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USE OF ONLINE TECHNOLOGIES BY
HIGHER EDUCATION PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS AND
PRACTITIONERS' PERCEIVED PREFERENCE
FOR THEIR USE BY THEIR INSTITUTIONS' AUDIENCES

By
Mary Elizabeth Erwin Hegel

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
June 10, 2004

Approved by

Date Approved 6-16-04

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ABSTRACT

MARY ELIZABETH ERWIN HEGEL

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2004

THESIS ADVISOR: ANTHONY FULGINITI, APR, CORPORATE PUBLIC
RELATIONS, FELLOW, PRSA

MASTER OF ARTS IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between the use of online technologies by university public relations specialists, and the PR professional's perceived preference for their use by media, internal and external audiences. The research also looked at other aspects of online technology use by university practitioners such as Web site content and emerging technologies.

The researcher collected primary data through a cross-sectional, self-administered questionnaire, designed for this study. The author gathered information for the survey from a literature review of Rowan University databases, scholarly journals, books and Internet searches. The survey contained Likert scale type questions, yes/no questions, and a comment section after each question. The researcher mailed questionnaires to public relations directors of 49 public colleges and universities, and 28 practitioners responded.

The research supported the hypothesis that there is a relationship between the use of online technologies and the practitioners' perceived preference of certain audiences. For internal audiences, 71% of practitioners use online technologies, and 70% perceive internal audiences prefer them. For external audiences, 31% of practitioners use online technologies, and 40% perceive the external audiences prefer them. For media, 49% of practitioners use online technologies, and 54% perceive media prefer them.

MINI-ABSTRACT

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Chapter 1

Importance of the Problem

New innovations in communication have enhanced, and in some ways hindered, the practice of public relations. Granat (2002) says, “The Internet has effected changes on numerous industries in recent years...Perhaps no industry has been changed so profoundly, however, as the news media and by extension, its tenuous ally – the public relations industry.” Some practitioners have whole-heartedly embraced the new communication technologies, while others persist with traditional ways. Ryan (2003) reports in his survey of non-profit and for-profit public relations practitioners, that “nearly 92% of respondents ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that their organizations’ Web sites support public relations objectives; and nearly 80% ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that they can do their jobs better because of Web sites.”

Public relations changed in the early 1990s. The country underwent a cultural communication transformation. The Internet became widely used by everyone from kids to grandmas, from mom and pop stores to Fortune 500 organizations. Of the people using e-mail, 97% stated, “e-mail had improved their lives,” according a 2001 Gallup Poll (Saxton, 2001).

When Bill Clinton became president in January 1993, fewer than a thousand pages were publicly available on the Internet. Its growth since then has been quite extraordinary; the uptake of the Internet and the PC has been faster than any other technology in history. It took nearly 50 years for half of all households in the United States to have a telephone and 90 years for half of all manufacturing industries to use electricity. It has taken fewer than eight years since the launch of the Web for half of all households in the United States to have a PC (Saxton, 2001).

The public relations industry and others who rely on communication were eager to jump on the Internet bandwagon. According to Ryan's (2003) research, "21st century practitioners need Internet skills in the same way a cougar needs claws." Online technologies have "created both opportunity and challenges for the public relations industry" (Granat, 2002).

Though e-mail is considered the most cost-effective development in online technologies (Hart, 2002), the development has also made the practitioners' work more frantic. Hart (2002) states that "people expect a quick answer – 36-hour turnaround or faster – to their e-mails." And Ryan (2003) says that not keeping current with e-mails and Web sites will cause the public to form a negative view of the organization.

Audiences now have more choices in how they receive information. On a positive note, practitioners have an "unlimited array of options when it comes to spreading the word on their company" (Granat, 2002). On the other hand, news media no longer depend on practitioners for news, making it more difficult to control the organization's message and the negative press (Granat, 2002).

Online technology enables organizations to disseminate information quickly and instantaneously. They enjoy free-flowing, two-way communication with their audience. PR practitioners now bypass traditional gatekeepers to deliver unfiltered information directly to customers.

The author studied the effect of online technologies on practitioner performance of certain traditional public relations activities. Practitioners must know contemporary industry trends and new technologies. This study identifies new, upcoming technologies

practitioners intend to integrate into their organizations' communication efforts (such as Web logs).

This study explores three traditional areas (media relations, internal relations, and external relations) and their relationship to emerging technologies.

Problem Statement

This study explores the extent to which college public relations practitioners integrate online technology with traditional public relations techniques in media, internal, and external relations. Online techniques for media relations form quite an extensive list. Several online tools that practitioners use to communicate media, internal and external audiences are included in Table 1 (Momorella and Woodall, 2003).

The organization's Web site should have universal formatting, quick loading capabilities, and be printer friendly. In addition, the Web site should include the information shown in Table 1 for the press (Levine, 2003).

The study researches how colleges communicate with their internal audiences, mainly staff, faculty and students. According to Gruning and Hunt (1984), people inside an organization are a primary source of information for external audience. Internal audiences must have access to current and accurate information about their organization. This information helps employees see beyond their particular department to better appreciate the campus's overall mission (Gruning and Hunt, 1984).

Table 1

Audience	Examples	Techniques
Media	Newspapers, radio, television reporters and editors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Electronic news releases• Advanced searches• Electronic distribution of photographs, audio, video and graphics• Online chats and video conferencing• PR information on the web page (Such as PR contact information, history of college, archived news, crisis information, financial information, e-mail list information)
Internal	Staff, faculty, students, administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online or e-mailed employee newsletters (which can include employee profiles, achievements and recognition)• Online bulletin boards and chat rooms for employees and students to discuss campus events• Online event communication which can include campus news, lectures or special events for the week• Electronic feedback surveys to gauge employee and student satisfaction, communicate concerns to management)• Online employee information such as benefits, training and job openings
External	Community, alumni, parents, potential students, government	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online fundraising through email or web site forms• Online crisis communication statements or e-mailed statements sent to targeted audiences (alumni, parents and donors)• Online campus and e-mailed admissions and campus information• Monitoring of online information circulating about the college (public opinion circulating on e-mail, newsgroups and bulletin boards)

Lastly, this study explores the use of online technologies and communication with external audiences, such as the community, alumni, parents, potential students, and the government. Online techniques for external audiences are displayed in Table 1.

Delimitation

This study deals with only public relations practitioners of four-year, public colleges with enrollments of 5,000 to 10,000 in the following states: Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont. The list of colleges was

developed using the database available at *US News and World Report* (America, 2003).

The author distributed questionnaires to the public relations officers at these 49 colleges.

Purpose

This study examines how higher education public relations practitioners perform traditional communication functions using online technologies. The study hypothesizes that university public relations specialists employ online technologies more often with media relations, than with any other relationship, because practitioners perceive that media prefer them to use them. Other audiences (internal and external) are perceived (by practitioners) to not demand online technologies as often. University public relations specialists use online technologies when they sense their audiences want them.

Procedure

The author collected data from online databases, Rowan University Library, public relations books, interviews and surveys with public relations and Internet public relations experts, scholarly journals, databases, speeches, newspapers, magazine articles, Web-based search engines, industry associations Web sites, dissertations and theses, statistics, and polls. A complete list appears in the sources.

Terminology

Blog	An online journal, typically updated daily. Slang term for Web log.
Chat rooms	Internet pages where correspondents can message one another, usually in real time.
Computer-mediated communication (CMC)	Communication facilitated by computers such as e-mail, chat and video-conferencing.
Domain name	A unique name that identifies a web site. http://www.rowan.edu is an example of a domain name.

Email	Electronic Mail. Correspondence from an on-line person or group to another person or group through the Internet.
External audience	Stakeholders in an organization, but not considered part of or “in” the organization.
Gatekeeper	Media reporting news. Media decides and filters what, when and how news is reported to the public.
HTML	HyperText Mark-up Language, code used by Internet servers to translate documents.
Intranet	An organization’s computer network for internal audiences.
Internal audience	People that are part of or “in” an organization.
Internet browser	Software used to connect to the Internet.
Internet	A group of inter-connected computer networks.
Media relations	Interaction of news reporters and editors with an organization.
Newsgroups	Discussions on web pages between groups of people with similar interests.
Online newsroom	Web page set up specifically for the media to access information about an organization. Some elements include news releases, photos, videos, mission statement, and crisis communication.
Online technologies	Communication tools transferred through the Internet, such as email, web pages, chat rooms and newsgroups.
Online	Connected to the Internet.
RSS Feeds	“Really simple syndication”. Can help keep track of changes in blogs.
Web page	A file on the Internet with text, photos, video, sound or other elements.
Web site	A collection of related web pages interconnected with links, usually under the same domain name.

**Weblog or Blog
Wikis**

An online diary where people can post messages.
Online diaries in which anyone can edit any page with simple formatting commands. Usually serious, knowledge rich, and collaborative. (WikiWikiWeb – wiki wiki is “quick” in Hawaiian)

Wimba

Online voice-activated forums.

World Wide Web

Documents containing text, graphics, video and/or sound, written in HTML and interconnected by Internet servers.

Chapter 2

Overview of Literature

What was studied?

A comprehensive literature review was conducted on the topic of online public relations practices. Sources explored extensively included the Rowan University online databases, Google search engine, The Public Relations Society of America Web site, Council for Advancement and Support of Education Web site, Amazon.com Web site, and Rowan University Library.

A search for “Internet Public Relations” on the Amazon.com Web site yielded five relevant books, which were purchased for this study. Online databases and Web sites were searched using such phrases as “online public relations,” “wired public relations,” “Internet public relations,” “university relations,” “nonprofit public relations,” “Web site criteria,” “media relations,” “employee relations,” “online newsroom,” and “e-mail public relations.”

Internet sites such as PR Insight, Online Public Relations, ePublic Relations, CyberJournalist.net, Internet PR Guide, and PRBytes provided overall information on public relations and online techniques. Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) Web site provided a more focused insight into the use of online tools by university public relations practitioners. Rowan University databases, such as Science Direct and ProQuest provided scholarly information on the subject.

Topics studied in this literature review include a brief history of communication technology and the Internet, online public relations techniques, and frequency of use of

online techniques by higher education public relations practitioners especially in the areas of internal, external and media relations.

The author found abundant literature on the subject of online public relations. Specific information about the use of online technologies by practitioners in the higher education field was more difficult to find, but the CASE Web site contained many articles on that subject.

For information about the current state of online technologies, the author focused on the years 2000 to 2004. When researching the history of communication technologies, the author studied earlier literature.

Most experts agree that online communications give practitioners a tool to reach their audiences in a richer, more individualized manner. Some experts feel the online technologies, such as e-mail, are less personal, and prevent the practitioner from establishing important relationships with the media that some feel are very important.

A copious amount of information exists about PR online technologies, but only some information about the use of it by higher education practitioners. The author did not find literature on the link between the preferences of higher education audiences and the use of online technology by the higher education practitioners. This study will present new information on this subject.

Communication Over Distances

Starting with messengers in ancient times up to the modern day Internet, humans feel the need to communicate over distances. It took 10 days to deliver a letter across the country in 1860, and today the same message can be delivered instantaneously over the

Internet. The following section looks at how far humans have come in their quest to communicate, and its impact on the practice of public relations.

Ancient Methods

Throughout history, humans have developed methods to communicate over distances. In ancient times, runners or human messengers were used to relay secret messages by kings and emperors.

We have observed still another device of Cyrus' (King of Persia, circa 530 BC) for coping with the magnitude of his empire; by means of this institution he would speedily discover the condition of affairs, no matter how far distant they might be from him: he experimented to find out how great a distance a horse could cover in a day when ridden hard, but not so hard as to break down, and then he erected post-stations at just such distances and equipped them with horses, and men to take care of them; at each one of the stations he had the proper official appointed to receive the horses and riders and send on fresh ones. They say, moreover, that sometimes this express does not stop all night, but the night-messengers succeed the day messengers in relays, and when this is the case, this express, some say, gets over ground faster than the cranes." Xenophon (430-355 BC) in *Cyropaedia* (Katz 1997).

In 1280 AD, Kublai Khan used a relay system of messengers on horseback that covered 250 to 300 miles per day. From March 1860 to October 1861 the Pony Express could deliver mail from Missouri to California in 10 days. People also used pigeons, smoke signals, heliographs (flashing the sun's rays using mirrors), and flags to transmit messages over distances.

Table 2

Long Distance Communications Methods (Katz, 1997).

Method	First Recorded Use		Last Recorded Use	
Pigeons	Egypt	2900 BC	California	AD 1981
Runner/Couriers	Egypt	1928 BC	Pony Express	AD 1860
Beacons/Torches	Troy	1184 BC	England	AD 1588
Calling Posts	Persia	400 BC	Germany	AD 1796
Heliographs	Greece	400 BC	Arizona	AD 1886
Flags	Greece	400 BC	Maritime	Used today

Electronic Communication

New communications technologies impacted the public relations profession with every new invention. Table 2 shows a brief outline of communication technology since the invention of the telegram.

Table 3

Year	Invention
1794	Telegram
1876	Alexander Graham Bell patents the electric telephone.
1900	Guglielmo Marconi receives a patent for the radio (or the wireless).
1923	The television or iconoscope (cathode-ray tube) invented by Vladimir Kosma Zworykin
1966	Xerox invents the Telecopier - the first successful fax machine.
1969	ARPANET - the first Internet started.
1976	Apple I home computer invented.
1979	First cellular phone communication network started in Japan.

Telegraph

The telegraph (“far writing” in Greek), invented by Frenchman Claude Chappe, was the “first optical digital data network” (Pavlik, 1996). The telegraph is a system that converts a coded message into an electric impulse and then sends it to a receiver. In 1794, the first telegraph line was opened, and by 1800, telegraph stations connected France. By 1814, the system extended to Italy and Belgium.

Samuel Morse, an American painter, invented Morse Code in 1835. Morse Code sent messages over telegraph lines via dashes dots, and short and long flashes. Amos Kendall, President Andrew Jackson’s press secretary, was Morse’s business manager. In his role as Jackson’s “pollster, counselor, ghostwriter and publicist,” Kendall served as one of the first political public relations practitioners (Cutlip, 1999). After Jackson’s

term, Kendall served as Postmaster where he met Morse, and his colleagues, who were developing inventions to improve the telegraph.

Some of the first, and best customers of the telegraph were newspapers. A group of newspapers formed the Associated Press Association to reduce the cost of obtaining information through telegraph.

The first telegraph customers were lottery sharps and stockbrokers who obtained advance secret knowledge, of lottery numbers or the Philadelphia stock exchange, to gain advantage. However, news organizations were soon the best customers. Dispatches from the Mexican War were especially important, the earliest examples of instant news from the fronts. Newspapers formed associations to share intelligence, and obtained special volume telegraph rates. Six New York newspapers cooperated by forming the Associated Press for sharing the cost of news received by telegraph. It was much better than the postal service, which still used riders and saddlebags for most routes. Presidential annual messages were notable traffic: the first was President Polk's, in December 1848. It was attempted to send this message to many points by a single manipulation, and this almost succeeded, but a bitter storm made some relaying of the long message necessary. Soon merchants and businessmen found the wires essential for price reports, making deals and ordering (Calvert 2003).

Telephone and Fax

The first newspaper article reported by telephone contained information about Alexander Graham Bell's exhibit of his new invention, the telephone. The article appeared in the Boston Globe, on February 13, 1877, and contained the heading "Sent by Telephone." Theodore N. Vail, an early proponent of the telephone system in the United States, was also an early public relations pioneer. He recognized that the success of the telephone depended on its public acceptance.

The first successful facsimile (fax) machine was invented in 1966, and took six minutes to transmit. By the 1980s many businesses were using fax machines regularly. "In the 1980s the fax machine was the technology breakthrough that allowed public relations professionals to get their messages out immediately. Press releases and media

advisories could be sent to top media contacts for timely follow-up, while a standard press release mailing through the U.S. Postal Service reached the masses. The fax was, and remains, a simple medium that helped public relations professionals garner quick results” (Middleberg, 2001).

Radio and Television

Both the telegraph and the telephone transformed communications in the 1800s, and at the close of the century radio was poised to start a third revolution. Some of the earliest speculation about radio's future centered on the almost mystical idea of portable individual communication (United, 2004).

By 1912, radio transmitters were used on all passenger ships, including the famous Titanic. In the early 1900s amateur “ham” radio enthusiasts experimented with building their own radio equipment. During World War I, in 1917, the national government shut down all radio stations. In 1922, radio broadcasting became popular with many books and articles published especially for radio broadcast (United, 2004).

Early radio brought in social change in corporate and public communications...radio provided more intimate and direct communication. Radio greatly enhanced the marketing, promotional, advertising and public relations abilities of companies. Corporations used the radio to clear up some public misunderstanding of their mission, operations and place in society (Ihator, 2001).

In 1927, a speech by Herbert Hoover, Secretary of Commerce, was transmitted on a 2” X 3” television screen, from Washington D.C. to New York City. Bell Telephone and AT &T sponsored the demonstration, sent over wire and radio circuits. During World War II all production of televisions was halted, but after the war, production began in earnest. From 1948 to 1949, televisions sales skyrocketed in the United States (Television, 2001). By 1963, television surpassed newspapers as American’s primary source for news.

A medium that permits the use of the printed word, spoken word, pictures in motion, color, music, animation and sound effects – all blended into one message-possesses immeasurable potency....This medium has greatly altered national election campaigns and has diminished the role of political parties...Events made large by TV shape public opinion worldwide....Television greatly heightens citizen awareness of the conduct of public institutions and emphasizes the impersonal, interdependent nature of the environment (Cutlip, 2000)

Computers

The uptake of the Internet and the PC has been faster than any other technology in history. It took nearly 50 years for half of all households in the USA to have a telephone, and 90 years for half of all manufacturing industries to use electricity. It has taken less than eight years since the launch of the Web for half of all households in the USA to have a PC (Saxton, 2001).

In 1957 the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, and the United States government reacted by forming the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA), a branch of the United States Department of Defense. The purpose of the ARPA was to research science and technology. In the early sixties, scientists Leonard Kleinrock, J.C.R. Licklider and Paul Baran wrote papers on computer communication networks and soon the ARPA began discussions on “cooperative network of time-sharing computers” (Zakon, 2004). J.C.R. Licklider took over the reigns of the ARPA in 1962, and the focus of the organization was to explore the future of computer technology.

"Lick was among the first to perceive the spirit of community created among the users of the first time-sharing systems... In pointing out the community phenomena created, in part, by the sharing of resources in one timesharing system, Lick made it easy to think about interconnecting the communities, the interconnection of interactive, on-line communities of people, ..."

The "spirit of community" was related to Lick's interest in having computers help people communicate with other people (Licklider, and Robert Taylor, "The Computer as a Communication Device"). Licklider's vision of an "intergalactic network" connecting people represented an important conceptual shift in computer science. This vision was also an important beginning to the ARPANET. After the ARPANET was up and running, the computer scientists using it realized that assisting human communication was the most fundamental advance that the ARPANET made possible (Hauben).

ARPANET was a large network of computers created by the ARPA. In 1969, the first organizations linked by ARPANET were UCLA, Stanford Research Center, University of California Santa Barbara, and University of Utah. By 1971 there were 23 network hosts, most of them at universities such as MIT, Harvard and Stanford. E-mail and computer chats were developed in 1972. In 1973 computer connections to the University of London initiated the first international computer link, and Bob Kahn started researching the “Internet.” Table 4 outlines the Internet timeline (Zakon, 2004).

Table 4

Year	Event
1957	Soviet Union launched Sputnik - US establishes the ARPA to research science and technology.
1962	J.C.R. Licklider leads the ARPA. He begins the push towards establishing computer communication networks.
1969	ARPANET initiates the first network to link computers over distances (links UCLA, Stanford Research Center, University of California and University of Utah).
1972	E-mail is introduced.
1973	The first international computer link (University of London) is formed. Bob Kahn introduces the “Internet.”
1984	Domain names, newsgroups and desktops introduced.
1991	World Wide Web developed by Tim Berners-Lee.
1994	Shopping malls, radio stations and the United States government are on the Internet.
1995	Prodigy, CompuServe and AOL begin offering Internet service. There are 2,300 Web sites.
2003	Web sites number 45,000,000.

HISTORY OF ONLINE PUBLIC RELATIONS

Early Public Relations

Communicating to sway opinions began in early in the history of man.

Archeologists discovered a farming techniques flyer from 1800 BC in Iraq. The ancient

Romans, Greeks and Indians all used various forms of propaganda to influence the public. American public relations, however, began with a fund raising campaign for Harvard College in 1643. It also created a fundraising brochure, which is now standard in fund raising campaigns (Cutlip, 1999).

To garner public support for the American Revolution, the founding fathers kicked off the first political campaign in America. "They used pen, platform, pulpit, staged events, symbols, news tips and political organization in an imaginative, unrelenting way" (Cutlip, 1999 p 103). Another important public relations breakthrough in this era were the 85 Federalist Papers written by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay in 1787 and 1788. These letters, published by newspapers throughout America, pushed for ratification of the Constitution. "In parrying blows against and enlisting support for the Constitution, the authors of the Federalist did the best job of public relations known to history" (Broadus Mitchell as cited in Cutlip, 1999, 104).

In the early 1800s, public literacy increased, and people became interested in politics. It became evident that politicians needed the public's support to be elected for office. President Andrew Jackson (1829-1837) was not well educated, nor a prolific speaker or writer. Amos Kendall assumed the role of press secretary for Andrew Jackson and served as "pollster, counselor, ghostwriter and publicist." (Cutlip, 1999). Kendall became a key advisor to Jackson, and was one of the first political public relations practitioners.

Businesses during this era also began to influence public opinion through advertisements in the press. Businesses used public relations techniques when government or labor threatened their powers. Modern day public relations began in the

early 1900s. Cutlip outlines six periods of public relations development. The first period is the Seedbed Era (1900-1917) in which bad business practices were revealed (muckraking) and politicians such as Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson encouraged political changes.

The World War I Period (1917-1919) saw the government using publicity to raise money and support for the war. The Booming Twenties Era (1919 - 1929) saw businesses and government use successful public relations techniques, learned during the war, to promote new technologies and products. During the Roosevelt Era and World War II (1930 - 1945), Louis McHenry Howe was Franklin Roosevelt's public relations strategist in garnering public support for his "New Deal." During this time, the Office of War Information (OWI), and the War Advertising Counsel distributed information and gained public money and support for World War II. About 75,000 people were educated in the practice of public relations.

The Postwar Boom (1945-1965) saw more businesses, schools and government agencies relying on public relations counsel in dealing with their publics. Colleges started to offer courses in public relations, and the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) was established. The Global Information Age (1965-present) saw a boom in new communication technologies, such as computers and telecommunications, which made the practice of public relations a global endeavor. It also introduced new stresses for the practitioner in keeping current with new technologies (Cutlip, 1999, p 101-136).

Public Relations in the 1990s

“Nothing has so radically and fundamentally changed the way public relations professionals approach their tasks as has the Internet” (Middleberg, 2001).
“The Internet represents one of the most significant tools ever employed in the practice of public relations” (Holtz, 2002).

(By promoting on the Internet) "...we are making a clear statement that we're up-to-date, state-of-the-art, and in the current moment...If we are on the Internet, we are part of what is going on *now*" (Levine, 2001).

In the early 1990s, Don Middleburg extolled the virtues of Internet to the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). He told practitioners who didn't embrace the new medium, "over the next few years you will be guilty of public relations incompetence" (Middleberg, 2001). Though many experts concur that communication via the Internet greatly influenced the public relations industry in the 1990s, practitioners initially were reluctant to embrace the new technology. Many felt it was the most "overhyped, misused, and abused medium" to permeate society (Middleburg, 2001). Practitioners did not believe that journalists would use the Internet, so they did not see it as important to the industry.

In the mid 1990s, online rumors began circulating about companies such as Intel, Ford and Cigna. Organizations realized they must monitor online public opinion and rumors before they got out of control. Thomas W. Hoog of Hill & Knowlton commented on this in the 2001 Public Relations Strategist article, "Future perfect? Agency leaders reflect on the 1990s and beyond":

What the 1990s brought with it was a new medium that is the medium of the Internet. A technology, which is less controllable and much more capable of being manipulated, if you will. If you look at current research, one of the greatest concerns expressed by CEOs is the damage that can be caused to reputation by misuse of the Internet. It has become a tool for positive force, but it has the potential to be a tool of destruction as well. How we deal with the Internet will be critical to our profession, as we move forward beyond 2001 (Howard, 2001).

Journalist started using the Internet for research, and practitioners started to look for ways to practice online PR. Some practitioners used e-mail, online press releases and Web sites to promote their organizations. Soon SPAM (e-mail blasted to many addresses

at once) became a problem for reporters, and the problems of slow connections along the hundreds of e-mails a day (through SPAM), doused the Internet fervor.

Around 1996, large organizations such as Bell Atlantic, began investing in Web pages and Internet communications. New online retail companies emerged and threatened the customer base of older, more established organizations. Online technology became a necessary communication tool, and practitioners began to see its importance (Middleberg, 2001).

In 2003, Ryan reports that the debate over the usefulness of online tools for public relations is over. His research indicated that “public relations practitioners, at least those who are members of the Public Relations Society of America, have abandoned the debate about whether the World Wide Web is useful in public relations, whether practitioners need technical skills and whether they are acquiring them, It is; they do; and they are, just as Grupp, Ryan and Gower and Cho report” (Ryan, 2003).

Early Studies and Expectations

In his 1994 thesis, “You Can’t Get Here From There,” Norman E. Higgins explored the effect of the Internet or “information superhighway,” on the public relations industry.

Journalists, according to Higgins, were very concerned about the impact of the Internet, asking questions about the future of television news, First Amendment rights and diversity of content.

The customizing of news by readers, and the “loss of the random story,” was a concern of John Walston, editor of the Wilmington News Journal. “One of the great things about a newspaper,” he said, “is to be reading through it and all of the sudden

come upon a story that you weren't looking for and didn't know was there. And it means something to your life. That loss of what I call the random story is my main problem with the information highway" (John Walston as quoted by Higgins, 1994).

Ross Irvine, president of ePublic Relations, Ltd, feels that the PR industry didn't embrace the new technologies, like other sectors of society, because they focus more using the surface tools, rather than exploring the underlying power of the medium.

The industry failed to study and appreciate the depth and importance of the Internet. Instead, it gave superficial attention to the Internet and adopted the approach that the Internet simply speeds up communications and makes a lot more information available. It failed to appreciate the power of the Internet to build "communities" and to encourage local, national and global activism, a fact that was immediately apparent to activists (Irvine, 2001).

Online Technology Audience

Traditionally, practitioners sent information about their organization out and audiences received it. The message was structured to be constant for all audiences. Internet communication is different. It is multidirectional and cuts across all cultural boundaries. To achieve its communication goals, an organization must identify all its audiences, and provide multifaceted communication techniques to reach them. Some techniques include chat rooms, e-mailing, video and searches

Narrowcast versus Broadcasting

Higgins quoted several experts in the field who predicted practitioners not only will have to learn the new technologies, but also a new way of practicing PR. In his research, Higgins found experts who predicted that the Internet would bring more control to the consumer, and force the public relations industry to use 'push' rather than 'pull' PR techniques. Higgins quoted Scott Tilden's prediction,

“The information superhighway will switch the nation from a ‘push’ to a ‘pull’ society. That is—public relations (like marketing) won’t be so much oriented toward pushing an abbreviated, inverted-pyramid type story as it will be toward making sure that a complete, ‘educational’ information package is ready for distribution at whatever hours of the day a prospect may be ready to retrieve it. The information superhighway will make everyone equal in this regard as to access as receiver or transmitter. The first change for public relations will be to be able to prepare these types of presentations. The second change will be the ability to generate interest on the part of the prospects to actually seek out these information packets. There will be increasing media sophistication on the part of the recipient so that ‘good enough’ won’t be good enough for an audience accustomed to high production values” (Scott Tilden as quoted by Higgins, 1994).

Matt Haig, in his book *ePR*, explains how the Internet fundamentally changed the PR industry.

The Internet’s interactivity enables people to customize information to their own specific needs. One hundred Internet users could visit the same Web site and come away with completely different information. The paradox of the Internet, therefore, is that it allows you to communicate with a lot of people on a on-to-one level. Whereas traditional media **broadcasts** the same message to a mass audience, the Internet **narrowcasts** messages to individual groups within the same audience. You can therefore build up thousands of one-to-one relationships simultaneously. In a world of niche markets and ever-smaller population segments, the Internet therefore has the potential to become the perfect communication tool enabling you to target “audiences of one” (Haig, 2001).

Web pages – Public Relations or MIS department?

Higgins quoted a 1991 report from the PRSA, that “if public relations professionals don’t keep up with technology, parts of the job will be taken over by data processing executives.” (PRSA as quoted by Higgins, 1994). In a 2000 Public Relations Strategist article, Grupp said public relations department should have control of an organization’s Web page.

“The need for public relations professionals to step up to the challenges of e-communications is urgent... Online strategic relationship management is the major new role for public relations in the connected economy, and it is the public relation practioner’s greatest opportunity... It’s about developing strategic relationships using the right information so that you can begin to influence the

points of view of existing and potential customers, and then feed that learning back into the business plan. This is how the Web creates a new value dimension for public relations... We in public relations also have a stewardship role for the content of information on the Internet that otherwise is just an unfiltered commodity. We have a responsibility for managing and protecting the corporate brand” (Margaritis, 2000).

In same article, William G.Margaritis counterpoints that the Web site should be a collaboration between departments.

Key departments – including communications, sales, marketing, and IT – must unite forces to maximize the utility of the Web site and align its content and functionality with the business objectives. Sales and marketing need to provide their expertise for products sold online because e-commerce products demand different sales forecasting, product marketing, and consumer/business developing and maintaining Web site applications, and must be able to support all of the “back-end” order processing and information flow that makes e-commerce possible (Margaritis, 2000).

Ryan said that at one time practitioners were worried they would have to be in charge of Web pages, and now they worry about other departments in have taken over what should be a public relations role. Other departments, such as marketing and information systems, have different attitudes about communication and may take a Web page in a direction not consistent with public relations goals.

The literature about encroachment reveals the existence of the threats to public relations departments from other departments that may be more powerful (have more resources) or that are believed to be more valuable. In many organizations, it is possible that another department within the organization is vying for, or already has, control of the Web site... Since other departments like marketing, advertising, customer service, and information systems (IS) also have a vested interest in the Web site, public relations’ influence with these departments many determine how communication goals are incorporated (especially if the site is initiated by another department) (Hill as quoted by Ryan, 2003).

Ryan’s research has suggested that the encroachment problems are not as pervasive as has been reported. The practitioners in his study said the departments work together to develop the Web site, without stepping on each other’s territories. They said

lack of resources and Web page guidelines were more problematic than encroachment (Ryan, 2003).

Monitoring Online Information and Viral Marketing

Since the mid 1990s, when organizations began to realize online rumors help or hurt their reputations, there has been a demand for an online monitoring system. “More and more these days, institutions want to know what the Net is saying, not only about themselves, but about their competitors or adversaries” (Kassel, 2000). Online clipping services such as NetCurrents (InvestorFacts, CyberFacts and CyberPerceptions) offer a very expensive clipping service (up to \$14,995 a month in 2000). Some companies think the money is well worth the service it provides.

The disgruntled customers and employees can unleash powerful messages online. Organizations now recognize that their employees have a new medium which can be used, if need be, to spread rumors easily and rapidly that may have potential to damage an organization’s image and reputation. The new information is also changing the nature, composition and modus operandi of the vocal publics. It is bringing together disparate publics that stretch beyond national boundaries. Protestations against organizations can now take place both online and on the streets....Groups with bizarre ideas which previously did not have access to the media to disseminate their viewpoints, can now connect with local, state, national and global audiences (Ihator, 2001).

Viral marketing is a way information, true or not, is spread very quickly through the Internet. “Viral marketing describes any strategy that encourages individuals to pass on a marketing message to others, creating the potential for exponential growth in the message’s exposure and influence. Like viruses, such strategies take advantage of rapid multiplication to explode the message to thousands, to millions” (Wilson, 2000).

mindset and communication goals... When the news release is used by the media, it may or may not represent the zones of meaning of the original sender” (Iharor, 2001)

Public Relations Online Technology Education

With pressure on public relations practitioners to learn many new computer technologies, college PR programs are recommended to provide education in this area. PRSA, in its recommendations for public relations curricula, says, “It also is essential that content address new public relations tools and techniques, especially current and emerging technology and its application in the practice of public relations.” In their recommendations for masters programs, PRSA says graduate students should master:

Public Relations Programming and Production: This area should include advanced programming and production principles, particularly related to new technology, the Internet and telecommunications as well as the practices and theories of message preparation, visual communications principles, and other communications techniques. Students should apply research and evaluation models to this practical side of public relations (PRSA, 1999).

Not all PR education programs have followed the PRSA recommendations. Ryan said, “the biggest problems within the public relations unit seem to be the lack of conceptual and technical training” (Ryan, 2003). In particular, the author’s PR masters program does not offer any public relations courses in Internet technology, telecommunications or other emerging technologies.

UNIVERSITY PUBLIC RELATIONS

History of University PR

Colleges in the United States started using public relations to raise money for their institutions. In 1641, Harvard College sent a contingent of men to England to raise funds for the college. They presented the first fund-raising brochure, “New England’s First Fruits”(Cutlip, p 103). A publicity office was established at University of Michigan

in 1897, Yale formed the alumni and public relations office in 1899, along with University of Pennsylvania (University Bureau of Publicity – 1904), and University of Wisconsin (press bureau - 1904).

In 1900, Harvard was the first client of the Publicity Bureau, the first publicity firm in the United States. Charles Eliot, Harvard president at the time, stressed the importance of influencing public opinion towards learning.

University of Chicago president, William Rainey Harper (1891 – 1906), was one of the first influential public relations people in higher education. His work in fundraising, attracting quality educators and the expansion of the university established the University of Chicago.

Harper's fame was not an isolated phenomenon. Beginning in the period just after the Civil War, American university presidents acquired roles of increasing consequence in national life. Unlike their clerical predecessors of the earlier collegiate era, the new generation of university presidents relished the growth of higher education and avidly promoted its influence in social, commercial, and political affairs. James B. Angell at Michigan, Andrew D. White at Cornell, Charles W. Eliot at Harvard, Daniel Coit Gilman at Johns Hopkins, and Nicholas Murray Butler at Columbia were easily the best known and most powerful of this group, but their success set the pattern for academic leadership at many other private and state universities across the country. By the time that Woodrow Wilson, former president of Princeton, was elected to the White House in 1912, the ascendancy of the university executive had long since become an accomplished fact (Meyer).

During the Depression, many institutions established public relations departments for fundraising efforts. After WW II, the returning soldiers, and the baby boom increased the demand for college education, which led to the need for more funds for buildings and staff.

The American College News Bureaus was established in 1917 due to efforts of T.T. Frankenberg (publicity director of Western College of Women, Oxford, Ohio), and

reestablished in 1925. In 1930 it became the American College Publicity Association, and then in 1964 the American College Public Relations Association. In 1974 was the merger with American Alumni Association, which formed the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). Alice Beeman was the first president of CASE, and also the first woman to lead national PR association.

History of Internet and Universities

Universities were in the forefront of the birth of online technology. In 1969, the first organizations linked by the early “Internet” were UCLA, Stanford Research Center, University of California Santa Barbara, and University of Utah.

“We’ll do well to remember that computer networking began with our institutions and that the Internet remains our home turf. If we move quickly, we can enter Communicopia not as mere observers-but as active creators of our PR futures” (Forbush, 1994).

Use of Internet by Higher Education PR practitioners in the 1990s

Dan Forbush and John Toon collaborated on the article, PR in the 21st century, which originally appeared in the March 1994 CASE Currents. Forbush and Toon surveyed campus PR practitioners and journalists to determine their perceptions of “How technology will affect our jobs?” Most practitioners felt the new technologies they will use included online newsrooms, transmitting information, photos and video to journalists, and e-mail. They felt the Internet would give them more communication tools, but not affect how they practice PR. Practitioners also feared they would have to become “more technologically sophisticated, master both old and new tools, and know which ones to use in every situation.” (Forbush, 1994).

The journalists surveyed by Forbush and Toon, predicted they will use the Internet for research, e-mail, computer bulletin boards, databases, transmitting photos and video. The journalists said practitioners will have to be educated in the new technologies, or they will be passed over. "Public information officers must be accessible online, make their availability known, and interact in a timely way with the growing number of reporters who prefer e-mail. That will require a higher level of computer skills than many of us now have, but the alternative is not attractive. 'I think we are seeing the tip of the iceberg, and PR people who aren't up to scratch are going to be buried,' one daily newspaper reporter warned." (Forbush, 1994). Tom Huber said, "By 2006, half of all jobs will require significant IT skills" (Williams, 2001).

Use of Internet by Higher Education PR practitioners

Jay Williams, in his Counselors to Higher Education article, says that more people, especially those under 65, are getting their news from the Internet. They prefer it to be "unfiltered news, directly from the source" (Williams, 2001). Some of the better higher education Web sites, according to Williams, offers constantly updated news stories with photo albums, and video streams.

As we look at higher education Web sites, we see a confusing array of packages. Ideally, institutional Web sites should clearly reflect the institution's personality, mission and vision. It should be organized so the typical person could easily find things he or she may want to know about your institution. Avoid clichés such as steepled buildings. Focus on real people teaching and learning. Financial aid information should never be left off the Web site. A gateway to corporate partners is essential.

Sokolowskis says that most people agree the Web sites are an institution's "most important communication vehicle." However, many colleges do not have their sites

organized in a cohesive manner because of the way the creation of institutional Web sites has evolved.

Most institutional Web sites share a common history one that includes clashes of biblical proportions. In the beginning, information technology departments created the first Web pages and they thought the pages were good. Then along came savvy public relations officers who realized the potential of these virtual publications. Epic battles ensued. In the process, communications officers had managed to wrest the reins away from the technology teams. But the ultimate winners were those campus communicators who-realizing they needed computer and network support to create the most effective Web sites-wisely maintained good relations with the techies (Sokolowski, 2000).

Some colleges have provided departments with templates and logos to keep the institutions Web site consistent. He says PR people should focus on the outside layers of an institution's Web site, like the home page, alumni relations and admission, while allowing individual departments to provide the content and apply the easy-to-use templates. Representatives from different departments should form a Web team to ensure the processes runs smoothly, and to fix problems as they arise (Sokolowski, 2000).

“The most successful Web sites are those that are driven by a strategy that is linked clearly with the overall objectives of the organisation [sic], but that they use the Internet to do things that are difficult or impossible in the physical world” (Saxton, 2001).

Internal Audiences

College internal audiences are the outside face of an institution. They are the college's ambassadors to the outside world. Online technologies can make students, faculty, staff and administrators feel they are part of a community that cares about what they are thinking and in which they have a vested interest. Colleges around the country are setting up Web site guidelines, online bulletin boards, event calendars and online

newsletters to ensure all their internal audiences are informed of what is going on in their work/school community.

Rob Herzog, director of new media at Wabash College says, “For us, the success of our Web site is just as much about breaking down internal communication barriers on campus as it is about opening ourselves up to the public. In this information age, all departments need to market themselves. Our site has prompted offices to better define what they do and how they fit into the grand scheme of things. And now they know that public affairs has some online tools to help” (Herzog as quoted by Sokolowski, 2000).

University of Iowa has set up an intranet called interCOM, a communications center for their health science advancement team. Staff can access events, style guidelines and communicate with other staff member through the on-line bulletin boards.

“The discussion boards has been a critical tool for us because we simply can’t call a meeting every Wednesday and have everyone we need there,” said Chad Ruback, director of alumni and external relations for the university’s College of Medicine. “The board also provides a “thread of conversation that everyone can join in and build off of, which doesn’t ordinarily happen with e-mail,” he says (Ruback as quoted by Rasicot, 2001).

Rasicot suggests the following before organizing an internal online communication plan. Find out what the users want you to provide, such as personal news, hard news, features, and bulletin boards. Keep it simple and personal. Allow the site to be personalized for each individual. The home page should be simple with links to follow depending on the interest of the department or employee. Encourage the staff to use it, but don’t be discouraged if it takes a little while to catch on. (Rasicot, 2001).

College Students

Colleges have many publics, such as employees, parents, media community, donors, and media. Their *raison d'être*, however, are the students. College students are typically 18 to 25 years old, and have used the Internet for everything from chatting with their buddies and playing games with kids across the world to homework and shopping for colleges. They expect instant, information-rich, and individualized communication. Colleges that don't accommodate them give the impression of being outdated and inept. "Practitioners must continuously monitor their technical applications or their companies and organizations may find their publics think poorly of them, or have abandoned them" (Ryan, 2003).

More than 10,000 prospective college students completed the ongoing Web Site Effectiveness Study (by Lipman Hearn and fastWeb.com) since 1999. The students ranked a college's Web site as the most important source in determining their college choice (second only to a college visit). The kids are used to commercial Web sites that personalize content, and expect the same thing with a college's site. Stoner says colleges need to create more appealing Web sites by making them interactive and individualized. "To see their sites apart, institutions should consider going a step further-as some innovative campuses already have-by adopting a variety of interactive, mass-customization, and personalization techniques that are increasingly common on commercial Web sites" (Stoner, 2000).

Joe Saxton, in the *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Marketing Sector* journal, says that these new technologies will be around for a while, and if practitioners try to wait them out, they will fall so far behind that it may be impossible to

catch up. “In the fast-changing environment a strategy of “wait and see” is in reality a strategy to fall behind” (Saxton, 2001).

By increasing the choices of the public, the Internet changes their customer service expectations. Banks, department stores and colleges all offer online serves, and those that don’t eventually will seem out-of-date and not credible. Audiences do not want to wait for a response. They are use to instant information, especially younger people. “People under the age of 25 and many under 35 live in a different world. Multi-channel television is the norm, the Internet is the standard way of talking to friends and spare moments throughout the day are spent chatting either online or sending text messages, The (developed) world is globalised [sic] and borderless as the Internet makes distances meaningless” (Saxton, 2001).

University Staff

“One of the cardinal rules of public relations is to make sure that people on the inside don’t feel like they’re on the outside. If that happens, you risk an outbreak of discontent, low morale, rumors, ad more rumors. And there are few things worse than unhappy employees spreading false information about your campus...No public relations program, no mater how well thought-out, will be effective unless it has an internal audience component. In many ways, faculty, staff, students and administrators are just as essential as reporters, community members, donors and prospective students” (Walsch, 2000).

Media

Momorella and Woodall outline tactics for a strong online newsroom.

Their guidelines include be timely - know how to update the page yourself (don't wait for information technology). Provide PR contact information, press kit downloads, links between homepage and newsroom and related stories, and feature important stories. Offer virtual folders for journalists, graphics, audio and video, and advanced searches engines. Follow good Web design with universal formatting using the colors and logos of organization, and make it print friendly. Promote events, important people in the organization, history and financial information and categorize your news releases. Provide easily accessible crisis information, e-mail distribution lists, and online feedback surveys (Momorella, 2003).

Bernstein and Page add that practitioners should “think like reporters and editors” when planning a campus site. Many times reporters get frustrated on a college site because “they meet the needs of the institution or its news service – not those of reporters and editors” (Bernstein, 2000). They say practitioners should set up a site customized for journalists with guidelines that include timely, important news up-front, content categorized for different media audiences, and have links to faculty members and their expertise (Bernstein, 2000).

Literature Conclusion

Since ancient times, man invented ways to communicate with others over distances. Runners, Pony Express, pigeons, telegraph, radio, and television were all stages in man's communication evolution. Each had a profound impact during its era. The Internet is the modern day long-distance communication invention, and like its

predecessors, the Internet has changed society. Not only has it provided new communication tools such as e-mail and Web pages, but also it has led to the formation of new “cyberspace” communities. Common interests instead of racial, cultural, and geographic boundaries connect people.

The Internet spawned audiences that expect individualized, information-rich communication from organizations. Those that do not provide this service are considered out-of-date and incompetent. Universities and colleges are in the education business, and their online presence reflects the type of education a student should expect from them. Will it be cutting-edge or behind the times? Practitioners should be aware of the type of messages their Internet presence sends, and that its alumni, students, staff and media are embracing the Web in record numbers every day. Modern PR practitioners recognize the power of the Internet, and use it in their practices.

Chapter 3

Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, this empirical study looks at the relationship between the use of online technologies by university public relations specialists, and the PR professional's perceived preference for their use by media, internal and external audiences. A sample of the university PR population represents specialists of middle-sized, public colleges and universities.

Type of Data

Does the perceived preferences of audiences influence the behavior of PR specialists in using online technologies? This study examines this question by surveying 49 university PR specialists and analyzing their behavior in the use of online technologies. It also studies the perception of PR specialists of the online technology attitude of their audiences, namely the media, internal and external. The study then analyzes the relationship between using online technologies and the perceived preference of internal, external audiences and the media for them. The research also looked at other aspects of online technology use by university practitioners such as Web site content and emerging technologies.

Source of Data

The researcher mailed questionnaires to public relations directors of 49 public colleges and universities on the east coast, with a population of 5,000 to 10,000 students. The author studied only public relations practitioners of four-year, public colleges with enrollments of 5,000 to 10,000 in the following states: Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York,

Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont. The list of colleges was developed using the database available at *US News and World Report* (America, 2003). The author then researched the names, titles and addresses of each public relations director through the Web site of each college chosen for the study.

The author distributed surveys to public relations specialists at the colleges listed in Appendix 1.

Technique in Acquiring the Data

The researcher collected primary data through a cross-sectional, self-administered questionnaire, designed for this study, and in-depth interviews. The author gathered information for the survey from Internet searches, Rowan University databases, scholarly journals and books. The survey contained Likert scale type questions, yes/no questions, and a comment section after each question.

The survey included questions about audience preferences, uses of online technologies, the role of PR professionals in constructing content of their college's Web pages and online future trends. The survey is in Appendix 2.

The author used a four-step process to administer the survey (Salant and Dillman, 1994). An advanced notice mailing, explaining the future survey, went to all the public relations director of the previously mentioned colleges. The second mailing, sent one week later, consisted of the cover letter and questionnaire. A postcard reminder followed the second mailing, two weeks later. A fourth mailing, two weeks later, went to all the nonrespondents, and included the questionnaire and a return envelope.

Method of Analyzing Data

Scores were analyzed based on percentages of those who chose a range from, for example, "always" or "never" in the Likert-type questions. The scores were then analyzed with SPSS to determine a relationship between the perception of an audience's preference, and the use of online technologies. Details given in the comments, gave more insight into the attitude of PR professionals toward using online technologies.

Chapter 4

Research Data

This study explored the relationship between the use of online technologies by higher education public relations professionals, and practitioners' perceived preference for its use by media, internal and external audiences. The study also looks at the role of the practitioner in developing Web page content, particularly Web pages with public relations connotations. Other topics studied were practitioners' use and knowledge of online technologies, and how likely they were to implement emerging technologies.

Surveys were mailed to 49 higher education practitioners of mid-sized public institutions in Northeastern United States. Of the surveys mailed, 28 (57%) were returned. Participants could choose to respond online, or by mail. Only four chose to respond online, and the rest were returned by mail. Many respondents commented on the subjects.

All tables are to be read across, and the following abbreviations are used.

No response	N/R
Do not know	D/K
No Opinion	N/O

1. A university's public relations department should have some input in the content of the university's web pages that have public relations implications.

All respondents believe PR practitioners should have input on the content of Web pages that have public relations implications. Six of those who commented say their

institutions' Web sites are supervised by of the public relations department, and three feel the public relations department should have total control of the institution's Web pages with public relations implications. Christine Florence, director of marketing communications at SUNY Brockport states, "(Web sites) are critical to marketing the college! Marketing communication controls the whole site – content, format and style."

Table 5

(Read Down)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	28	100
No	0	0

Actual comments:

- *Should have total control of Web pages.*
- *I am speaking as executive director for communication with responsibilities for public relations (media relations), publications (including Web content), advertising, and graphics.*
- *Actually, I think most of the Web site has PR implications.*
- *We do. There is a Web oversight committee that meets regularly. I have a good deal of influence over what is posted.*
- *We produce almost all principal pages.*
- *The web management office is part of our public affairs office.*
- *Critical to marketing the college! Marketing communications controls whole site-content, format, and style.*
- *Our electronic newsletter is distributed Tuesday and Thursday. Our "people in the news" electronic newsletter is distributed monthly. Both are sent to faculty & staff. We hope to expand by sending to retirees & alumni. Our Webmaster uses Dreamweaver.*
- *This is an absolute no brainer. I can't believe there would even be a question about that these days.*
- *Essential.*
- *The Webmaster falls under my supervision.*
- *They should have total control of Web pages that have PR implications.*

2. How much input do you have into the content of your university's web pages with public relations implications?

All the surveyed practitioners (100%) say they have at least some input into the content of their institution’s Web pages with public relations implications. Most comments indicate that their public relations departments have input on content of certain pages, two say they do not have input on the academic pages, and two say they input all content of their Web sites with PR implications.

“(We have) complete control of “official” pages,” says Clair Jones, associate vice president for communication and marketing at Buffalo State College. “(We) are moving to a template system, content management, for academic departments, and other high-profile pages.”

Bonnie D. Franklin, interim assistant vice president, public relations, of Ramapo College of New Jersey said her department has input on the content of some of their institution’s Web pages. “(We have) direct input on the news and events pages, the President’s pages, the home page and some other content,” says Franklin.

Table 6

(Read Down)

	Frequency	Percent
Input on all content	12	43
Input on some content	16	57
No input at all	0	0
Total	28	100

Actual comments:

- *We do not seek input on academic-based pages for department and faculty.*
- *Complete control of "official" pages; moving to a template system - content management system – for academic departments, and other high profile pages.*
- *Direct input on news and events pages, the President's page, the home page and some other content. We recently re-did a large portion of the web page - a section on the president.*
- *Must.*
- *Input on all content.*
- *We all have our various niches. More senior staff has more overall guidance on*

site content.

- *Tone/direction, but we do a lot of regularly updated content on high traffic parts of the site.*
- *News, update, content of front page, admissions pages, no input on academic pages.*
- *I have approval authority for content, although I do not write it all.*

3. Do you use online technologies?

All but one surveyed practitioner (96%) said they use online technologies.

Table 7

(Read Down)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	27	96
No	1	4
Total	28	100

Actual comments:

- *CMS*
- *We use mail (send news releases to media) web pages (posting of news releases)*
- *I'm usin' 'em now.*

4. Does your university's web site provide public relations information (such as media and public relations contact information, etc...)?

Most practitioners (96%) say that their Web site does provide public relations information. The lone dissenter, SUNY Plattsburg in New York, says it plans to begin the process soon. "Not yet, one of the things to do this semester." says Keith D. Tyo, director of public relations of SUYN Plattsburg.

Table 8

(Read Down)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	27	96
No	1	4
Total	28	100

Actual comments:

- *Press releases.*
- *We are just about to launch on-line experts guide.*
- *Not yet - one of the things to do this semester.*
- *News releases, newsletters, faculty who are willing to do speaking engagements.*

5. Does your public relations department monitor information circulating online about the college?

Monitoring online information about their institution is performed only by 75% of those surveyed. In their comments, 44% indicated that they don't monitor as much as they should. Tim Kelly, Public Relations Director of Stockton College in New Jersey said they monitor "as best we can, given limited personnel and resources."

Table 9

(Read Down)

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	21	75
No	6	21
N/R	1	4
Total	28	100

Actual comments:

- *Not as much as we should.*
- *Very little, not nearly enough.*
- *But not as much as we should.*
- *Our web guru is in the IT branch. They monitor that stuff, and get input from me when questions arise.*
- *I'm assuming you mean info on the Internet.*
- *As best we can give limited personnel and resources.*
- *Some, not all.*
- *We periodically do Google searches, and we are currently researching becoming members of Burrelle's Luce press clipping service.*
- *At times - we use online version of the Chronicle of Education each day.*

6. What online technologies do you use or plan to integrate into your university's communication efforts?

The online technology most frequently used by practitioners is e-mail (100%), followed by electronic press releases (89%), online crisis communication (86%) and electronic distribution of image files (82%). Least frequently used are new technologies such as wikis (7%) and wimbass (4%). Many practitioners have no plans to use the two-way communication online tools such as online bulletin boards (36%), blogs (39%) and videoconferencing (36%).

Table 10

(Read Across)

	Use now		Will use		Do not plan		N/R	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
E-mail	28	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Electronic news releases	25	89	3	11	0	0	0	0
Electronic distribution of files	23	82	3	11	2	7	0	0
Online feedback surveys	14	50	8	29	4	14	2	7
Online bulletin boards and chat rooms	7	25	8	29	10	36	3	11
Internet crisis communication	24	86	1	4	1	4	2	7
Electronic newsletters	22	79	6	18	0	0	1	4
Weblogs or Blogs	4	14	6	21	11	39	7	25
Virtual campus tours	19	68	7	25	1	4	1	4
Wimba (Voice activated forums)	1	4	2	7	18	64	6	21
Videoconferencing	4	14	8	29	10	36	6	21
Wikis	2	7	1	4	12	43	12	46
RSS Feeds	5	18	1	4	11	39	11	39
Webinar (Web-based seminar)	8	29	4	14	10	36	6	21
Webcast	14	50	10	36	3	11	1	4

Actual comments:

- *I'm not familiar with Wikis and RSS Feeds.*
- *Not sure what the circled ones mean (Wikis and RSS Feeds).*

7. Which audiences prefer that you communicate public relations messages using online technologies such as e-mail, Web sites and electronic news releases?

Question 7 asked practitioners' opinions about their audiences' preferences for online communication. 71% of practitioners say that internal audiences prefer them to communicate via online technologies; 49% believe external audiences do; and 54% say

media do. “Potential students” can also be considered a “special” audience because eventually they could become an internal audience. If potential students are taken out of the external audiences, then the percentage drops to 31%.

Three practitioners say that they have no research on what audiences prefer. Michele McCoy, director of public affairs, California University of Pennsylvania says, “I’ve never formally surveyed these audiences to know this, but I based my answers on the preferences of the majority of the people I deal with in these audiences.”

Some practitioners (50%) say the audiences’ individual preferences dictate whether they use online technologies. David Salter, director of public relations and publications of York College in Pennsylvania says on the use of technology with reporters: “Many reporters do not use e-mail or other electronic options. Picking up the telephone the old-fashioned way, is still the preferred method of communication. A couple of newspapers out this way didn’t even have e-mail until a couple of years ago.”

Table 11

(Read across)

Internal Audiences	Yes		No		D/K		N/D		N/R	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Students	20	71	0	0	4	14	1	4	3	11
Professional Staff	20	71	1	4	2	7	2	7	3	11
Faculty	18	64	0	0	3	11	2	11	2	14
Administrators	22	79	0	0	2	7	1	4	3	11
Support Staff	19	68	1	4	3	11	2	7	3	11
Mean	20	71	0	2	3	10	2	7	3	12

Table 12

(Read across)

External Audiences	Yes		No		D/K		N/D		N/R	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Local Community	7	25	5	18	13	46	0	0	3	11
Alumni	10	36	2	7	9	32	2	7	5	18
Parents	7	25	2	7	11	39	3	11	5	18
*Potential Students	22	79	0	0	3	11	0	0	3	11
Government	10	36	2	7	12	43	1	4	3	11
Mean	11	40	2	8	10	34	1	4	4	14
*Mean w/o potential students	9	31	3	10	11	40	2	6	4	15

Table 13

(Read across)

Media	Yes		No		D/K		N/D		N/R	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Newspaper editors/reporter	16	57	3	11	1	4	4	14	4	14
Television editors/reporters	14	50	6	21	1	4	3	11	4	14
Radio editors/reporters	13	46	6	21	2	7	3	11	4	14
Magazine editors/reporters	17	61	3	11	1	4	3	11	4	14
Mean	15	54	5	16	1	5	3	12	4	14

Actual comments:

- *I've never formally surveyed these audiences to know this, but I based my answers on the preferences of the majority of the people I deal with in these audiences.*
- *Some in each category.*
- *I do very little "PR" communication, which I define as a message promulgated and distributed based on a perceived benefit to the sender. I try to produce and distribute messages predicated on a perceived benefit to the receiver. The "PR" factor is built into useful messages.*
- *Depends on the individual.*
- *We never surveyed this.*
- *We have done no research, so we don't know which methods are preferred.*
- *Editors tend to be different – often one prefers an email and another fax.*
- *Many reporters do not use email or other electronic options. Picking up telephone the old-fashioned way, is still the preferred method of communication. A couple of newspapers out this way didn't even have email until a couple of years ago.*

8. Is the following information on your university web site?

Web sites tend to include traditional one-way public relations information, such as news (100%), calendar of events (100%) and information about the institution (100%).

Sites that provide two-way information, such as feedback surveys (43%) and bulletin boards (32%) are less frequent.

Table 14

Information on Web site

(Read across)

	Yes		No		D/K		N/R	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Online newsroom	21	75	5	18	0	0	2	7
History of organization	25	89	0	0	2	7	1	4
Archived news	28	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Crisis information	17	61	11	39	0	0	0	0
Financial information	19	68	7	25	1	4	1	4
Registration	27	96	0	0	0	0	1	4
Calendar of events	28	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Schedule of courses	25	89	1	4	2	7	0	0
Academic department information	28	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Campus announcements	28	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Employee benefits	20	71	6	21	2	7	0	0
Job openings	27	96	0	0	1	4	0	0
Feedback surveys	12	43	11	40	4	14	1	4
Campus bulletin boards for students	9	32	11	39	7	25	1	4

Actual comments:

- *(Financial info) Don't know what you mean by this, college budget? Tuition? Financial aid info?*
- *Little knowledge/no responsibility for intranet for students.*
- *Online registration is being fully developed.*

9. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about communicating via online technologies such as e-mail and Web sites?

Practitioners say they use online technologies when audiences prefer them (96%) and 89% use them for two-way communication. Most agree online technologies provide a global reach (96%), and that they are cost effective (86%). Practitioners' comments indicate that audiences prefer a combination of personal and technical communication (78%). One practitioner says, "Online technologies and personal contact are both effective. Audiences prefer a combination of mail, phone and online technologies."

One problem with online technologies, a practitioner says, is its validity. "The medium gives us no mechanism by which to assess the validity of the information.

Leather-bound, gold embossed volumes have high credibility. Online, every crackpot looks like a legitimate expert, often more so.”

Table 15

(Read across)

	Agree		N/O		Disagree		N/R	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Online technologies are convenient time savers	22	79	2	7	3	11	1	4
I use them when the audience prefers them	27	96	1	4	0	0	0	0
Online technologies give richer information	9	32	10	36	8	29	1	4
I use them for two-way communication	25	89	1	4	1	4	1	4
Online technologies are cost effective	24	86	0	0	3	11	1	4
Online technologies provide global reach	27	96	1	4	0	0	0	0
Online technologies provide rich information	17	61	5	18	5	18	1	4
Not enough knowledge of online	8	29	2	7	17	60	1	4
Online technologies waste time	2	7	2	7	22	79	2	7
Personal contact over online technologies	7	25	9	32	8	29	4	14
Audiences prefer traditional methods	4	14	6	21	14	50	4	14
Online technologies are costly to set up	7	25	9	32	11	39	1	4

Actual comments:

- *Convenient timesavers- in conjunction with other methods, but we spend a large amount of time on it.*
- *Cost effective- not personnel! Prefer more personal contact – just not always possible all of these methods together are important – print, personal, on-line, etc.*
- *It depends. Online technologies provide very little of the Marshall McLuhan factor. The medium gives us no mechanism by which to assess the validity of the info. Leather-bound, gold-embossed volumes have high credibility. Online, every crackpot looks like a legit expert, often more so.*
- *(Audiences prefer...) would depend on the audiences involved.*
- *Online technologies and personal contact are both effective. Audiences prefer a combination of mail, phone, and online technologies.*
- *(Audiences prefer...) depends on the audience.*
- *(Personal Contact) you cannot rely exclusively on online technologies; it's helpful with the media and university advocates in particular maintaining person contact.*
- *(Audiences prefer...) it depends on their preferences.*

10. For which audiences, and how often, do you use the following online technologies to communicate public relations messages?

Campus announcements are always sent using online technologies by 71% of practitioners, while 57% always use email with internal audiences. Generally, online

technologies are “always” (40%) or “sometimes” (31%) used by 71% of practitioners for internal audiences.

Table 16

(Read across)

Internal Audiences	Always		Sometimes		Never		N/R	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
E-mail	16	57	10	36	0	0	2	7
Electronic news release	12	43	9	32	4	14	3	11
Electronic distribution of files	9	32	13	46	13	46	2	7
Online feedback surveys	8	29	5	18	9	32	6	21
Online fund raising	1	4	9	32	11	39	7	25
Online bulletin boards and chat rooms	3	11	8	29	13	46	4	14
Internet crisis communication	13	46	11	39	2	7	2	7
Electronic newsletters	15	54	7	25	4	14	2	7
Employee information	15	54	8	29	2	7	3	11
Campus announcements	20	71	6	21	0	0	2	7
Mean	10	40	7	31	6	21	3	12

50% of practitioners always communicate campus announcements to external audiences through online technologies, but only 4% use online technologies for fund raising. Online communication with external audiences happens “always” with only 14% of the practitioners and “sometimes” 47% of the practitioners; 21% never communicate with external audiences using online technologies.

Table 17

(Read across)

External Audiences	Always		Sometimes		Never		N/R	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
E-mail	3	11	21	75	1	4	3	11
Electronic news release	6	21	17	61	2	7	3	11
Electronic distribution of files	3	11	16	57	4	14	5	18
Online feedback surveys	4	14	11	39	9	32	4	14
Online fund raising	1	4	12	43	9	32	6	21
Online bulletin boards and chat rooms	2	7	8	29	14	50	4	14
Internet crisis communication	3	11	15	54	6	21	4	14
Electronic newsletters	8	29	14	50	4	14	2	7
Employee information	9	32	8	29	8	29	3	11
Campus announcements	14	50	10	36	2	7	2	7
Mean	5	14	11	47	6	21	4	13

Only 49% of practitioners use online technologies for media, according to the criteria asked in the survey. However, if you delete some of the criteria that media traditionally do not participate in such as feedback surveys, fundraising, online bulletin boards, newsletters and employee information, then 81% of practitioners use online technologies for the media.

Table 18

(Read across)

Media	Always		Sometimes		Never		N/R	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
*E-mail	9	32	15	54	1	4	3	11
*Electronic news release	11	39	24	50	0	0	3	11
*Electronic distribution of files	8	29	15	54	2	7	3	11
Online feedback surveys	1	4	3	11	18	64	6	21
Online fund raising	1	4	2	7	17	61	8	29
Online bulletin boards and chat rooms	1	4	3	11	19	68	5	18
*Internet crisis communication	4	14	15	54	4	14	5	18
*Electronic newsletters	5	18	9	32	10	36	4	14
*Employee information	6	21	5	18	11	39	6	21
*Campus announcements	13	46	9	32	3	11	3	11
Average - all	5	19	9	30	8	29	4	15
*Average – media online technologies	9	32	16	49	2	7	3	12

Actual comments:

- *A little too detailed for public disclosure at this time*
- *Use online for practically everything.*

Summary of Data

In the Tables 20 and 21, the author cross-tabulated practitioners' perception of audiences' preferences (question 7) with how often practitioners use online technologies with these audiences (question 10).

For which audiences, and how often, do you use the following online technologies to communicate public relations messages?

Table 20

(Read across)
Frequency using online technologies

Audiences with whom practitioners communicate.	Always		Sometimes		Never		N/R	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Internal audiences	10	40	7	31	6	21	3	12
External audiences (w/o potential students)	9	31	3	10	11	40	2	6
Media	5	19	9	30	8	29	4	15

(Summary of means)

More practitioners always use online technologies for internal audiences (40%), than any other audience. However, if you combine “always” and “sometimes” then 71% of practitioners use online technologies for internal audiences, 31% for external audiences, and 49% for media.

Which audiences prefer that you communicate public relations messages using online technologies such as e-mail, Web sites and electronic news releases?

Table 21

(Read across)
Practitioners perceived audience preferences for online technologies

Audiences with whom practitioners communicate.	Yes		No		D/K		N/D		N/R	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Internal audiences	20	71	0	2	3	10	2	7	3	12
External audiences	11	40	2	8	10	34	1	4	4	14
Media	15	54	5	16	1	5	3	12	4	14

(Summary of means)

Table 22 illustrates that public relations practitioners tend to use online technologies when they perceive that their audiences prefer such technologies.

Table 22

Audiences	Practitioners always/sometimes use online technologies (%)	Practitioners perceive audience prefers online technologies (%):
Internal audience	71	70
External audience (without potential students)	31	40
Media	49	54

If one were to manipulate the data, to show how often practitioners use traditional media technologies such as e-mail, news releases, online crisis communication, electronic distribution of files and announcements, then 81% of practitioners use online technologies with media (though only 54% of them perceive media as preferring online technologies).

Likewise with external audiences, if you combine potential students with external audiences, then 61% of practitioners use online technologies with them, though they perceive only 40% prefer them.

Table 23

Audiences	Practitioners always/sometimes use online technologies (%)	Practitioners perceive audience prefers online technologies (%)
External audiences with potential students	61	40
Media (With only media technologies)	81	54

Table 24

Audiences	Practitioners always/sometimes use online technologies (%)	Practitioners perceive audience prefers online technologies (%):
External audience (without potential students)	31	40
Media (including all technologies)	49	54

Chapter 5

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between the use of online technologies by university public relations specialists, and the PR professional's perceived preference for their use by media, internal and external audiences. The research also looked at other aspects of online technology use by university practitioners such as Web site content and emerging technologies.

A comprehensive literature review was conducted on the topic of online public relations practices. Sources explored extensively included the Rowan University online databases, Google search engine, the Public Relations Society of America Web site, Council for Advancement and Support of Education Web site, Amazon.com Web site, and Rowan University Library.

A search for "Internet Public Relations" on the Amazon.com Web site yielded five relevant books, which were purchased for this study. Online databases and Web sites were searched using such phrases as "online public relations," "wired public relations," "Internet public relations," "university relations," "nonprofit public relations," "Web site criteria," "media relations," "employee relations," "online newsroom," and "e-mail public relations."

Internet sites such as PR Insight, Online Public Relations, ePublic Relations, CyberJournalist.net, Internet PR Guide, and PRBytes provided overall information on public relations and online techniques. Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) Web site provided a more focused insight into the use of online tools

by university public relations practitioners. Rowan University databases, such as Science Direct and ProQuest provided scholarly information on the subject.

The researcher collected primary data through a cross-sectional, self-administered questionnaire, designed for this study, and in-depth interviews. The author gathered information for the survey from Internet searches, Rowan University databases, scholarly journals and books. The survey contained Likert scale type questions, yes/no questions, and a comment section after each question.

The researcher mailed questionnaires (Appendix 2) to public relations directors of 49 public colleges and universities on the east coast, listed in Appendix 1. Of the surveys mailed, 28 (57%) were returned.

Scores were analyzed based on percentages of those who chose a range from, for example, "always" or "never" in the Likert-type questions. The scores were then analyzed with SPSS to determine a relationship between the perception of an audience's preference, and the use of online technologies. Details given in the comments, gave more insight into the attitude of PR professionals toward using online technologies.

Conclusions

The author found that public relations practitioners do use the Internet for PR communication, and most believe that their Web sites have PR implications. They also believe the practitioners should have input on the content of their institution's Web site.

Practitioners are still "pushing" information to the public, however, with e-mail, electronic news releases and distribution of files. Less frequently used are the more powerful tools of the Internet, such as those that provide two-way communication (Web logs, RSS feeds and bulletin boards). According to Ross Irvine, president of ePublic

Relations, Ltd., the PR industry hasn't embrace the new technologies, like other sectors of society, because they focus more using the surface tools, rather than exploring the underlying power of the medium.

The industry failed to study and appreciate the depth and importance of the Internet. Instead, it gave superficial attention to the Internet and adopted the approach that the Internet simply speeds up communications and makes a lot more information available. It failed to appreciate the power of the Internet to build "communities" and to encourage local, national and global activism, a fact that was immediately apparent to activists (Irvine, 2001).

A large percentage of practitioners either did not respond or said they do not plan to use the newest Internet technologies such as Wimba (85%), Wikis (89%), and RSS Feeds (78%). This may indicate the practitioners are not familiar with the technologies, and have no future plans to learn them. Paradoxically, 60% said they do feel they have enough knowledge of online technologies.

Most practitioners comment that they perform little or no research on the preferences of their audience, though 50% also say their use of online technologies depends on the audience's preferences.

The author analyzed practitioners' perceived preferences of their audiences, by separating them into internal audiences (students, professional staff, faculty, administrators and support staff), external audiences (local community, alumni, parents, government) and media (newspaper, television, radio and magazine reporters and editors). Potential students were initially included in external audiences. The perceived preference of students (79%) was markedly different than others in the external group (40%), so the author chose to think of them as a special audience, rather than an external audience.

Recommendations

The author thought it interesting, that for a survey about online technology, only 4 (14%) of the respondents chose to answer the survey online. The remainder (86%) chose the traditional “snail” mail to return their responses. The author offered both choices because to give only online as a choice could skew the responses -- only those comfortable with online technologies would answer the questionnaire.

The research shows that practitioners are knowledgeable of some online technologies, but not of emerging online technologies. They are not using the Internet to its full potential. Instead of tapping into the ability of the medium to build communities, provide two-way communication and supply rich information, they use it to merely communicate quickly. Many realize the important PR implications of an organization’s Web site, but lack technical knowledge to request services on their site. If they don’t know about RSS Feeds, they’ll never request their technicians to provide the service for their audiences.

“Public information officers must be accessible online, make their availability known, and interact in a timely way with the growing number of reporters who prefer e-mail. That will require a higher level of computer skills than many of us now have, but the alternative is not attractive. ‘I think we are seeing the tip of the iceberg, and PR people who aren’t up to scratch are going to be buried,’ one daily newspaper reporter warned.” (Forbush, 1994). Tom Huber said, “By 2006, half of all jobs will require significant IT skills” (Williams, 2001).

Practitioners must be educated on how to fully integrate the Internet into their PR plan. Online PR education should begin in college and graduate schools and can also be

offered at professional societies like the PRSA. PRSA, in its recommendations for public relations curricula, says, "It also is essential that content address new public relations tools and techniques, especially current and emerging technology and its application in the practice of public relations" (PRSA 1999).

A quarter of practitioners do not monitor online information about their organization, and many who do so, said they don't do it enough ("not as much as we should, very little, not nearly enough" etc..). For a university to stay competitive, attract potential students and control rumors, practitioners have to stay on top of all online information circulating about their colleges. As one respondent said, "Online, every crackpot looks like a legit expert, often more so." "More and more these days, institutions want to know what the Net is saying, not only about themselves, but about their competitors or adversaries" (Kassel, 2000).

Practitioners say they are not researching how audiences feel about online technologies. "I've never formally surveyed these audiences," "we never surveyed this," "we have done no research, so we don't know which methods are preferred," were some practitioners' actual comments. Most universities realize the marketing power of the Web in attracting potential students. The PR department should perform research to determine Internet preferences of their audiences before deciding how to use technology with them.

Recommendations for Further Research

This was a narrow study involving only 28 public relations directors of medium-sized public colleges on the East coast. A larger sample of PR directors would give more insight into the use of technology, and would generate interesting comments and ideas.

The author would consider “potential students” a special audience instead of an external audience because it is very different than other external audiences segments.

A few survey questions were confusing, such as question 9, line 11 “Audiences prefer traditional methods.” The author would take out that line, because the information is gathered for segmented audiences in question 10.

A few respondents were concerned about the “anonymity” of the survey, because the author had a tracking number on the questionnaires. The tracking number tracked those had responded, and flagged non-respondents for follow-up. The author might have received more responses if practitioners were confident of their anonymity, and the tracking number appeared on the envelope instead of the survey.

Evaluation

The author set out to determine the relationship between the use of online technologies and practitioners’ perceived preference of certain audiences. The author found there was a relationship. For internal audiences, 71% of practitioners use online technologies, and 70% perceive internal audiences prefer them. For external audiences, 31% of practitioners use online technologies, ad 40% perceive the external audiences prefer them. For media, 49% of practitioners use online technologies, and 54% perceive media prefers them.

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Appendix

1. Questionnaire
2. Distribution List
3. Postcards and Letters

Rowan University
Public Relations Graduate Thesis Questionnaire

Please complete the following survey and return it in the enclosed, postage paid envelope. You may also fax the questionnaire to 856-256-5602, answer it online (<http://www.rowan.edu/mcsiip/questionnaire.htm>) or by email (hegel@rowan.edu), which ever you chose. Feel free to write comments after any question, using the back of the page, or a separate page, if necessary. Thank you for your participation.

Online technologies refer to Internet technologies such as e-mail, Web pages, electronic bulletin boards, chat rooms, online surveys, online fund raising, Internet searches, online newsrooms, electronic videos, audio and photos.

1. A university's public relations department should have some input in the content of the university's web pages that have public relations implications.

(Check one) Yes No

Comments:

2. How much input do you have into the content of your university's web pages with public relations implications?

(Check one) Input on all content Input on some content No input at all

Comments:

3. Do you use online technologies?

(Check one) Yes No

Comments:

4. Does your university's web site provide public relations information (such as media and public relations contact information, etc...)?

(Check one) Yes No

Comments:

5. Does your public relations department monitor information circulating online about the college?

(Check one) Yes No

Comments:

6. What online technologies do you use or plan to integrate into your university's communication efforts?

(Check one column for each number)

	Use Now	Plan to use	Do not plan to use
1. E-mail			
2. Electronic press releases			
3. Electronic distribution of photos, audio, video and/or graphics			
4. Online feedback surveys			
5. Online bulletin boards and chat rooms			
6. Crisis communication via Internet or e-mail			
7. Electronic newsletters			
8. Weblogs or Blogs			
9. Virtual campus tours			
10. Wimba (Voice activated forums)			
11. Videoconferencing			
12. Wikis			
13. RSS Feeds			
14. Webinar (Web-based seminar)			
15. Webcast (broadcast live or delayed audio and/or video transmissions)			

Comments:

7. Which audiences prefer that you communicate public relations messages using online technologies such as e-mail, Web sites and electronic news releases?

(Check one column for each number)

	Yes	No	Don't Know	No Difference
1. Students				
2. Professional Staff				
3. Faculty				
4. Administrators				
5. Support Staff				
6. Local Community				
7. Alumni				
8. Parents				
9. Potential Students				
10. Government				
11. Newspaper editors/reporter				
12. Television editors/reporters				
13. Radio editors/reporters				
14. Magazine editors/reporters				

Comments:

8. Is the following information on your university web site?

(Check one column for each number)

	Yes	No	Don't Know
1. Online newsroom			
2. History of organization			
3. Archived news			
4. Crisis information			
5. Financial information			
6. Registration			
7. Calendar of Events			
8. Schedule of courses			
9. Academic department information			
10. Campus announcements			
11. Employee benefits			
12. Job openings			
13. Feedback surveys			
14. Campus bulletin boards for students			

Comments:

9. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about communicating via online technologies such as e-mail and Web sites?

(Check one column for each number)

	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree
1. Online technologies are convenient time savers			
2. I use them when the audience prefers them			
3. Online technologies give richer information			
4. I use them for two-way communication			
5. Online technologies are cost effective			
6. Online technologies provide global reach			
7. Online technologies provide rich information			
8. I do not have enough knowledge of online technologies			
9. Online technologies waste time			
10. I prefer more personal contact over online technologies			
11. Audiences prefer regular mail, phone contact over online technologies			
12. Online technologies are costly to set up			

Comments:

10. For which audiences, and how often, do you use the following online technologies to communicate public relations messages?

Internal audiences – Students, professional staff, faculty, support staff, and administrators

External audiences - Local community, alumni, parents, potential students and the government

Media – Newspaper, television, radio and magazine reporters and editors

(Check all that apply)

	Internal Audiences			External Audiences			Media		
	Always	Sometimes	Never	Always	Sometimes	Never	Always	Sometimes	Never
1. E-mail									
2. Electronic news release									
3. Electronic distribution of photos, audio, video and/or graphics									
4. Online feedback surveys									
5. Online fund raising									
6. Online bulletin boards and chat rooms									
7. Crisis communication via Internet or e-mail									
8. Electronic newsletters									
9. Employee information such as benefits or job openings									
10. Campus announcements									

Comments:

Thank you for your time. Your answers will contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of public relations.

If I may contact you, with a few follow-up questions, or use your name, title and institution in my thesis, please provide the information below. If not, please leave blank.

(Optional)

Name: _____

Title: _____

Institution: _____

Email: _____

Phone Number: _____

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PUBLIC RELATIONS ONLINE TECHNOLOGIES

Dear _____,

Online technologies such as email and web pages affect how college and university public relations specialists communicate with their publics. I am a graduate student at Rowan University. My master's thesis studies the phenomenon of communicating using online technologies. Next week, you will receive a short, anonymous, questionnaire from me. I selected you for this questionnaire, and I appreciate your timely response. Thank you in advance.

Marybeth Hegel
Graduate Student
Rowan University



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(856) 256-4827 FAX: (856) 256-5602 hegel@rowan.edu

January 30, 2004

«School»
«FirstName» «LastName»
«Title»
«Department»
«Address1»
«Address2»
«City», «AddressState» «Zip»

Dear «Prefix» «LastName»,

Greetings. I am a public relations graduate student at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey. My master's thesis studies the use of online technologies by college and university public relations professionals.

Part of my study includes a survey of college and university public relations specialists. I selected you to participate in this study, as a public relations specialist for a mid-sized public college or university.

Please fill out the attached questionnaire, and mail it in the enclosed stamped envelope, or fax it to (856) 256-5602. If you prefer, the questionnaire is also available at <http://www.rowan.edu/mcsiip/questionnaire.htm>. The questionnaire can also be sent by email by contacting me at hegel@rowan.edu. Though the survey is anonymous, to track the response rate, each public relations specialist is given a unique tracking number. Your tracking number is # **«trackingnumber»**.

Thank you for your time and interest in this research. If you wish to receive a copy of my final research, please indicate that when you return the questionnaire.

Sincerely,

Marybeth Hegel
Graduate Student
Rowan University



PUBLIC RELATIONS ONLINE TECHNOLOGIES

A few weeks ago, you received a questionnaire from Rowan University about online technologies used by college public relations practitioners. If you have any questions about the survey, please contact me at hegel@rowan.edu. The questionnaire is also available online at <http://www.rowan.edu/mcsiip/questionnaire.htm> Your timely response is appreciated.



Thank you.

Marybeth Hegel
Graduate Student
Rowan University



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Thank you.

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Rowan University



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Rowan University



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Thank you.

Marybeth Hegel
Graduate Student
Rowan University



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«School»
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«Address1»
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Dear «Prefix» «LastName»,

A few weeks ago, I sent you a questionnaire from Rowan University. As I said in my previous letter, I am a public relations graduate student at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey. My master's thesis studies the use of online technologies by college and university public relations professionals. Part of my study includes a survey of college and university public relations specialists. You were specially selected to participate in this study, as a public relations specialist for a mid-sized public college or university.

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Thank you for your time and interest in this research. If you wish to receive a copy of my final paper, please indicate that when you return the questionnaire.

Sincerely,

Marybeth Hegel
Graduate Student
Rowan University

P.S. You can make a great contribution to the field of public relations by participating in this research. Thank you for your cooperation.