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University E-Newsletters: The Implementation of Best Practices

Paula H. Naumann

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in
English: Technical Communication


Minnesota State University, Mankato
Mankato, MN

May 2011

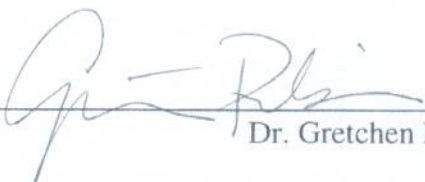
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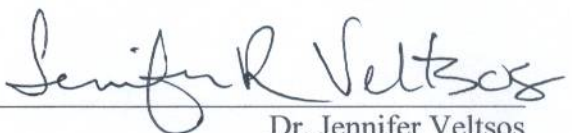
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Abstract

University E-Newsletters: The Implementation of Best Practices

Paula H. Naumann

English: Technical Communication

Minnesota State University, Mankato

2010

My purpose for this research was to examine the use of best practice guidelines for e-newsletters published by university alumni associations and to recommend additional best practice guidelines for alumni e-newsletters. For this study I reviewed 20 current alumni association e-newsletters. I based my research on the following questions:

1. Which best practices described in the literature about e-newsletters are evidenced in university e-newsletters?
2. Which practices, if any, are not common in the literature but are evidenced in university e-newsletters?
3. Which additional practices evidenced in the alumni e-newsletters should be considered best practices for publishing alumni e-newsletters?

I examined the use of best practice guidelines in university e-newsletters published by the alumni associations of large universities in the United States, and I recorded and evaluated other practices used in alumni e-newsletters to determine their suitability as best practices. Very little scholarly research existed about e-newsletters, so I compiled a list of best practices not only from journals but also from trade publications and advice

columns. I reviewed 20 e-newsletters and made a list of features that did not appear on the original best practices list in order to create a list of additional practices. After my initial review of the e-newsletters, I compared each e-newsletter to my list of additional practices to determine how many of the e-newsletters used each noted practice. I evaluated the items on the original list of best practices as well as the list of additional practices for positive contributions to the e-newsletter. I endorsed 16 best practices that appeared in three or more best practice articles. I strongly agreed with the best practice to keep the publication brief, and this recommendation was taken into account when endorsing or rejecting other best practices. I endorsed best practices for distribution of the e-newsletter included providing the e-newsletter name and date on the e-mail subject line and using the university name or e-newsletter name on the e-mail *from* line. I endorsed best practices for content such as including articles about a variety of topics with an emphasis on news articles. I also endorsed five specific formatting practices to enhance scannability. I also recommended additional practices which were in evidence in the e-newsletters but were not listed in best practice articles. I recommended sending the e-newsletter with a brief and straightforward subject line and naming the e-newsletter something other than “newsletter.” I also recommended including articles about university research and profiles of alumni. I recommended eight specific links for inclusion. I suggested specific additional research that could be conducted using reader feedback. I also suggested research about new communication technology and effective use of current technology.

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Introduction

In August of 1983, the *Training and Development Journal* included a paragraph about a new high-tech electronic newsletter that was available from the National Center for Research in Vocational Education. The article notes that “To use the newsletter, it is necessary to have the computer hardware for sending and receiving messages electronically (either a terminal or microcomputer with modem to connect into phone lines)” (High-tech electronic newsletter now available, 1983, p. 10). The article concludes with contact information for interested parties—a physical mailing address.

A few years later, in 1988, *Physics Today* provided its readers with information about an electronic newsletter:

What's New is a weekly electronic newsletter written specifically for members of the American Physical Society (APS) by Robert Park, APS public affairs officer in Washington... What's New can be accessed without charge by any APS member equipped with a terminal and a modem. The access instructions are as follows: dial the local Telenet number; at the CONNECT prompt, hit the return key twice; at the terminal = prompt, hit the return key; at the @ prompt, type TELE-MAIL, type GMEMBER, and hit the return key; for PASSWORD, type APS692, and hit the return key. After the current What's New page appears on the terminal, the user will automatically be disconnected from Tele-mail. (Park, 1988, para. 1)

Evidently, when electronic newsletters, commonly called e-newsletters, were an emerging form of communication in the 1980s, a fair amount of effort was required to access them.

Subscribing to e-newsletters is no longer a difficult task. Now many commercial websites have an e-newsletter link at the bottom of the homepage, and interested readers can click and subscribe in minutes or even seconds. The result is that many potential readers have inboxes that are overflowing with information that they don't have time to open, much less read (Nielsen, 2006).

Although they can contribute to overflowing inboxes, e-newsletters are an efficient and inexpensive way to communicate. They are useful for delivering up-to-the minute content, and they encourage immediate feedback. Because e-newsletters are most often delivered by request, they are preferred over websites as a means of conveying information. Higher return on investment (ROI) is realized from e-newsletters compared to many other kinds of communication or advertising. Jakob Nielsen advises, "If you don't have a newsletter, then publishing one is probably the single-highest ROI action you can take to improve your Internet presence" (Nielsen, 2007, Email Newsletters section, para. 2).

Creators of e-newsletters need to weigh the potential benefit of reaching an audience with e-newsletters against the fact that many of them are deleted before they are opened. Because entities that produce e-newsletters want to succeed in reaching their intended audiences, experts in the field have written webpages and articles devoted to best practices for e-newsletters. A large number of best practice articles present advice for creating e-newsletters dedicated to sales and marketing. Authors have also written valuable articles that provide best practices for e-newsletters in general.

Higher education is one segment of society that has embraced the production of e-newsletters. Many factors seem to make this type of communication well suited for

distribution by universities, including low cost and ease of delivery, as well as a potential readership base that is more likely to have e-mail and internet access. Universities produce campus-wide as well as departmental e-newsletters, some of which are intended for internal audiences and others for external audiences. Although higher education generates a great number of e-newsletters, I did not find evidence of best practice recommendations intended specifically for university e-newsletters.

I have attended universities as a graduate and as an undergraduate. I have a daughter who is attending professional school and two sons who are enrolled in college. I have gained a certain familiarity with university e-newsletters because I have them sent to me from these various universities. I have also worked at two different universities, and while I was deciding on a topic for my thesis, I was asked to develop an e-newsletter for the college that employed me. I am interested in recommendations that are available for producing e-newsletters and decided to make best practices for university e-newsletters the topic of my research.

Purpose Statement

My purpose for this research was to examine the use of best practice guidelines for e-newsletters published by the alumni associations of U.S. universities with enrollments greater than 20,000 students and to recommend additional best practice guidelines for alumni e-newsletters. For this study I analyzed 20 current alumni association e-newsletters using guidelines and best practices already published, and I recorded practices used in the e-newsletters for evaluation as additional best practices.

Research Questions

I based my research on the following questions:

1. Which best practices described in the literature about e-newsletters are evidenced in university e-newsletters?
2. Which practices, if any, are not common in the literature but are evidenced in university e-newsletters?
3. Which additional practices evidenced in the alumni e-newsletters should be considered best practices for publishing alumni e-newsletters?

Literature Review

Many articles about e-newsletters focused on research about reader opinions concerning e-newsletters and on research about the effectiveness of e-newsletters. Other articles touted the benefits of and listed recommendations in favor of using e-newsletters rather than print newsletters. However, my literature review was limited to those articles that presented best practices for e-newsletters.

Material that outlined best practices for e-newsletters was abundant, but I found very little scholarly research on the topic. Most of the sources I used in this study were brief advice articles published on websites.

I used the Minnesota State University, Mankato Library Services website to search the following journal databases: *ACM Digital Library*, *Business Source Premier*, *Communications and Mass Media Complete*, and *Sage Premier*. I also searched the internet using Google and Google Scholar. I conducted searches using the following terms separately, in combination, and using an asterisk as a wildcard: *e-newsletter*, *newsletter*, *news**, *communic**, *best practices*, *electronic*, *e-mail*, *digital*, *e-mail*

marketing, university communication, external, alumni, organizational communication, higher education, postsecondary education, academic, and public relations.

As I reviewed the literature, I developed categories for the best practices and placed each best practice into a category. I created a heuristic that includes best practices mentioned in three or more articles.

In my research of the literature, I found 29 articles that described a total of 51 best practices for e-newsletters. I kept a tally of the frequency of occurrence for each best practice in order to identify the best practices that were written about three or more times. I grouped those best practices into four categories: 1) goals for e-newsletters, 2) policies for distribution, 3) content, and 4) format.

Goals for e-newsletters. Under the category of goals for e-newsletters, I included best practices that contribute to creating a professional and appealing publication that could result in positive ethos for an institution or brand.

Authors listed best practices relating to goals for e-newsletters that included careful proofreading (Gorey, 2007; University of Washington, 2009a), and using an e-newsletter to reinforce brand identity (University of Washington, 2009a).

Authors emphasized brevity as a best practice. Some simply stated that e-newsletters should be brief and should follow established web writing guidelines, without providing specific information about how to achieve that goal (Nielsen, 2004; Lawless, 2003; Nugent, 2008). Other authors suggested that e-newsletters should be limited to three or fewer screens (Congressional Management Foundation, 2003; Embleton, 2003). Authors of e-newsletter articles should also use concise wording to provide overviews rather than too much detail (Gorey, 2007; Lawless, 2003). Two articles included specific details

about the best way to achieve a brief e-newsletter. Lacy (2009) recommended, “The content had to be just right, akin to light, tasty, 150-word morsels” (Don't Abuse the In-Box section, para. 1). Peppriell (1998) provided a longer listing of factors that contribute to brevity:

Space availability demands brevity in writing style: one-word declarations; short sentences; strong nouns and verbs; the active voice; short statements with supporting facts. The rhythm: short and shorter. No 39-word sentences will fly here. The computer screen slows readability by 25 percent. Consequently, “eNewsletters” should have only half the word count of their paper equivalents. (K.I.S.S. and Tell section, para. 2)

Policies for distribution. I categorized several best practices as e-newsletter policies for distribution. Items in this category include how the e-newsletter is distributed, to whom it is distributed, how often it is sent, and related items.

Several authors stated that e-newsletters should target a specific segment of the audience and that content should be tailored to each segment (Gray, 2004; Iafrate, 2008; Khodarahmi, 2007; Krupa, 2001; Nielsen, 2004; University of Washington, 2009b). An e-mail marketing company called MailChimp (2009a) found that “When MailChimp users segmented their lists based on some field in their recipient database (examples might include “customer type” or “ZIP code” or “job title”) results went way up compared to non-segmented lists.” (Segment by Merge Field section, para. 2) Results for this study included numbers of opens, clicks, bounces, abuse reports, and unsubscribes.

Authors also recommended a related best practice that e-newsletters should be personalized using the recipient’s name (Eppler & Mengis, 2009; Khodarahmi, 2007;

University of Washington, 2009b). Eppler and Mengis (2009) stated, “Addressing people personally (for example, using their name in an e-mail) or pointing to issues or people that interest them, engages people on another level and helps them focus on your messages” (p. 5).

Authors offered various best practices related to frequency of publication of e-newsletters. Iafrate (2008) stated that e-newsletters should be offered at least once per quarter and recommended that subscribers be allowed to choose the frequency for receiving the e-newsletter. On the subject of publication frequency, authors most often noted that the schedule should be consistent (Gallo, 2009; Gorey, 2007; Iafrate, 2008; Lord, 2002; University of Washington, 2009a). Editors should save news items that are not especially time-critical to be included in the e-newsletter rather than sending frequent, short e-mails with single news items that may cause recipients to view the sender as bothersome. Leibowitz (1999) provided this cautionary note:

E-mail beckons as an inexpensive way to alert thousands of people about alumni events or graduates' achievements. But the messages, if they arrive too frequently, can be perceived as spam, poisoning the relationship between the college and the graduate. “Yes, we have the ability to send out e-mail. But very few people can hit the send button,” says Ms. Yem (director of Stanford’s Alumni Association). “We use e-mail only for our monthly newsletter.” (Keeping Alumni Informed section, para. 4)

Several authors advised that an e-newsletter should be sent using software that tracks the reader’s response. Open rates, unsubscribe rates, and click-through rates should all be reported. This is the easiest way to get feedback about readers’ usage of your e-newsletter

(Carrigan, 2006; Congressional Management Foundation, 2003; Gorey, 2007; Lord, 2002; University of Washington, 2009b; Waring, 2008).

The privacy policy that is put in place and stated on your website should be followed precisely, to maintain reader trust (Carrigan, 2006; Congressional Management Foundation, 2003; Waring, 2008).

Content. Authors outlined many best practices regarding e-newsletter content.

The first items that a reader encounters are not actually a part of the e-newsletter, but rather parts of the e-mail that contains it. Entities distributing e-newsletters should pay particular attention to the subject line and to the name that appears on the *from* line (Congressional Management Foundation, 2003; Embleton, 2003; Gray, 2004; Khodarahmi, 2007; Nielsen, 2002; Sinickas, 2008). Senders of effective e-newsletters use these spaces thoughtfully to interest and impact readers.

Several authors recommended the best practice that subject lines should be short and should provide some compelling information about the content of the e-newsletter rather than simply an e-newsletter name or an issue number (Congressional Management Foundation, 2003; Embleton, 2003; Gray, 2004; Khodarahmi, 2007; Nielsen, 2002; Sinickas, 2008).

Nugent (2008) suggests that the *from* line should reveal a trusted source, either an individual or an institutional name.

The most commonly noted best practice about content was that it should be relevant (Berst, 2000; Congressional Management Foundation, 2003; Gallo, 2009; Gorey, 2007; Iafate, 2008; Lawless, 2003; Nielsen, 2004; Nielsen, 2008). Editors of e-newsletters will have to make decisions about what is relevant to their readers in order to follow this best

practice. E-newsletters are not expected to be read word for word, so authors may recommend this best practice based on the assumption that readers will read more content if the whole e-newsletter is made up of information they can use.

Authors also recommended the best practice that e-newsletters should contain news (Cintorino, 2003; Congressional Management Foundation, 2003; Kedem, 2007; Lord, 2002; Nielsen, 2008). Information should be fresh to readers so that they will continue to read future issues.

Content: Links. Several authors noted that e-newsletters should never be sent with attachments (Carrigan, 2006; Congressional Management Foundation, 2003; Gorey, 2007; Waring, 2008). According to Gorey (2007), “An e-mail with an attachment may easily be filtered as junk mail” (Make your newsletter easily accessible section, para. 1). E-newsletter publishers can easily avoid sending attachments by providing links to information. Authors offered numerous best practices about specific links to be included.

Many sources recommended including a link to unsubscribe to the e-newsletter, with the further recommendation that the process be made simple. Nielsen (2002) stated that some e-newsletter publishers attempt to make people continue to receive their e-newsletter by making the unsubscribe process difficult. This practice is dangerous because frustration in the unsubscribe process may cause the recipient to take a shortcut and mark the e-newsletter as spam. Nielsen (2004) warned,

The fact that many users will declare a newsletter to be spam when they tire of it has terrifying implications: legitimate newsletters might get blacklisted and thus ISPs might block their delivery to other subscribers. This is a compelling reason to

increase the usability of the unsubscribe process: better to lose a subscriber than to be listed as spam. (Spam is a Fact of Life section, para. 4)

It is necessary to include an unsubscribe link as well as a valid physical address in order to comply with the CAN-SPAM Act of 2003 (Federal Trade Commission, 2009). These features were not recommended frequently, but it's possible that they were overlooked as best practices because of the legal requirement to include them.

Those who prepare e-newsletters should also include links to allow readers to subscribe (Cintorino, 2003; Congressional Management Foundation, 2003; Embleton, 2003; Gorey, 2007; Kotlas, 1999; Lawless, 2003; Peppriell, 1998; University of Washington, 2009b). One of the most positive features of e-newsletter communication is the fact that recipients have often requested the mailing. This makes the likelihood much higher that the e-newsletter will be read. It follows that e-newsletter publishers should make it easy for people to subscribe.

Several authors recommended the best practice of including a link back to the company website (Gorey, 2007; Khodarahmi, 2007; Nielsen, 2008). The Congressional Management Foundation (2003) noted that such a link allows readers to easily access and become familiar with the company's internet offerings (p. 2).

E-newsletter preparers should also provide links to other websites (Cintorino, 2003; Congressional Management Foundation, 2003; Gallo, 2009; Gorey, 2007; Khodarahmi, 2007; Nugent, 2008). This feature is a service to readers, providing them with related information of interest.

Many authors touted the best practice of publishing a headline followed by several short sentences on a topic and then including a link to the complete article.

(Congressional Management Foundation, 2003; Embleton, 2003; Gorey, 2007; Khodarahmi, 2007; Nielsen, 2008; Peppriell, 1998; University of Washington, 2009).

Gorey (2007) stated,

Use subject headings and links that invite the reader to investigate further. Tease readers with a small amount of information that requires them to read in-depth to get the full picture. If you have a Web site, insert links as often as possible. (para. 6)

Authors recommended the best practice of offering a link to an archive of the e-newsletter because archives allow readers to easily find information from previous issues (Congressional Management Foundation, 2003; Khodarahmi, 2007; Kotlas, 1999; Lord, 2002; University of Washington, 2009b).

The University of Washington (2009b) advised including a link to a feedback form or e-mail address so that readers can easily provide input and also recommended that the resulting feedback be used to improve the e-newsletter so that it meets the needs of readers.

Authors of best practice articles frequently recommended a link to a privacy policy (Carrigan, 2006; Congressional Management Foundation, 2003; Lawless, 2003; Waring, 2008). When privacy policies are stated, readers feel more secure in providing their e-mail addresses. Lawless (2003) explains,

With the influx of unwanted e-mail, users often wonder how marketers acquire their e-mail address. Dispel users' fears that you will distribute their address by including a link to your privacy policy online. Make it clear that their address will remain private. By including a link to your policy in the header or footer of the e-newsletter,

you demonstrate that you understand their concerns and care about their privacy.

(para. 5)

Format. Authors offered the greatest number of best practices in the area of formatting.

An overwhelming majority of sources stated that e-newsletters should be sent in HTML format with minimal graphics so that download time isn't an issue (Carrigan, 2006; Cintorino, 2003; Congressional Management Foundation, 2003; Gorey, 2007; Khodarahmi, 2007; Kotlas, 1999; Lord, 2002; Nugent, 2008; Waring, 2008; University of Washington, 2009a). The word minimal is not a specific guideline, but two references provided specific best practices for e-newsletter size: The Congressional Management Foundation (2003) stated that e-newsletters should be under 100K, while the University of Washington (2009a) recommended using only 40K to avoid clogging inboxes. E-mail technology continues to improve, and it bears noting that advice concerning download times may change. An increasing majority of e-mail recipients have the advantage of a broadband connection which makes download time negligible.

Scannability is a common consideration when writing anything that will be read online because most people do not read every word of online documents but rather scan them for items of interest. Several authors mentioned making text scannable and provided different suggestions for achieving this goal (Berst, 2000; Congressional Management Foundation, 2003; Gorey, 2007; Gregory, 2004; Khodarahmi, 2007; Lawless, 2003; Nielsen, 2004; University of Washington, 2009a). The Congressional Management Foundation (2003) recommended that e-newsletters be formatted in this way: "Provide multiple headers, bullets, short paragraphs and sentences, and links to further

information” (p. 2). Berst (2000) recommended using white space to make text scannable. The University of Washington (2009a) listed the best practice of restricting the width of content. The Congressional Management Foundation (2003), Kotlas (1999), and Nielsen (2008) all recommended the use of appropriate line length so recipients don’t need to scroll horizontally. Other authors revealed that scannability is enhanced by including a table of contents (Khodarahmi, 2007; Lawless, 2003).

Authors suggested other best practices related to formatting including choosing a simple design (Gorey, 2007; Gray, 2004; Nielsen, 2002), and testing the format using several e-mail platforms to make sure that the format isn’t distorted when it is received (Embleton, 2003; Nielsen, 2002; University of Washington, 2009a).

Methods

Data Collection

I collected e-newsletters published by alumni associations of universities in the United States with enrollments of 20,000 or more students. I completed online subscription forms when I was allowed to subscribe using that method. Many alumni associations did not offer online subscription forms because they restrict the distribution of their e-newsletters to their active alumni members only. I sent e-mail to those alumni associations to request their alumni e-newsletters.

I followed these steps to collect data:

1. Because universities produce large numbers of e-newsletters, it was necessary to choose a small segment of university e-newsletters to research. I decided to research alumni association e-newsletters and then decided to seek them from the largest universities because I thought they would be more likely to have alumni e-newsletters than smaller universities. I set a goal of examining an e-newsletter from each of 20 different alumni associations affiliated with a public U.S. university with an enrollment greater than 20,000. I found a list of the 100 largest institutions in the U.S., and I checked each school using the information on the website to determine if they were public four-year universities (“MatchCollege,” 2010). I requested e-newsletters of large universities in the United States through alumni association webpages, or by e-mail request to alumni associations (Appendix A). I continued to contact alumni associations until I received an e-newsletter from 20 alumni associations. I contacted the alumni associations of

the 65 universities listed in Appendix B. Only one issue of each e-newsletter was examined for this research.

2. I saved an electronic version and a text only version of the 20 e-newsletters I received for future reference. I assigned a number to each e-newsletter so that the results of my study could be reported without naming the universities associated with a given e-newsletter. I decided to report information without naming the universities because I encountered reluctance on the part of some alumni associations to provide me with their e-newsletter when I told them it was going to be used for my research. In Appendix C the universities whose alumni associations provided e-newsletters are listed in alphabetical order which does not correspond with the numerical order used in recording data.

Data Analysis

I followed these steps to create a heuristic and to analyze the 20 e-newsletters I received from university alumni associations:

1. I started with the list of best practices I created based on the literature. I eliminated best practices that were mentioned by fewer than three authors. I also eliminated practices that could not be observed in an e-newsletter, such as certain practices that made recommendations about goals for e-newsletters and policies for distribution. I used the resulting list of best practices to develop a heuristic (Table D1 in Appendix D).
2. As I received each e-newsletter, I examined it using the heuristic, and noted the best practices that were used.

3. I viewed each e-newsletter using two different monitors, one with a resolution of 1024 x 768 and the other with a resolution of 1440 x 900. Because monitor resolution varies from computer to computer, and because the e-newsletters looked slightly different depending on the e-mail platform I used, I counted the number of articles, sentences and words instead of the number of screens in order to compare the e-newsletters to each other. I converted each e-newsletter into a text document. I removed headlines and stand-alone hyperlinks in order to determine a word and sentence count for each article. I counted advertisements as articles only when there were complete sentences in an advertisement and it appeared in the body of the e-newsletter along with other articles. I did not count links to event information as articles unless there was some accompanying description of the event.
4. I categorized each article according to its type of content: 1) news; 2) relevancy (mention of the word, or a form of the word, *alumni*); 3) profile of person who was not an alumnus; and 4) enjoyable, clever, or human interest story. Because 19 of 20 e-newsletters were sent monthly or more frequently, I considered an article to contain news if it reported on something that had happened within the previous three months or was an announcement for an event in the future. News items that were about alumni or upcoming events that were planned for alumni were counted in both relevant and news categories.

These four steps of analysis provided answers to my first research question:

Which best practices described in the literature about e-newsletters are evidenced in university e-newsletters?

5. Using constant comparative analysis of the e-newsletters, I developed a list of practices that were used in the e-newsletters, but were not included on the heuristic compiled from the literature.

This step of analysis aided me in answering the second research question:

Which practices, if any, are not common in the literature but are evidenced in university e-newsletters?

6. I reexamined the e-newsletters and noted the frequency of use of each of the additional practices (Appendix F). I evaluated each of the items on the additional practice list.

This step of analysis aided me in answering the last research question:

Which additional practices evidenced in the alumni e-newsletters should be considered best practices for publishing alumni e-newsletters?

I undertook the first five steps of data analysis as each e-newsletter was received. I completed the last step of data analysis after all e-newsletters were received.

Results

Initial Best Practices

I collected 20 alumni e-newsletters containing a total of 242 articles and compared them to the following heuristic that I developed while reviewing the literature:

Goals for e-newsletters

Brevity

100K size or less

Policies for distribution

Schedule for publication – regular

Target audience

Personalize with recipient's name

Content

Enjoyable, clever, human interest

News

Relevant (uses a form of the word *alumni*)

Article about person (not alumni)

Archive

No attachments

Link to contact

Feedback form

From line identifies trusted company or individual

Links to other sites and other university pages (# in newsletter)

Content, continued

Mailing address (federal antispam)

Privacy policy - stated

Subject line - attention getter, short

Subscribe option

Unsubscribe option

Format

Graphics—provide text descriptions

Headline with summary and link to detail

HTML graphics minimal (# of images?)

Multi-platform compatible

Scannable: appropriate line length

Scannable: bullets

Scannable: white space to separate articles

Scannable: table of contents

Simple design

The occurrences of best practices in each e-newsletter are shown in Appendix D, in Table D2. The occurrences of best practices in all e-newsletters are summarized in Appendix D, in Table D3.

Goals for e-newsletters. The best practice for goals for e-newsletters was to keep the e-newsletter brief. The e-newsletter with the most articles had 33. The e-newsletter

with the fewest articles had only two. The average number of articles was 12. The number of articles in each e-newsletter is shown in *Figure 1*.

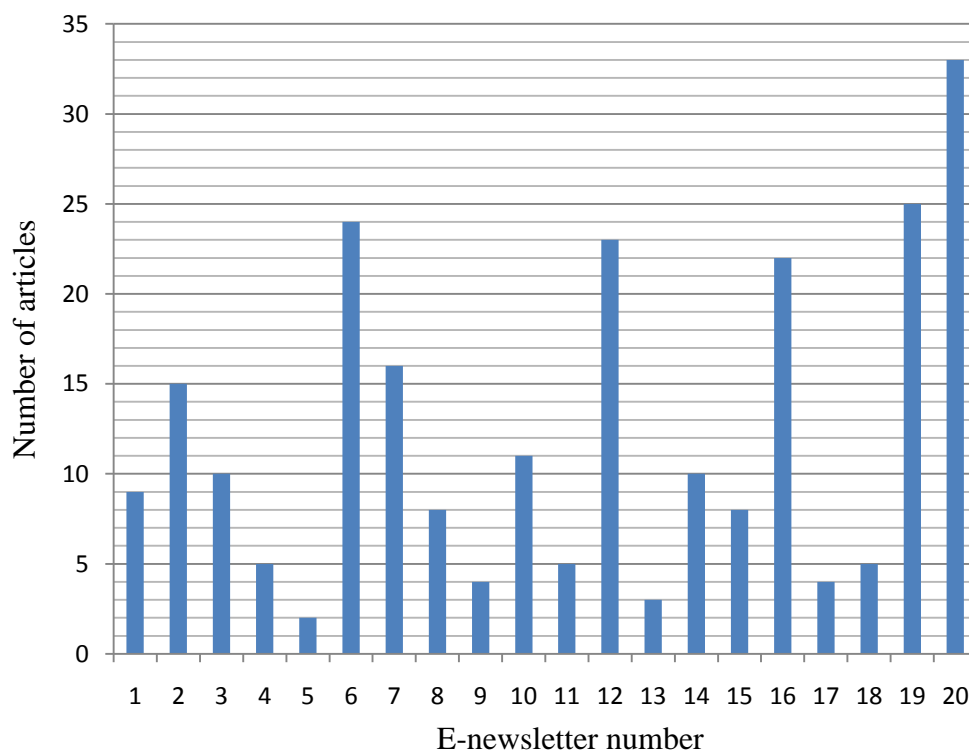


Figure 1. Number of articles in each e-newsletter.

I recorded statistics on the brevity of each article (Appendix E). The average number of sentences in each article was three; the median number was also three. The literature noted that including links to additional information, rather than including complete information, was a best practice that could eliminate the need for attachments. No e-newsletters were sent with attachments. Those who create e-newsletters may consider using links to complete information in order to produce a briefer e-newsletter.

The four e-newsletters with the shortest articles averaged fewer than two sentences per article. These four e-newsletters had 58 articles among them, with 57 associated links; all but one of these articles had one link to more information. This was higher than

the average percentage of links per article in the e-newsletters: Overall 208 of 242 articles, or just less than 86%, contained links. The literature recommended including specific types of links in e-newsletters; those links are reviewed below in the content category.

I also found the average number of words per sentence for articles in each e-newsletter. All sentences in all of the e-newsletters fell well short of the 39-word sentence warning from Peppriell (1998, K.I.S.S. and Tell section, para. 2). The e-newsletter with the longest sentences averaged 29.91 words per sentence. The e-newsletter with the shortest sentences averaged only 14.65 words per sentence. The mean was 21 words and the median was 20 words.

When all of the brevity factors were taken into account, only three e-newsletters had lower than average counts in all three categories: fewer than 12 articles, fewer than 3 sentences per article, and fewer than 21 words per sentence.

Policies for distribution. My research of the literature showed that e-newsletters should target a specific segment of an audience. Since my e-newsletters were all requested from alumni associations, the target of the requested e-newsletter could be assumed to be a member of the alumni group. Two of the e-newsletters I received were e-newsletters that did not mention alumni but were instead e-newsletters of general interest about the university.

E-newsletters can be personalized with the recipient's name. Only three e-newsletters included my name; two did as a greeting and one did as a closing.

Authors frequently recommended that e-newsletters be sent on a consistent schedule, and Iafrate (2008) recommended e-newsletters be sent no less frequently than every quarter. All 20 e-newsletters were sent on a regular schedule which was at least quarterly. One was sent quarterly, 17 were sent monthly, one was sent twice each month, and one was sent weekly.

Content. Because I received the e-newsletters by e-mail rather than accessing them online, all of them had a subject line and a *from* line. For each e-newsletter, I recorded the content of the subject line and the identification information provided on the *from* line to indicate the sender of the email.

Alumni associations, in 18 of 20 e-newsletters, used only the e-newsletter name and the month of publication on the subject line rather than including attention-getting information from a top story. The two e-newsletters that included a reference to a top story in the e-newsletter both mentioned record spring enrollments. One continued with a phrase indicating that university merchandise was available.

Without exception, universities followed best practice guidelines by using a trusted name for the sender. Sixteen senders used the name of the alumni association on the *from* line, which in all 16 cases included the name of the university. One of the 16 also used the name of the e-newsletter on the *from* line. The other four e-newsletters were sent with the university name on the *from* line.

Authors recommended that content be relevant to readers. In determining whether or not content was relevant, I noted whether articles actually used the word *alumni* or some form of it in them. Some of these articles were about alumni, and others offered benefits

or event information of interest to, or planned specifically for, alumni. I recorded that 15 e-newsletters included a profile of an alumnus, which I counted as a relevant article. Of the 242 articles, 73 articles, or just over 30%, contained a reference to alumni and were thus considered to be relevant.

Authors also recommended that content in e-newsletters should actually be news. I considered articles to be news if they reported on events that had occurred within the last three months or if they were going to occur in the future. I frequently recorded athletic team accomplishments, university awards, faculty awards, student accomplishments, and events that had taken place on campus as news. Approximately 52% of the articles, 126 of the 242, fell into the news category.

Articles that I did not consider to be news or to be relevant to alumni were most often advertisements, human interest stories that were not current, and stories about students or faculty or other individuals or groups who were not alumni. These types of content were not addressed in the best practice articles.

Only five alumni associations provided links to archives of their e-newsletters. Three of the archives were up to date and provided archived issues for two or more years of e-newsletters. One archive allowed access to only the two previous issues. One archive had not been updated since July 2009.

Content: Links. Authors of best practice articles recommended that specific types of links be included in e-newsletters. E-newsletters varied greatly in their inclusion of links recommended in best practice articles.

Unsubscribe links were included in 17 of 20 e-newsletters.

Authors also recommended the inclusion of links to subscribe to the e-newsletter.

Five e-newsletters included a link to subscribe.

Links to the company homepage and links to other websites are recommended.

Eighteen of 20 e-newsletters included a link to the alumni association homepage.

Eighteen of 20 e-newsletters also included links to other university webpages. Only five e-newsletters included links to websites that were unrelated to the university: a charitable organization that was sponsoring an alumna who lost a leg, an endowment management comparison, two local newspapers, and a site that profiled people who helped charitable causes.

Seventeen e-newsletters provided links to the alumni association webpage or to other university webpages where readers could read complete articles or find more information about a topic. These links were sometimes headlines, words, or phrases within the article. The terms used for the links to more information included 1) *more information*, 2) *complete information*, 3) *continued*, 4) *details*, 5) *to learn more*, 6) *to view the full article*, and 7) *full story*.

Five e-newsletters provided links that were specifically designed to elicit feedback. These links included invitations to offer feedback, to make comments, or to ask questions about the e-newsletter.

Only five e-newsletters provided a link to a privacy policy.

Format. Publishers can make e-newsletters a manageable size by following the best practice of using an HTML format with minimal graphics. I determined the file size for each e-newsletter, which is an indicator of how long it would take to download the file.

The two recommendations I used as a guideline for optimal size were around 40K (University of Washington, 2009a), and less than 100K (Congressional Management Foundation, 2003). All 20 e-newsletters used less than 100K. Eleven universities produced e-newsletters less than 40K. The smallest e-newsletters were only 12K, 14K, and 17K. The largest e-newsletter was 83K, followed by two e-newsletters that were each 70K. The mean was 40.4K and the median was 33.5K.

As I analyzed each e-newsletter, I checked for ways in which formatting choices made the text scannable. The following paragraphs provide more detail about scannability.

All 20 of the e-newsletters used headlines, which was a best practice noted by the Congressional Management Foundation (2003, p. 2).

In addition to headlines, the authors of best practice articles recommended bulleted lists (Congressional Management Foundation, 2003; Gregory, 2004). Only one e-newsletter contained a bulleted list, and that list was a part of an advertisement.

Berst (2000) recommended using white space purposefully to make text scannable. Every e-newsletter had some white space between articles. Due to variation in monitors, web-browsers, and the availability of adjustable text I did not attempt to measure the white spaces between articles.

The University of Washington (2009a) listed the best practice of restricting the width of content in order to make text scannable. I viewed all of the e-newsletters on a 15" monitor with a resolution of 1024 x 768, as well as on an 18" monitor with a resolution of

1440 x 900. I had to scroll horizontally for three e-newsletters to see the end of each line when using the monitor with lower resolution.

Ten of the 20 e-newsletters restricted the width of content by formatting the text into two columns.

Tables of contents were used by seven of 20 e-newsletters. Five of the seven tables of contents were provided on the first screen of the e-newsletter. Six of the seven tables of contents were made up of hyperlinks so that articles within the e-newsletters could be accessed with a click.

Authors recommended the best practice of a simple design for e-newsletters (Gorey, 2007; Gray, 2004; Nielsen, 2002), but judging simplicity was difficult because the authors did not provide any specific guidelines or definitions for simplicity. I decided that three e-newsletters did not have a simple format because they used the following:

- formats that resembled websites
- large pictures
- a greater-than-average number of pictures
- colored backgrounds
- colored boxes around articles
- large numbers of advertisements
- columns
- a greater-than-average amount of content which created longer e-newsletters

As I viewed each e-newsletter using each of three e-mail platforms, I noted any problems with the formatting or display. Although there were slight differences in the

appearance of e-newsletter using different e-mail platforms, all of the content was intact and viewable for all of the e-newsletters.

Additional practices

As I reviewed each e-newsletter, I recorded practices that were evident in the e-newsletter but did not appear on the original compiled list of best practices. I noted any practice that fit into three of the previously determined categories for best practices: goals for e-newsletters, content, and format. Practices for the category of policies for distribution were not apparent as I reviewed the e-newsletters. I have used the term *additional practices* throughout this paper to refer to the practices on the list that I have included below, with practices following category headings.

Goals for e-newsletters

A name other than e-newsletter

Content

Advertisements

News Articles

Information about research

Articles Relevant to Alumni

Member benefit of the month

Coupon or discount code

Profile of alumni

Thank you for your membership

Enjoyable/Clever Articles

Editor's note

Trivia

Links

Link to the alumni association homepage

Link to a calendar for campus and/or alumni events

Link to colleges or departments

Link to the e-newsletter homepage

Link to Facebook

Link to Flickr

Link to feedback from others

Link to an image library of university

Link to join alumni association

Link to join an online community or forum

Link to Linked In

Link to make a donation or gift

Link to the news service homepage

Link to an online version of e-newsletter

Link to other university publications

Link to purchase university merchandise

Link to read class notes

Link to resources or services

Links, continued

Link to RSS feed

Link to a sports schedule

Link to submit a class note

Link to the university homepage

Link to update alumni information

Link to YouTube

Format

Columns

Stand-alone hyperlinked headlines

After I reviewed each newsletter and compiled the list of additional practices, I analyzed each e-newsletter again to determine how often these additional practices were used by the e-newsletters. The results of that analysis are shown in Appendix F. The following paragraphs describe the additional practices in more detail.

Goals for e-newsletters. Although I couldn't observe e-newsletter goals, it was apparent that setting goals for an e-newsletter is important in order to make decisions about policies for distribution, content, and format.

The only additional practice that I categorized as an e-newsletter goal was naming the e-newsletter something other than *newsletter*. I assigned it to this category because the name can affect subscriber opinions and attitudes about a publication. I discovered that 15 e-newsletters had been given a name other than *newsletter*. Five e-newsletters used some form of the word *connect*—*connect*, *connected*, or *connection*—in their name.

Five e-newsletters incorporated the symbol @ into their name. Five e-newsletters had no name other than *newsletter* or *e-newsletter* combined with the alumni association or university name.

Policies for distribution. I did not find any policies for distribution that could be listed as additional practices.

Content. As evidenced in the findings about brevity, some e-newsletters had more content than others. Three types of content are discussed below: advertisements, articles and links.

Advertisements for services and merchandise were found in 13 e-newsletters. Some of these advertisements were promotions for products offered by the university and others for products offered by unrelated vendors. Some e-newsletters included one or two small links for advertising, while others offered as many as six links. Seven e-newsletters did not have any advertisements at all—not even options to purchase clothing in the university colors emblazoned with the university logo.

I recorded article topics and links that were not recommended in the literature, and assigned each of them to one of the previously established content categories.

Content: News. Information about research conducted at the university appeared in six e-newsletters. Research topics included ethanol, couples meeting on-line, obesity prevention, a new mineral being used for computer chips, and auditory implants. One e-newsletter included a link to a university magazine dedicated to reporting research done on the campus. Another e-newsletter provided a link to an article on research about predicting snowfall and density.

Content: Relevant to Alumni. Special benefits for alumni in the form of coupons or discount codes for merchandise or services appeared in four e-newsletters.

A thank-you to alumni for their membership in the alumni association was found in three e-newsletters.

A profile of an alumna or alumnus, or a link to that information, appeared in 15 of the 20 e-newsletters.

A description highlighting a specific benefit for members of the alumni association was noted in three e-newsletters as a benefit of the month or some similar designation.

Content: Enjoyable, Clever. Trivia about the university was included in two e-newsletters.

A note from the editor was found in two e-newsletters.

Content: Links. A great number and a wide variety of links were included in the e-newsletters. They are summarized in Table 1 and the number of e-newsletters that included each one is indicated.

Table 1
Summary of Links Included in E-newsletters and Frequency of Occurrence

Link to	In this many e-newsletters
university blog	3
buy tickets for events	7
calendar of campus / alumni events	13
college or department webpages	2
sports schedule / calendar	6
e-newsletter homepage	5

Table 1, continued

Link to	In this many e-newsletters
social networking sites	14
view feedback about the e-newsletter	2
university photos or images	4
join the alumni association	9
join online community or forum	10
make a donation or gift	11
university news service	8
on-line version of e-newsletter	16
other university publications	7
purchase university branded merchandise	12
read or submit a class note	6
resources or services	7
subscribe to RSS feeds	2
update personal information	12
university-related content on YouTube	6

Format. Multiple columns were used to format 10 e-newsletters. Each of these newsletters presented the text in two columns.

Discussion

My goal for this research was to identify commonly recommended best practices that should be endorsed for alumni association e-newsletters and to recommend additional best practices.

I attempted to research a broad base of articles about best practices relating to e-newsletters. There has been very little research on this topic published in scholarly journals. Most of the articles that informed this research were brief articles on websites that offered advice for business communication.

I obtained a total of 20 alumni e-newsletters to evaluate, so this study was limited by the number of e-newsletters obtained. Most alumni associations automatically sent their e-newsletter to members only. Many alumni association contacts were unable to add my name to their alumni database either because of their policies or because they did not have a mechanism to do so. Some of these contacts sent me single issues of their e-newsletter, usually as a forwarded copy that had been sent to their own inbox. I had no reason to believe that these e-newsletters differed in any way from the e-newsletters sent to the alumni association members. I received one e-newsletter with an accompanying note that it was the e-newsletter sent to alumni who were not members of the association. That e-newsletter included information about joining the alumni association, and since that was a feature found in several other e-newsletters, I included the newsletter in my study.

Although my research was limited to best practices for e-newsletters, the literature about reader preferences and the pros and cons of e-newsletters offers several avenues for

further research. For instance, is there a cost-effective way to produce a paper version of the alumni e-newsletter for readers who prefer a hard copy? What is the return on investment for producing alumni-specific e-newsletters? Would an e-newsletter designed for a broader university audience including potential students and community members be as effective for reaching alumni as an alumni-specific e-newsletter?

More opportunities for further research in the area of best practices for alumni e-newsletters are apparent. This study was conducted using best practices as established through the literature on e-newsletters. Additional best practices could be sought in the literature about basic document design, alumni relations, or other types of electronic media.

Because I concentrated my efforts on large universities and reviewed only 20 e-newsletters, it would be beneficial to conduct research that includes universities of varying sizes and to study a greater number of e-newsletters. E-newsletters produced by colleges or departments within a university could be compared to e-newsletters from alumni associations.

I studied only e-newsletters prepared by alumni associations of U.S. universities. Studies could be conducted to determine whether universities in other countries are using e-newsletters to communicate with alumni and how their alumni communication and involvement compares with that of the alumni associations associated with the e-newsletters discussed in this paper/

I realized that an examination of a publication would not reveal whether or not best practices relating to goals for e-newsletters and policies for distribution had been

followed. For this reason I eliminated several best practices from the study.

Consequently, most of the practices I addressed in my study were related to content and format.

The following discussion of the results includes my reasons for endorsing certain best practices found in the literature as well as additional practices found in e-newsletters. Several screenshots that are representative of the practices used in the e-newsletters are included as figures following the discussion of individual practices.

Goals for e-newsletters

The goal that was recommended by three or more authors of best practice articles was to keep the e-newsletter brief. Although the term *brief* was not clearly defined, the difference in length among e-newsletters was obvious. The goal of brevity could be used to decide what content should be included in an e-newsletter. Editors could set goals for brevity for each of the components I counted for this study: An e-newsletter with fewer than the average of 12 articles, with three sentences in each, and an average of 21 words per sentence, would be considered a brief e-newsletter. I endorse the best practice of keeping e-newsletters brief.

Additional practices for goals for e-newsletters

I considered the name of an e-newsletter to be an item that might advance certain goals for the e-newsletter. This may be why five of the alumni associations used a form of the word *connect* in the e-newsletter name. (Figure 2 provides an example.) The five e-newsletters that had the @ symbol in their name, may have been intended to emphasize the fact that they were a form of electronic communication. Five alumni associations used

names such as *e-newsletter* or *newsletter*. (Figure 3 provides an example.) A simple name like that could not be expected to have a great deal of impact, either positive or negative. I recommend as a best practice the choice of an e-newsletter name that promotes the goals for the e-newsletter. Readers could be polled about their impression of the e-newsletter name.



Figure 2. Example of an e-newsletter with a name other than *newsletter*. Adapted from: *ASU Alumni Connection* by Arizona State University Alumni Association, 2010, Retrieved from: <http://alumni.asu.edu/emails/phxnews/feb10/index.html>



Figure 3. Example of an e-newsletter that uses the name *Alumni e-Newsletter*. Adapted from: *Alumni e-Newsletter* by Indiana University Alumni Association, 2010, Retrieved from: <http://alumni.indiana.edu/publications/enews/index.php?archive=news>

Further study about goals for e-newsletters could be undertaken. Are these e-newsletters intended to be a service to the alumni, or are they produced in order to benefit the university by increasing the connection of alumni to the university? Much of the content in the e-newsletters I received focused on informing the alumni about events, awards, and opportunities for alumni interaction, which I would consider to be a service of informing the alumni. Very little of the content attempted to present the mission or challenges of the university to the alumni, and I think including that type of content may

result in a different connection with the alumni, which could in turn benefit the university. I was surprised to find that the e-newsletters did not make explicit attempts to raise funds beyond including links to donation information.

Additional research could focus on whether or not e-newsletters have a mission statement or written goals. If goals for an e-newsletter could be obtained from the publishing entity, a study could compare the components of a given e-newsletter with its stated goals. This type of research could be conducted in house by anyone who publishes an e-newsletter to determine whether stated goals are being met in a particular issue of the e-newsletter.

Research could also be conducted to determine the impact of alumni e-newsletters on alumni involvement with the university and alumni perceptions of the university. Studies may show if alumni demonstrate a greater response when e-newsletter content is targeted for a specific segment of the alumni. Research could also be conducted to discover if there is a potential readership for the e-newsletter outside of the alumni population.

Because any evaluation of whether or not goals for e-newsletters are being met would be based on feedback from readers, research could be conducted about the most effective ways of eliciting feedback.

Policies for Distribution

The e-newsletters that I reviewed seemed to have policies for distribution in place that aligned with the best practice recommendations.

Authors of best practice articles recommended that e-newsletters target a specific segment of society. Some of the e-newsletters I studied emphasized the fact that the

publication was intended for alumni. Since alumni associations already have an audience made up of a specific segment of society, it is appropriate and potentially effective for them to emphasize that fact when communicating with alumni in order to achieve the goals of their association. Only two alumni associations sent an e-newsletter that was intended for the entire university community rather than for an alumni audience.

Researchers may explore if e-newsletters that are produced specifically for alumni result in more alumni interaction with the university or if university e-newsletters intended for a broad audience result in similar alumni involvement. None of the alumni associations from whom I received e-newsletters offered me an e-newsletter that would appeal to a smaller segment of the alumni population. Colleges or departments within a university that have not established their own e-newsletter may consider doing so in order to promote stronger ties to the alumni who graduated from their programs. Research could be conducted to determine the appeal and impact of e-newsletters geared toward a specific segment of the alumni determined by the degree they earned.

Authors of best practice articles suggested personalizing the e-newsletter with the recipient's name, and only two e-newsletters used my name. Personalization is easy to incorporate, and if a university wants closer ties to alumni, doing so might be a way to achieve that goal. The best practice of personalization of e-newsletters could be studied to determine whether or not personalization improved readers' impressions of the publication. Research could also be conducted to determine if alumni preferred the use of their first names or a more formal address.

The last policy recommended by three or more authors was to establish and maintain a consistent schedule for publication. All of the e-newsletters I received had a consistent quarterly, monthly, bi-monthly, or weekly publication frequency. Some publication managers sent me only a single issue of their e-newsletters, but the e-newsletters to which I was able to subscribe were sent on schedule. I find the punctuality of the regularly published e-newsletter to be a demonstration of professionalism and commitment. I endorse this best practice. This part of my research may have been skewed by alumni associations that do not publish their e-newsletters on a regular basis and for that reason were not included because they were unable to send me an e-newsletter during the three months I was collecting e-newsletters for my study. Conducting and following research on alumni preferences for publication frequency could be a valuable way to optimize alumni e-newsletters. Would readers prefer a longer, less frequent publication or a shorter, more frequent one? How often is too often to help create a positive relationship with alumni?

In summary, an alumni association could set policies for distribution to align their publication with alumni preferences about the following:

- Specialized e-newsletters for narrow segments of the alumni population
- Personalization and preferences for addressing alumni
- Publication length and frequency
- Automatic distribution to all alumni or subscription by request

Researchers could also study whether it is detrimental to allow non-alumni to subscribe to the e-newsletter or if there would be possible benefits to making it available to the public.

Additional practices for policies for distribution

I did not discover any additional practices for policies for distribution.

Content

Authors provided a great deal of advice about content. I dedicated most of my time to analyzing content, and it was the area in which I found many additional practices to consider.

I analyzed subject lines and *from* lines first.

I judged most subject lines to lack appeal and originality when evaluated according to the best practice guidelines. However, after analyzing the e-newsletters, I do not recommend the best practice that the e-mail subject line be designed to attract attention and create interest by including information from the body of the e-newsletter. In the case of regularly published alumni e-newsletters, and especially e-newsletters that follow best practices and provide current, relevant information, a subscriber should have an interest in opening the e-newsletter based on a subject line that lets the reader know the e-mail contains the current e-newsletter. Efforts to make attention-getting subject lines may have a negative effect if the result ends up being too cute or corny or if it highlights a topic that is not of interest to a particular recipient. For alumni association e-newsletters, I recommend a brief and straightforward subject line that reveals the fact that an alumni association e-newsletter has arrived. Studies could be conducted to compare e-newsletters

sent with differing subject lines to try to determine whether including more information is a way to entice readers to open the e-newsletter. A study of the links that were accessed through the e-mail would show whether the topic introduced in the subject line received greater attention than other articles in the e-newsletter.

All of the e-newsletters were sent from trusted sources; this best practice is well-established and should be followed by all alumni associations.

I judged relevancy using narrow parameters that dictated that only articles that mentioned the word *alumni* or a form of it would be considered relevant. Although this type of guideline was necessary for establishing a count of relevant articles, I know that an article's relevancy can be judged only by the individual reading it. With that in mind, I think a best practice for relevancy would be to publish articles about a variety of subjects and to make sure that articles about alumni and alumni events are included. E-newsletters that had only articles about alumni-related topics might cause alumni who want to know what is currently happening on campus to seek all of their news from a different source. Those publishing alumni e-newsletters may be able to establish what readers consider relevant based on feedback from them. I endorse following the best practice of including relevant articles.

I also endorse the best practice of seeking feedback from readers. Only five e-newsletters included links so that readers could offer feedback. An example of a link to provide feedback is shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Example of a link to provide feedback. Adapted from: *Connected @ My Carolina* by My Carolina Alumni Association, 2010, Retrieved from: <http://www.mycarolina.org/s/842/index.aspx?sid=842&gid=1&pgid=2035&cid=4950&ecid=4950&crd=0&calpgid=606&calcid=2265>

Providing a link for feedback could result in gaining insight that might change the content offered in an e-newsletter to better suit the expectations of readers. Further study could be done on eliciting feedback. Are links to surveys more effective than an option to send an e-mail message? Does the wording of the request for feedback affect the amount of feedback received? Should a request for feedback be fashioned as a complete sentence that states that comments and suggestions are welcome rather than consisting of the single-word link *feedback*?

I determined that most of the articles in each e-newsletter qualified as news. Alumni associations that follow the best practice of including news publish an e-newsletter that seems necessary and may inspire recipients to open it and read it. On the contrary, if an e-newsletter is filled with too many travel offers and links to purchase clothing with university logos, recipients may tire of opening new issues and finding familiar advertisements over and over again. If actual news is included in each issue, readers will know the e-newsletter will offer something new each time it arrives. Some segment of the alumni community will probably have an interest in current stories, even if they may seem insignificant to others. The best practice of including news articles should be a priority in publishing e-newsletters.

Many e-newsletters dedicated a significant amount of space to links. The wide variety of links that appeared in e-newsletters makes this topic somewhat unwieldy.

As I compared e-newsletters to each other, I appreciated the fact that by using links some alumni associations offered access to a great deal of information while still keeping their e-newsletter fairly brief. Specific types of links are discussed below.

Many e-newsletters contained links to a webpage that included the complete text of an article. The use of a hyperlink associated with two to three sentences of the article could create enough interest for a reader to click on the link for more information and would make the e-newsletter shorter than it would be if complete articles were included. I would endorse this as a best practice. Sometimes the hyperlink was the headline, and sometimes it followed the text as shown in Figure 5. I preferred two to three sentences accompanying the hyperlink, but research could help to establish reader preferences for the number of sentences to use.

Brionna Dickerson, '09

Finding success after the cheering stops

Brionna Dickerson is the poster child for what you want from a University student-athlete. She had an outstanding career as a member of the Carolina women's basketball team, graduated in four years, and is continuing her education while staying close to the game she loves. Dickerson graduated from Carolina in 2009 with a degree in International Business with a concentration in marketing and completed a minor in Spanish. *Photo: Brionna Dickerson (R) and mother, Sandra Dickerson (L). Read more.*

Figure 5. Example of a hyperlink to read the complete story. Adapted from: *Connected @ My Carolina* by My Carolina Alumni Association, 2010, Retrieved from: <http://www.mycarolina.org/s/842/index.aspx?sid=842&gid=1&pgid=2035&cid=4950&ecid=4950&crd=0&calpgid=606&calcid=2265>

Best practice articles recommended subscribe and unsubscribe links as shown in Figure 6. Many alumni associations have a policy in place that allows their e-newsletter to be sent only to their association members, so a subscribe link is not appropriate for those e-newsletters. For those e-newsletters, it is more appropriate to include a link to join the alumni association. However, for alumni associations that allow the public to subscribe, I endorse subscribe links as a best practice.



Figure 6. Example of links to subscribe and unsubscribe to an e-newsletter. Adapted from: *VT Netletter* by Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2010, Retrieved from: <http://www.vtnewsletter.vt.edu/feb10/index.html>

Unsubscribe links remain important because the distribution lists for alumni association e-newsletters are often drawn from the alumni association membership list rather than from subscriptions. Just because someone wants to be a member of the alumni association does not necessarily mean that they also want to receive e-mail from the alumni association in their inbox. It bears noting that publishers of e-newsletters have a legal responsibility to provide a way for recipients to opt out of future issues, so every e-newsletter should have an unsubscribe link, and this should be considered a best practice. Alumni associations could benefit from research focused on if alumni prefer to be sent e-newsletters automatically or if they would prefer to subscribe. Alumni

associations that limit the distribution of their e-newsletter exclusively to their alumni could study possible positive associations that could be developed based on expanded distribution. Alternately, those alumni associations could explore whether or not there is any interest in an additional version of their e-newsletter that could be sent to individuals outside of the alumni population.

As noted earlier, some e-newsletters seemed to have too many links. The e-newsletter with the most links had 120; most of the available space was dedicated to stand-alone links rather than articles. Authors recommended links to the company homepage as well as links to other websites. The majority of e-newsletters provided links to the alumni association homepage as well as the university homepage as shown in Figure 7. I endorse the best practice of including links to the alumni association and university homepages. These links are valuable because alumni can reasonably expect to find those links in an e-newsletter. If the goal of brevity is taken seriously, editors of alumni e-newsletters will include only a minimal number of carefully chosen links that help to meet the overall goals for the e-newsletter.



Figure 7. Example of a link to university and alumni association homepages. Adapted from: @ *Illinois* by University of Illinois Alumni Association, 2010, Retrieved from: <http://www.uiaa.org/enews/illinois/1002.html>

Best practice guidelines recommended access to archived e-newsletters, but only five e-newsletters provided this feature. Figure 8 shows one type of a link to access archived e-newsletters. An archive provides additional opportunities for alumni to access the information presented in e-newsletters and offers a service by which alumni can refer back to older issues without having to save the information on their own computers. I endorse the best practice of creating an e-newsletter archive and allowing readers access to it. I further recommend that if an archive is provided, it should be updated as frequently as a new issue of the e-newsletter is published, and it should include a significant number of back issues. Alumni associations that provide an archive of e-newsletters could research the way in which the archives are used by the alumni, including frequency of access and age of the most commonly accessed issues. Rates of usage could be studied in relation to the cost of developing and maintaining an archive. Alumni associations that do not provide archives of their e-newsletters may wish to poll their alumni to see if it would be a service they would appreciate and use.

To read previous issues of this and other
IUAA e-mail newsletters, visit
E-mail Newsletters Web site.

Figure 8. Example of a link to e-newsletter archive. Adapted from: *Alumni e-Newsletter* by Indiana University Alumni Association, 2010, Retrieved from: <http://alumni.indiana.edu/publications/enews/index.php?archive=news>

Five e-newsletters included a link to a privacy policy. (See Figure 9.) Authors noted that people are more likely to provide their e-mail address when a privacy policy is available. Because alumni associations request e-mail addresses from members, it would be important to include the full privacy policy on the webpage where alumni give their

private information when joining the alumni association. I do not think it is necessary to provide the complete privacy policy within the e-newsletter, but because subscribers may not remember the privacy policy from when they subscribed or may never have read the privacy policy at all, a link to the privacy policy could be accompanied by a short statement reassuring alumni that their e-mail address will never be shared. I endorse the inclusion of a link to the privacy policy as a best practice.

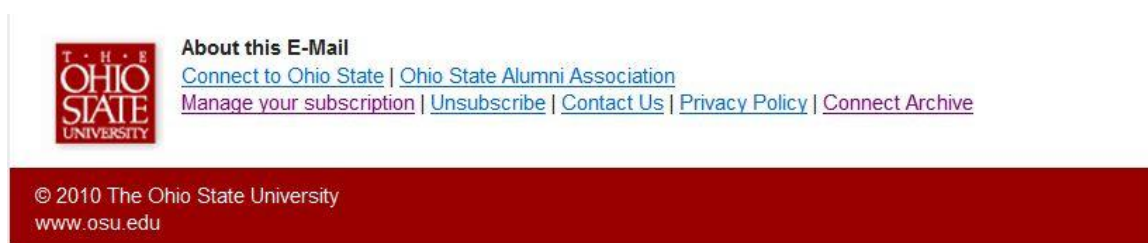


Figure 9. Example of a link to a privacy policy. Adapted from: *Connect: News from Ohio State* by Ohio State University Alumni Association, 2010, Retrieved from: <http://www.osu.edu/connect/archive/0210.php>

Researchers could study which links alumni expect to be able to find in e-newsletters and which links are clicked most often. The discovery of reader expectations and current usage would allow alumni associations to include appropriate links and to avoid the removal of links that readers use frequently.

Additional practices for content

I evaluated the content items of trivia about the university and free items and giveaways, and judged them to be more frivolous than beneficial. Creators of e-newsletters may choose to include these items if they are popular with subscribers, but a serious effort to keep a newsletter brief would probably result in their exclusion. Feedback from readers should be used to inform decisions in these content areas.

I found that 13 e-newsletters included advertisements, but neither the inclusion nor the exclusion of advertisements was noted as a best practice by three or more authors. I think there is a fine line between offering a service to the readers of a publication to point them toward products that may interest them and an overemphasis on selling products.

I found links for purchasing university merchandise (Figure 10) to be very appropriate, and advertisements for alumni travel groups are probably also well received. Too many ads, however, could easily overshadow the content of the e-newsletter. I would recommend a best practice for content that advised including only a small number of advertisements in each issue of the publication.

Marketplace



Surprise your Hoosier fan on Valentine's Day with special gifts just for him!
Shop now ...

Figure 10. Example of advertisement for university merchandise. Adapted from: *Alumni e-Newsletter* by Indiana University Alumni Association, 2010, Retrieved from: <http://alumni.indiana.edu/publications/enews/index.php?archive=news>

A policy should be in place to require that each advertisement is small and unobtrusive so that the e-newsletter will not leave readers with the negative impression


that it is a sales flyer. Policy could dictate that advertisements not be larger than a set size, for instance, no larger than one-tenth of the part of a newsletter expected to be viewed at one time on a monitor. Guidelines could also determine whether or not advertisements for university-branded merchandise would be restricted in the same way as other advertisements. Policies about advertisements could be guided by research in this area. Do alumni respond well to various offers included in the e-newsletter by buying or signing up for the products or services offered? Would they prefer no advertising? Does the inclusion of advertisements affect the impression readers have of the e-newsletter? What do alumni e-newsletters charge for advertising space in their e-newsletters, and does the income have a direct benefit for the e-newsletters?

Two e-newsletters included letters from the editor that introduced articles in the e-newsletters and included links to those articles. The introductory letters did not make a significant contribution to the e-newsletters. The same information could have been conveyed more succinctly within a table of contents. I do not recommend the inclusion of a letter from the editor as a best practice.

I included articles about university research on the list of additional practices. Of the 20 e-newsletters I reviewed, 16 of them were from universities ranked by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2005) as having very high research activity. The remaining four e-newsletters were from universities ranked as having high research activity (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2005).

Only six of the e-newsletters I studied included an article about research like the example shown in Figure 11. Just as e-newsletters included articles about awards won by

university athletes, or information about new buildings on campus, I think it would benefit the university to showcase the research being conducted on campus. Alumni will take pride in their alma mater for innovation and excellence in research. Some alumni might also be in a position to support research in some way if they are made aware of the research and opportunities for involvement or support. I recommend the inclusion of articles about university research as an additional best practice.



GENETICS
Hunt is on for genetic cause of newly discovered retinal disease
 University of Iowa researchers have found the existence of a new, rare, inherited retinal disease. Now the search is on to find the genetic cause, which investigators hope will increase understanding of more common eye diseases. [More](#)

Figure 11. Example of an article about research. Adapted from: *Spectator @ Iowa* by University of Iowa Alumni, 2009, Retrieved from: <http://spectator.uiowa.edu/2010/january/index-1-10.html>

Articles about an alumna or alumnus were found in 15 e-newsletters. These articles are relevant to alumni since they have common ground with the individual highlighted in the article. They can take pride in their university for producing graduates who excel. Although it may be difficult to find an example of excellence for each issue of an e-newsletter, I recommend the inclusion of these articles as a best practice. The first part of an article about an alumnus is shown in Figure 12. Those e-newsletters that include a link through which alumni can submit classnotes could easily use the classnotes to find information that would translate into an interesting alumni profile article.

profile

(Back to top)

Cassius McChesney '81 B. S., '86 M.B.A.

Which groups or activities were you most involved in at ASU? What did you gain from that involvement?

I wasn't involved in many formal organizations as a student. I think that's why I appreciate the Alumni Association so much today.




Figure 12. Example of an article about an alumnus. Adapted from: *ASU Alumni Connection* by Arizona State University Alumni Association, 2010, Retrieved from: <http://alumni.asu.edu/emails/phxnews/feb10/index.html>

Three e-newsletters thanked alumni for their membership, which seemed appropriate and simple to include. This would be especially true for those alumni associations that charge alumni a fee for membership and could be a best practice in that circumstance. Thanking alumni for their membership if they are automatically included on the mailing list because they are graduates of the university would be unnecessary.

Several e-newsletters I studied included articles and links that provided detailed information about special services and benefits available to alumni. I evaluated each service-oriented item and kept in mind the value it may have for alumni, but I weighed that value against the fact that including any or all of these items would increase the length of the e-newsletter. The specific services and benefits offered are evaluated in the following paragraphs.

Some e-newsletters provided coupons or discount codes. This practice would need to be evaluated based on the goal of the e-newsletter. Is merchandising a strong goal of the e-newsletter? Is it more likely that alumni will read the e-newsletter because it contains

coupons or discount codes? Are the coupons and discount codes used by alumni? If the preceding questions could be answered positively, it may be a best practice to include coupons and discount codes. This area could be studied to determine the value of the inclusion of these items. If the use of the included coupons and discount codes is minimal, I would recommend eliminating that content, and I would not consider it a best practice to include it.

Another practice that is somewhat related is a link to or a description of a specific membership benefit. Alumni associations provide a wide variety of benefits to their alumni, and since there are new alumni every semester, it can be assumed that not all alumni know about all of the benefits offered by the alumni association. Highlighting a different membership benefit each month through a brief article or by providing a link to details, as shown in Figure 13, would inform recipients without taking up too much space in an e-newsletter. I would recommend that this type of article be included only for membership benefits applicable to most alumni, rather than for benefits that would be of use only to alumni who still live near the university.

Save at the Claremont Hotel Club & Spa

—CAA Member Benefit—

Celebrate Cal at the Claremont, home of two Cal Sports live radio broadcasts. CAA members save on room rates, spa services, and catering.

[More »](#)

[Cal Sports Radio at the Claremont »](#)

Figure 13. Example of a description and link to a member benefit.. Adapted from: *The Cal Connection* by Cal Alumni Association, 2010, Retrieved from: <http://alumni.berkeley.edu/news/cal-connection-newsletter>

Additional practices for content: Links. I considered the many different links that appeared in the e-newsletters as additional practices. I would recommend evaluating every link based on whether or not readers should have a reasonable expectation of being able to access the linked information from the alumni e-newsletter. Feedback from readers may help to determine what information they would like to be able to access when reading the alumni e-newsletter. I have already stated that the number of links in e-newsletters should be limited to achieve brevity, so links should be carefully evaluated before they are included in an e-newsletter. Researchers could conduct studies to determine reader response to varying numbers of links. Do too many links make an e-newsletter overwhelming or unappealing? Does reader usage of links increase or decrease as more links are added? The links included in the alumni e-newsletters reviewed for this study are discussed in the following paragraphs.

I have already recommended links to the alumni association and university homepages as best practices. Because e-newsletters are received from the alumni association, I would recommend as additional best practices the inclusion of those links that allow alumni to join the alumni association or to update their membership with the alumni association, as shown in Figure 14, or to submit and read class notes. Links to alumni and campus events calendars or listings would be additional best practices as well.

Volume 11, Number 3
February 2010

Your membership makes IU stronger.
Join or renew today!

Welcome to the IU Alumni Association e-Newsletter, sent monthly to IU alumni and friends to keep you connected to IU with news, alumni happenings, special deals, and more.

Contents

- [IU News Roundup](#)
- [Your Alumni Association](#)
- [Calendar Highlights](#)
- [More Campus News and Events](#)
- [Trivia Challenge](#)
- [Feedback & Archive](#)
- [Marketplace](#)

Keep the IUAA informed.
[Update your alumni profile.](#)



Spring enrollment is up for IU on a number of campuses and the university overall.

Figure 14. Examples of links to join the alumni association and to update alumni information. Adapted from: *Alumni e-Newsletter* by Indiana University Alumni Association, 2010, Retrieved from: <http://alumni.indiana.edu/publications/enews/index.php?archive=news>

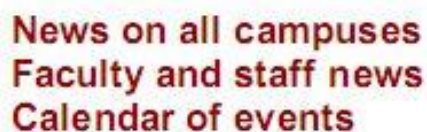
I would not consider including links to athletic events calendars or listings a best practice for an alumni e-newsletter. Instead, this information should be accessible through the university homepage. Links to purchase athletic tickets or university apparel can also be found through other university webpages. Careful consideration of alumni feedback would dictate whether or not certain links should be included in an alumni e-newsletter. Certainly, long-standing links should not be removed from an e-newsletter without careful consideration and research.

As stated earlier, I recommend that alumni associations provide an opportunity for readers to submit feedback about the e-newsletter. Do readers express an interest in viewing the feedback offered by others? Extensive study of types of feedback received could inform decisions about whether or not to make reader comments accessible by all

readers. Studies may also show whether or not the feedback received was more positive or more negative based on whether or not it could be viewed by the whole alumni community. Research may also reveal if it would be a good policy to post online responses to posted feedback. Different wording and formats for requesting feedback could be studied in order to find the most effective ways to elicit feedback.

I recommend as an additional best practice a link to the online version of the e-newsletter. Online versions allow for optimal viewing of the publication by all alumni. Because recipients of the e-newsletter should be expected to want news about the university, I recommend a link to the university news service as an additional best practice. An example of a link to the news service is shown in Figure 15. One e-newsletter included a link to subscribe to university RSS feeds. Researchers could study alumni preferences for links to RSS feeds and the expectation that they would be able to link to RSS feeds from the alumni e-newsletter.

More Campus News and Events

The image shows a vertical list of three text links. The first link is "News on all campuses", the second is "Faculty and staff news", and the third is "Calendar of events". All three links are rendered in a dark red or maroon color. The text is set against a plain white background.

News on all campuses
Faculty and staff news
Calendar of events

Figure 15. Example of a link to the university news service. Adapted from: *Alumni e-Newsletter* by Indiana University Alumni Association, 2010, Retrieved from: <http://alumni.indiana.edu/publications/enews/index.php?archive=news>

Although only two e-newsletters included links to colleges within the university, alumni associations should consider the possibility that some alumni may have more interest in news from the college or department they were involved with than in news

from the university as a whole. I recommend links to colleges and departments as an additional best practice. Alumni newsletters could attempt to meet the needs of different segments of their readership by featuring articles about specific colleges or departments. E-newsletters sent to alumni from college departments rather than from alumni associations could be the basis for a study about alumni contact and involvement. Alumni lists could easily be segmented by areas of study and used to poll alumni about whether they would have an interest in an e-newsletter that was customized for them. Additional study could also show whether colleges and departments had enough news on a regular basis to merit the publication of their own newsletter. The benefit to members of that segment of the alumni community would have to be weighed against the expenditure of resources to produce it.

Seven e-newsletters provided links to other university publications. Some of those were links to the publication's homepage, and others were links to specific articles on a webpage of another publication. I support the links to specific articles that may be of interest to alumni, like the example shown in Figure 16, but based on the goal to keep e-newsletters brief I do not recommend links to the homepages of the other publications. The recommended link to the university news service site should be sufficient to assist alumni to access other university publications.

**From the
Iowa Alumni Magazine**



*MAKING SCIENCE
SCINTILLATING*

With assistance from rural Iowa schoolteachers, a UI researcher aims to engage elementary students in science--and make the U.S. more competitive in the global marketplace. [More](#)

Figure 16. Example of a link to a different university publication. Adapted from: *Spectator @ Iowa* by University of Iowa Alumni, 2009, Retrieved from: <http://spectator.uiowa.edu/2010/january/index-1-10.html>

Three e-newsletters included a link to read a university blog. I would recommend conducting research on university blogs to find out if alumni are interested in reading them. How many alumni demonstrate interest by accessing the blog? Do alumni prefer a blog written by a current student, by faculty, or by a fellow alumnus? Another avenue of research would be to track the level of interest in the blog based on topics covered. Because both e-newsletters and blogs could strengthen ties with alumni, it would be advantageous to research how the two different publications might promote the other. There could also be value in studying whether the two publications compete for readers.

If research showed that a university blog was regularly accessed by alumni, I think it would be valuable to include a link to it in the alumni e-newsletter. If alumni show little interest in a university blog, I would recommend including a link to the blog on the university news service homepage or the alumni association homepage but leaving it out of the alumni e-newsletter.

I expected to see links for alumni to make donations to the university, and 11 e-newsletters included them (Figure 17). Such links should be evaluated in relation to the goals for the e-newsletter. If the purpose of sending the e-newsletter is to get donations from alumni, then this link must be included. If an alumni association wants to avoid looking like it is seeking money, this link need not be included. Researchers could study how often the e-newsletter links to donation pages are used for accessing those pages and whether or not accessing the page results in a donation being made. Research could also be conducted to determine if the wording used in the link affects the frequency of donations or if presenting alumni with various options for making donations affects giving.



Figure 17. Example of a link to make a donation. Adapted from: *Connect: News from Ohio State* by Ohio State University Alumni Association, 2010, Retrieved from: <http://www.osu.edu/connect/archive/0210.php>

Links to social networking sites (Figure 18) were included in my list of additional practices. Whether or not inclusion of these links constitute an additional best practice for an alumni e-newsletter is an topic for additional study. Are alumni who “friend” their university on Facebook able to receive relevant information about the university through that source, and are they then more likely to stay connected to the university? What goals do alumni associations have in mind when they provide these links in the e-newsletter, and is there a way to determine if these goals are being met? Do social networking connections have the potential to eliminate the need for an e-newsletter, to complement an e-newsletter, or are they a duplication of effort?



Figure 18. Example of links to social networking sites. Adapted from: *VT Netletter* by Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2010, Retrieved from: <http://www.vtnetletter.vt.edu/feb10/index.html>

Ten e-newsletters included links for alumni to join other online communities or forums. These links offered contact with other alumni who had similar interests or lived in the same area of the country or the world. If a strong network among alumni benefits the goals for the e-newsletter, this type of link would be more valuable for inclusion than links to other social networking sites. These types of communities or forums would be organized specifically for alumni and could be expected to be found in the alumni

e-newsletter. I would recommend the inclusion of these links, when applicable, as an additional best practice. Community alumni groups could be a valuable asset for recruitment of students and for fundraising.

Because general university content on sites like YouTube and Flickr would not be specifically designed for the interests of alumni, I would not recommend including links to such sites as a best practice. I think it would be more appropriate to include links to these sites on a university webpage rather than in the alumni e-newsletter. Of course, if research reveals that alumni expect to be able to access YouTube and Flickr from the alumni e-newsletter, an alumni association would be wise to include them and may want to consider developing specific alumni content for those types of sites.

Format

All of the e-newsletters were published using between 12K and 83K. Using broadband internet service, I was able to download every e-newsletter I received without any delay at all. Research about alumni internet capabilities could help alumni associations make appropriate decisions regarding e-newsletter size and delivery method. If researching information about bandwidth capability is impractical, e-newsletters could be created following the best practice of using less than 100K and would be considered a manageable size that would be likely to reach most alumni. According to Horrigan (2010) 82 percent of adults who have attended or graduated from college are broadband users at home. Alumni associations who have large numbers of members in rural areas, where broadband is not as common, may consider offering a specialized subscription for their

alumni or a limited run of a print version for their alumni who do not have access to the internet.

Extensive research has already been conducted in regard to the formatting of online documents for scannability. Additional research could be conducted to see how current recommendations apply to and could be implemented in e-newsletters.

Some specific methods of improving scannability were included in this study and are discussed in the following paragraphs.

All 20 e-newsletters were formatted using headlines to introduce articles. Differences in the font size and color of the headlines resulted in e-newsletters looking very different from one another. Research could be conducted to determine how headline size and color affect scannability in e-newsletters. I endorse the well-established use of headlines in e-newsletters as a best practice.

One reason that bulleted lists may not have been used frequently was that the majority of e-newsletters did not contain complete articles but rather provided short summary sentences and paragraphs with links to additional information. When authors prepare complete articles for e-newsletters, the use of bulleted lists would be a best practice to follow, if appropriate for the article.

Editors also need to set an appropriate line length so that readers will not need to scroll horizontally. Adherence to this best practice makes a newsletter not only easier to read but also more professional in appearance. The same is true for making sure that an e-newsletter opens properly in different e-mail programs. I endorse both appropriate line length and testing in multiple e-mail programs as best practices.

Crunching calories



When restaurants provide convenient calorie information, consumers tend to opt for low-cal items, according to an Ohio State study. Turns out ignorance is not bliss: an extra 172 calories a day over a year can pack on 10 pounds.

[Get the lowdown on low-cal.](#)

Eye-wise



Wearing sunblock during the winter is just as important as during the summer. And it's not just your skin that you need to protect. Ohio State researchers point out that UV rays can lead to cataracts, the most common visual impairment in the world.

[Find out what you can do to protect your vision.](#)

Figure 19. Example of effectively used white space in an e-newsletter. Adapted from: *Connect: News from Ohio State* by Ohio State University Alumni Association, 2010, Retrieved from: <http://www.osu.edu/connect/archive/0210.php>



Professional development online: The IU School of Continuing Studies' spring 2010 schedule includes certificate programs in contemporary entrepreneurship and distance education, courses leading to certification in managing in the life sciences and limited cardiac catheterization radiography, courses in supervision and leadership skills, and courses from the Institute for Pension Planning and Management. **More information ...**

Academic credit online: In addition to courses offered by the School of Continuing Studies, IU offers a wide range of online certificates for academic credit. **More information ...**

Hoosier Travelers: Join us to visit two fascinating and vastly different destinations - The Galapagos Islands and Turkey - with two sets of dates for each trip. April 14-24 and Sept. 7-14 for Galapagos, and April 19-May 5 and June 2-13 for Turkey. For more details, call (800) 824-3044 or visit **Hoosier Travelers**.

Free book: The first 1,000 to reserve the new book, *The Price of Progress: IUPUI, the Color Line, and Urban Displacement*, will receive their copies for free. **Reserve your free copy today.**



Do the math. It pays to be a life member of the IU Alumni Association! The cost is less over the long term and it provides you with a lifetime connection to IU. Plus, your member dues are 80 percent tax deductible as a charitable contribution. **Sign up today ...**

Figure 20. Example of minimal white space in an e-newsletter. Adapted from: *Alumni e-Newsletter* by Indiana University Alumni Association, 2010, Retrieved from: <http://alumni.indiana.edu/publications/enews/index.php?archive=news>

All of the e-newsletters used white space to separate articles. Although the authors of best practice articles did not offer specifics about the best way to use white space to make

text scannable, the most effective uses of white space occurred when the space between articles was greater than the space between lines in the articles. The white space in the first example (Figure 19) separates the articles more effectively than the white space in the second example. (Figure 20)

Tables of contents were included in seven e-newsletters. A table of contents on the opening screen of the e-newsletter enhanced scannability by revealing all of the articles contained in the e-newsletter and should be considered a best practice. In addition, the use of hyperlinks in the table of contents allowed readers to easily access articles (Figure 21). Further study on tables of contents could reveal whether their inclusion leads readers to access more or fewer articles in each e-newsletter. While a table of contents may be valuable in presenting all of the e-newsletter articles quickly, it's possible that browsing the entire e-newsletter may result in readers spending more time reading more articles. Reader click-through rates could be studied in connection with the inclusion of tables of contents in e-newsletters.

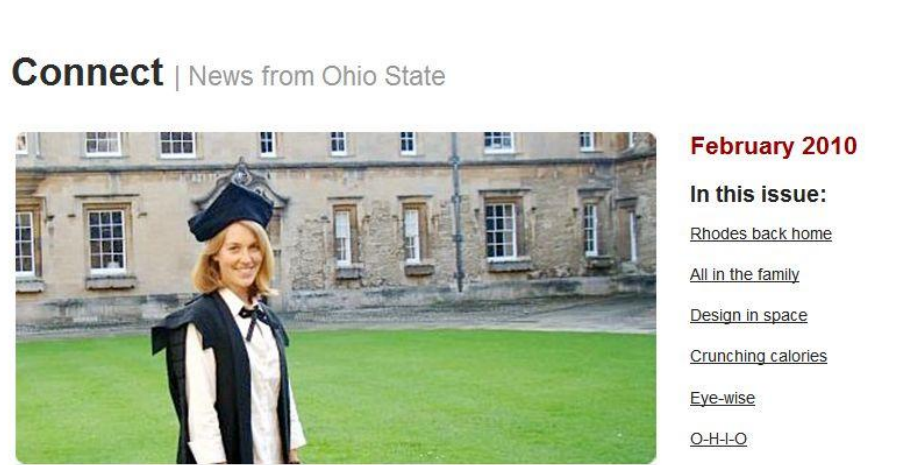


Figure 21. Example of a table of contents with hyperlinks. Adapted from: *Connect: News from Ohio State* by Ohio State University Alumni Association, 2010, Retrieved from: <http://www.osu.edu/connect/archive/0210.php>

Editors choose whether or not they want to follow the best practice of keeping their e-newsletter simple. I thought that the simplest text-only e-newsletters looked less professional than some of the e-newsletters that incorporated more color and images. Although none of the articles I read defined exactly what a simple e-newsletter was, I would recommend that editors strive for a simple design that incorporates some images as well as university colors and logos and that keeps the goal of brevity in mind. This is another area in which feedback from readers could influence editorial choices.

Additional practices for format

As noted in the results, ten e-newsletters were formatted using columns. Two different uses of columns. (Figures 22 and 23) I recommend the use of columns as an additional best practice because they are very helpful for making text scannable. This benefit should be weighed against possible formatting problems, and columns should only be implemented if they can be delivered successfully. Research of a variety of delivery methods may help to determine the best way to retain columns on delivery. Researchers could also study the use of columns to determine reader preferences for them and whether there is a perceived increase in the scannability of text when it is arranged in columns.






	<p>SCIENCE EDUCATION <i>Physiology professor works on national campaign to reinvigorate science education</i> University of Iowa professor Gina Schatteman is playing a key role in Educate to Innovate, a White House initiative designed to reinvigorate science, technology, engineering, and math education in schools and to increase U.S. competitiveness in those fields. More</p>	<p>Old Gold</p> 
	<p>LAW <i>Kansas law dean Gail Agrawal to lead UI College of Law</i> Gail Agrawal, professor and dean of the University of Kansas College of Law, has been named the 17th dean of the University of Iowa College of Law. More</p> <p>Related: Law students to become medical students for class</p>	<p><i>TEMPORARY HOUSING: NOT MUCH, BUT IT'S HOME</i></p> <p>Quonset-hut, barracks, and trailer communities sheltered hundreds of families who came to campus during the post-World War II GI boom. More</p>
	<p>TOP DOCTORS <i>Best Doctors in America recognizes 294 University of Iowa physicians</i> The 2009-10 Best Doctors in America database recognizes 294 physicians from University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics and University of Iowa Children's Hospital. The selected UI physicians comprise nearly 60 percent of the 507 individual Iowa physicians in the nationwide database. More</p>	<p>From the Iowa Alumni Magazine</p> 

Figure 22. Example of columns. Adapted from: *Spectator @ Iowa* by University of Iowa Alumni, 2009, Retrieved from: <http://spectator.uiowa.edu/2010/january/index-1-10.html>



ASU ALUMNI
ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY
connection

february 2010 | top news | marketplace | sports | members only

events

Celebrate ASU tradition and innovation at Founders' Day 2010
 With a history that dates back to 1964, the annual [Founders' Day Awards Dinner](#), slated for Feb. 24, will honor ASU faculty, staff and alumni who are helping resolve the world's most pressing challenges. Join us at the Arizona Biltmore Resort & Spa for an evening that honors Sun Devil tradition and looks forward to a bright future for the university!
[RSVP for Founders' Day](#)

View a [special video invitation to Founders' Day](#) from Alumni Association President Christine Wilkinson

Explore CSI, Supreme Court justice at upcoming PCEP lectures
 The President's Community Enrichment Program (PCEP) will host lectures on two highly discussed topics in the next month.

editor's note

Here we are, Valentine's Day, and love is in the air! At the ASU Alumni Association, we love connection and engagement with fellow Sun Devils. This month's e-newsletter highlights several ways you can show your love for your alma mater, and several ways in which our organization shows alumni how much we appreciate them.

If you're looking for an outlet for your Sun Devil pride, consider participating in the [Sun Devil Advocacy Network](#), which makes the case for support of higher education at the statehouse. You also can attend events sponsored by our [chapter and club network](#). Maybe you'll feel inspired to help the leaders of these important groups organize the next gathering! You also can participate in an [ASU CARES](#) event during March, when ASU supporters will host service-oriented events in their local neighborhoods.

Figure 23. Example of columns. Adapted from: *ASU Alumni Connection* by Arizona State University Alumni Association, 2010, Retrieved from: <http://alumni.asu.edu/emails/phxnews/feb10/index.html>

The second additional practice for format was the use of hyperlinked headlines without accompanying text. The use of these stand-alone hyperlinked headlines resulted in e-newsletters that were quite brief, but the brevity came as a result of excluding information about articles that may have been necessary to capture a reader's attention. I endorsed the best practice of including two to three sentences with each hyperlinked headline, and I prefer that format to the stand-alone headlines.

Longstanding best practices for the format of newsletters, in place well before electronic delivery came into being, should be thoroughly reevaluated to determine if traditional formatting advice for newsletters should be implemented for e-newsletters.

Endorsed best practices

In summary, the best practices recommended by three or more authors that are applicable to alumni association e-newsletters and that I endorse as best practices for such e-newsletters are as follows:

1. Keep the publication brief.
2. Establish a regular publication schedule.
3. Use the university name or e-newsletter name on the e-mail *from* line.
4. Publish articles about a variety of topics. Make sure that a majority of articles include information about alumni or alumni-centered events.
5. Allow readers to provide feedback.
6. Include news articles.
7. Include portions of articles with links to complete stories.
8. Include an unsubscribe option, and a subscribe option when applicable.

9. Provide links to the alumni association homepage and the university homepage.
10. Create, maintain, and offer access to an archive.
11. Provide a link to a privacy policy.
12. Enhance scannability as much as possible by using formatting including
 - a. headlines
 - b. bulleted lists
 - c. white space to clearly separate articles
 - d. appropriate line length so readers don't need to scroll horizontally
 - e. table of contents

Recommended additional best practices

I recommended the following as additional best practices for alumni association e-newsletters:

1. Give the e-newsletter a name other than *newsletter*.
2. Create a policy that allows for the inclusion of minimal advertising.
3. Use a brief and straightforward subject line.
4. Include information about university research.
5. Include profiles of alumni.
6. If a membership fee is charged to belong to the alumni association, include a thank you for membership.
7. In each issue, highlight a benefit or service that is available to all alumni.
8. Include links for the following:
 - a. to join or update alumni association membership

- b. to submit and read class notes
 - c. to access a calendar of upcoming alumni events
 - d. to read complete articles
 - e. to view an online version of the e-newsletter
 - f. to access the university news service
 - g. to access college webpages
 - h. to read specific articles in other publications of the university
 - i. to join an alumni group or forum
9. Keep the e-newsletter size less than 100K, or create a low bandwidth version.
 10. Enhance scannability by using columns.
 11. Use a simple design that incorporates university colors and logos.

Conclusion

E-newsletters can be an effective and inexpensive means of communication. This study examined best practices for e-newsletters found in the literature as well as practices in use by university alumni associations that publish e-newsletters.

My strongest recommendation for the application of the results of this study is that alumni associations should create e-newsletters with their readers in mind. Goals for the e-newsletter should be firmly established so that both the alumni association and the alumni readers can benefit. I endorse the goals, frequently cited in the literature, to keep e-newsletters brief and to include content relevant to the alumni. A brief e-newsletter with content that interests readers is likely to be well-received. Other practices that make an e-newsletter appealing to readers should be implemented and are summarized below.

A brief e-newsletter can be achieved through a variety of methods such as using links to complete articles and additional information on other webpages rather than including complete information within the e-newsletter.

A brief e-newsletter can be optimized by formatting because a reader can spend a shorter time finding content that appeals to them if the e-newsletter has text that is scannable. Scannability can be improved through the use of headlines, bulleted lists, white space to clearly separate articles, appropriate line length so readers don't need to scroll horizontally, tables of contents, and the use of columns.

Alumni associations should make sure that their e-newsletter interests alumni and is of use to them. The name of the e-newsletter is the first thing that may interest a reader, and should be chosen carefully. News should be included so that each e-newsletter

presents fresh information. A variety of articles about alumni and alumni events should be included in each e-newsletter. Updates on university research activity are important as well. Various specific links are recommended to aid alumni in accessing additional university information and resources.

Other practices that make an e-newsletter more likely to be read and that should be implemented are delivering the e-newsletter to inboxes with well chosen information on the *from* line and the subject line and making the e-newsletter visually appealing. Simple designs are recommended.

The reputation of the university and the alumni association can be positively enhanced through an e-newsletter that is published and distributed with professionalism. Alumni associations should pay careful attention to the size and formatting of the e-newsletter to ensure that it is delivered and viewed as intended. A regular distribution schedule should be maintained, privacy policies should be available and should be followed, and an easily-accessible archive should be established and regularly updated. Feedback about the e-newsletter should be sought from readers.

I made recommendations for additional research that could inform the publication and distribution of e-newsletters in order to enhance the relationship between alumni associations and the intended e-newsletter readers.

Those who are responsible for the publication of alumni e-newsletters should evaluate and implement appropriate best practices in order to effectively communicate with their alumni.

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Appendix A

E-mail Request Sent to Alumni Associations

Dear Alumni Association Publications Manager:

I am currently conducting research for my thesis about e-newsletters to fulfill requirements for my master's degree in Technical Communication at Minnesota State University, Mankato. I am interested in receiving the electronic version of your Alumni Newsletter, even though I am not an alumnus of your university. If you are able to include me on your mailing list, I would appreciate it very much. Please let me know if you need additional information from me. My email address for this research is newsletter4paula@gmail.com

Sincerely,

Paula Naumann

Appendix B

University Alumni Associations Contacted

Table B1 University Alumni Associations Contacted

Arizona State University		University of Cincinnati	
Boston University		University of Colorado	
Central Michigan University		University of Connecticut	
Colorado State, Fort Collins		University of Florida, Gainesville	
Florida Atlantic University		University of Georgia	
Florida State University, Tallahassee		University of Houston	
Indiana University		University of Illinois, Urbana Champagne	
Iowa State University		University of Iowa	
Kansas State University		University of Kansas	
Kent State University		University of Kentucky	
Louisiana State University		University of Louisville	
Michigan State University		University of Maryland, College Park	
Middle Tennessee State University		University of Michigan	
New York University		University of Minnesota, Twin Cities	
North Carolina State University		University of Missouri	
Northern Illinois University		University of Nebraska	
Northwestern University		University of Nevada, Las Vegas	
Ohio State University		University of North Texas	
Oklahoma State University		University of Oklahoma	
Oregon State University		University of Oregon	
Penn State University		University of Pittsburgh	
Purdue University		University of South Carolina	
Rutgers University		University of Southern Florida	
San Diego State University		University of Texas	
Strayer University		University of Utah	
Temple University		University of Washington, Seattle	
Texas A&M		University of West Virginia	
Texas Tech University		University of Wisconsin, Madison	
University of Arizona		Virginia Commonwealth University	
University of California, Berkeley		Virginia Tech	
University of California, Los Angeles		Washington State Pullman	
University of Central Florida		Wayne State University	
		West Virginia University	

Appendix C

University Alumni Association E-newsletters Received

Table C1 University Alumni Association E-newsletters Received

Arizona State University			
Colorado State University, Fort Collins			
Florida State University, Tallahassee			
Indiana University			
Iowa State University			
Kansas State University			
Kent State University			
North Carolina State University			
Northern Illinois University			
Ohio State University			
Purdue University			
University of California, Berkeley			
University of Illinois, Urbana Champagne			
University of Iowa			
University of Louisville			
University of Michigan			
University of Oklahoma			
University of South Carolina			
University of Utah			
Virginia Tech			

Appendix D

Best Practices Data

Table D1 Best Practices Heuristic

Goals for e-newsletters

- Brevity
 - # of articles
 - # of words/article
 - # of sentences/article
 - Average # of words/sentence
- 100K size or less

Policies for distribution

- Schedule for publication—regular
- Targeted audience
- Personalize with recipient's name

Content

- Enjoyable, clever, human interest article
- News article
- Relevant (must use word *alumni*) article
- Article about person (not alumni)
- Archive
- No attachments
- Link to contact
- Feedback form
- From* line identifies trusted company or individual
- Links
 - Alumni association homepage
 - University homepage
 - Other university webpage
 - Other sites
 - Complete articles
 - Total links to other pages (# in newsletter)
- Mailing address (federal antispam)
- Privacy policy—stated
- Subject line—attention getter, short
- Subscribe option
- Unsubscribe option (federal antispam law)

Table DI Best Practices Heuristic (continued)

Format

Graphics—provide text descriptions

Headline with summary and link to detail

HTML graphics minimal (# of images?)

Multi-platform compatible

Scannability

 Appropriate line length

 Bullets

 White space to separate articles

 Table of contents

Simple design

Table D2 Occurrences of Best Practices

E-newsletter Number	Goals	Policies	Content			News	Relevant	Topic about person (not alumni)
	Brevity Data—See Appendix E 100K size or less	Schedule for publication—regular Targeted alumni Personalize w recipients name	Enjoyable, clever, human interest					
1	Y-70K	Y Y N	2 of 9	6 of 9	1 of 9	1 of 9		
2	Y-22K	Y Y Y	1 of 15	6 of 15	3 of 15	1 of 15		
3	Y-47K	Y Y N	2 of 10	5 of 10	5 of 10	0 of 10		
4	Y-31K	Y Y N	0 of 5	3 of 5	1 of 5	2 of 5		
5	Y-27k	Y Y Y	0 of 2	2 of 2	1 of 2	0 of 2		
6	Y-51K	Y Y N	0 of 24	10 of 24	11 of 24	0 of 24		
7	Y-53K	Y Y N	0 of 12	10 of 12	0 of 12	2 of 12		
8	Y-12K	Y Y N	0 of 7	1 of 7	3 of 7	0 of 7		
9	Y-33K	Y Y N	0 of 3	0 of 3	3 of 3	0 of 3		
10	Y-27K	Y Y N	0 of 10	4 of 10	2 of 10	1 of 10		
11	Y-32K	Y N N	0 of 5	5 of 5	1 of 5	0 of 5		
12	Y-53K	Y Y N	4 of 19	9 of 19	3 of 19	4 of 19		
13	Y-83K	Y Y Y	0 of 3	0 of 3	3 of 3	0 of 3		
14	Y-40K	Y Y N	0 of 10	2 of 10	4 of 10	0 of 10		
15	Y-14K	Y N N	0 of 8	4 of 8	2 of 8	1 of 8		
16	Y-68K	Y Y N	0 of 22	12 of 22	5 of 22	2 of 22		
17	Y-24K	Y Y N	0 of 4	3 of 4	4 of 4	0 of 4		
18	Y-34K	Y Y Y	0 of 5	1 of 5	5 of 5	0 of 5		
19	Y-17K	Y Y N	0 of 25	14 of 25	10 of 25	0 of 25		
20	Y-70K	Y Y N	0 of 33	29 of 33	4 of 33	1 of 33		

Table D2 Occurrences of Best Practices (continued)

E-newsletter Number	Content, cont.	Archive	NO attachments	Link to contact	Feedback form	From line= trusted company or person	Link to alumni association homepage	Link to other university webpage	Link to other sites	Link to complete story info	Link to University home page	Total number of links in e-newsletter	Mailing address (federal antispam)	Privacy policy--stated	Subject line--attention getter, short	Unsubscribe option
1	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	120	Y	N	N	N	Y
2	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y-10	N	34	Y	N	Y	N	Y
3	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y-10	N	18	Y	N	N	N	Y
4	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y-7	Y	23	N	Y*	N	Y	Y
5	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	19	N	N	N	N	Y
6	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y-5	N	41	N	N	N	N	Y
7	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y-15	Y	49	N	N	N	Y	Y
8	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y-3	Y	38	N	Y*	N	Y	Y
9	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y-2	N	21	Y	N	N	N	Y
10	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y-3	Y	50	N	N	N	N	Y
11	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y-5	Y	10	Y	Y*	N	Y	Y
12	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y-29	N	38	Y	Y*	N	N	N
13	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y-2	N	36	Y	N	N	N	N
14	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y-2	N	15	Y	Y*	N	N	Y
15	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y-8	N	8	N	N	N	N	Y
16	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y-17	Y	54	Y	N	Y	N	Y
17	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y-1	N	15	Y	N	N	N	Y
18	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y-4	N	30	Y	N	N	N	N
19	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y-23	N	58	Y	N	N	Y	Y
20	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	24	Y	N	N	N	Y
*link provided to policy statement																

Table D2 Occurrences of Best Practices (continued)

<i>E-newsletter Number</i>	<i>Format</i>	<i>Graphics - provide text descriptions</i>	<i>Headline, summary and link to detail</i>	<i>HTML graphics - minimal (# of pics)</i>	<i>Multi-platform compatible</i>	<i>Scannable: appropriate line length</i>	<i>scannable: bullets</i>	<i>Scannable: spaces to separate articles</i>	<i>Scannable: table of contents</i>	<i>simple design</i>
1	N	N	Y-9	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	
2	N	Y-6/15	Y-11	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	
3	N	Y-10/10	Y-11	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	
4	N	Y-5/5	Y-6	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	
5	Y*	Y-2/2	Y-6	Y	Y	N	Y+lines	N	Y	
6	Y*	N	Y-2	N	N	N	Y+lines	N	Y	
7	N	Y-12/12	N-15	Y	Y	N	Y+lines	N	Y	
8	N	Y-4/8	Y-9	Y**	Y	N	Y+boxes	Y	Y	
9	N	Y-3/3	Y-8	Y	Y	N	Y+lines	N	Y	
10	Y*	Y-3/10	Y-1	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
11	Y*	Y-5/5	Y-14	Y	Y	N	Y+lines	N	N	
12	Y*	Y-19/19	Y-10	Y	Y	N	Y+lines	N	Y	
13	N	Y-2/3	Y-5	Y	Y	N	Y+boxes	N	Y	
14	N	N	Y-9	Y	Y	N	Y+lines	Y	Y	
15	N/A	Y-8/8	N/A-0	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	
16	Y*	Y-22/22	N-18	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	
17	Y*	Y-2/4	Y-6	Y	Y	N	Y+lines	N	Y	
18	N	Y-4/5	Y-6	N	Y	N	Y+lines	Y	Y	
19	N	Y-22/22	N-14	N	Y	N	Y+lines	Y	N	
20	N	Y-16/32	Y-11	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	
* text description is provided when mouse is rolled over graphics										
** this newsletter was a .jpg file and all articles could be read online only										

Table D3 Summary of Occurrences of Best Practices in E-newsletters

Best Practice	# of Occurrences
Goals	
Brief	See Appendix D
100K size or less	20
Policy	
Schedule for publication--regular	20
Targeted alumni	18
Personalized with recipient's name	3
Content	
Enjoyable, clever, human interest	9 of 242
News	126 of 242
Relevant	73 of 242
Topic about person (not alumni)	15 of 242
Archive	5
Advertisements	13
NO attachments	20
Link to contact (had to use word contact)	7
Feedback form	5
From line= trusted company or individual	20
Link to alumni association homepage	18
Link to other university web page	18
Links to other pages (#)	15
Link to complete story info	17 (146 of 242 articles)
Link to university home page	8
Total number of links in all e-newsletters	701
Mailing address (federal antispam)	13
Privacy policy—link	5
Subject line—attention getter, short	2
Subscribe option	5

Table D3 Summary of Occurrences of Best Practices in E-newsletters (continued)

Best Practice	# of Occurrences
Format	
Graphics—provide text descriptions	7
Headline, summary and link to detail	17
HTML graphics—fewer than 9 (median)	12
Multi-platform compatible	17
Scannable—appropriate line length	18
Scannable—bullets	1
Scannable—spaces to separate articles	20
Scannable—table of contents	8

Appendix E

Brevity Data

Table E1 Brevity data for each e-newsletter

E-newsletter number	# of articles	Average # of words per article	Average # of sentences per article	Average # of words per sentence	# of links included
1	9	140.78	5.67	25.84	1
2	15	46.47	2.73	20.12	11
3	10	36.60	1.70	23.47	10
4	5	43.20	2.20	23.40	5
5	2	75.50	3.50	21.88	2
6	24	84.79	4.79	20.78	22
7	16	40.75	1.44	29.91	15
8	8	30.63	2.00	14.65	8
9	4	84.25	4.25	19.60	4
10	11	63.36	3.00	20.84	7
11	5	50.00	2.00	26.87	5
12	23	45.04	2.43	22.85	23
13	3	56.00	3.00	20.00	3
14	10	75.60	5.20	16.12	9
15	8	23.13	1.63	14.94	8
16	22	25.09	3.00	17.43	22
17	4	109.00	6.00	19.00	3
18	5	60.00	3.00	22.68	5
19	25	18.04	1.24	15.64	25
20	33	48.42	2.85	19.68	20

Table E2 Brevity data averages for all e-newsletters

	# of articles	# of words per article	# of sentences per article	# of words per sentence	# of links included
Average	12	58	3	21	10

Appendix F

Occurrences of Additional Practices

Table F1 Occurrences of additional practices in each newsletter

E-newsletter Number	Advertisements (note number)	Columns	Editor's note	Giveaway or free stuff	Headline links only - no portion of article	Information about research	Link to blog	Link to buy tickets	Link to campus / alumni calendar	Link to college or department webpage	Link to newsletter home page	Link to Facebook	Link to Flickr
1	Y-2	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	
2	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N
3	Y-1	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N
4	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	
5	Y-2	Y	N	Y	Y-8	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N
6	Y-5	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
7	N	Y	N	N	Y-3	Y-1	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N
8	Y-4	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
9	N	N	N	N	Y-9	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N
10	N	N	N	N	N	Y*	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N
11	Y-6	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N
12	N	N	N	N	N	Y-1	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
13	Y-2	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N
14	Y-4	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N
15	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N
16	Y-2	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N
17	Y-2	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N
18	Y-2	N	Y	N	Y-4	Y*	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
19	Y-6	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y
20	Y-1	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N
Totals	13 Ys	10	2	2	4	6	3	7	13	2	5	14	3
*a link was provided to this information													

Table F1 Occurrences of additional practices in each newsletter (continued)

E-newsletter Number	Link to feedback from others	Link to image library of U	Link to join Alumni Association	Link to join an online community/forum	Link to Linked In	Link to make a donation (gift)	Link to news service home page	Link to online version of e-newsletter	Link to other University publications	Link to purchase U merchandise	Link to read class notes	Link to resources or services
1	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
2	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y-1	N	N
3	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y-1	Y	N
4	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N
5	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y-1	N	N
6	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y-1	N	N
7	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
8	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y**	N	Y-1	Y	Y
9	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
10	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y
11	N	N	N	Y	N	Y-2	N	Y	N	Y-2	N	N
12	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y-3	N	N
13	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y
14	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N
15	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N
16	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
17	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
18	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y
19	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y
20	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N
Totals	2	3	9	10	8	11	10	16	7	12	2	7
**this e-newsletter was only available as an on-line document												

Table F1 Occurrences of additional practices in each newsletter (continued)

E-newsletter Number	Link to RSS feed	Link to sports schedule	Link to submit a class note	Link to update Alumni information	Link to YouTube member benefit of the month	coupon or discount code	name other than "newsletter"	profile of alum	stated publication schedule	thank you for your membership	trivia	
1	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	
2	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y
3	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y
4	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N
5	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y*	Y	N	N
6	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
7	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N
8	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N
9	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N
10	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N
11	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N
12	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y*	N	N	N
13	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y*	N	N	N
14	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
15	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
16	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y*	N	Y	Y	N	N	N
17	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N
18	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	N
19	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N
20	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
Totals	2	6	5	12	6	3	4	15	15	6	3	2
*a link was provided to this information												