

Third Thursday Society: Annual Reports Discussion, August 18, 2011

**Discussion, Part One: Audience and Messages-Who is your key audience and what are key messages you wish to communicate with an annual report?**

**Key audiences:** Potential Investors/grantors, community leaders (Board of Supervisors, Town Council) program participants, board members, community partners, organizational funders, clients and potential clients

**Key messages:** Achievements, impact, partnerships, accountability, fundraising focus, credibility, the history of the organization, financial status, purpose/plans and goals

**Discussion, Part 2: Annual Report Formats-What is the best format to communicate those key messages and what are some potential challenges and benefits?**

Formats:

**Online copy-**Posting the annual report on your website or transferring it to a CD or DVD

**Benefits:** access to people who you may not necessarily be in contact with, shows budget consideration **Challenges:** prospective readers need to know how to access the internet and use technology, harder to reach new audiences

**Paper copy-**Printing the annual report in the form of a brochure, newsletter or booklet

**Benefits:** can upload online in standard format (8.5 X 11) so people can view online and also print, very accessible, eye catching

**Challenges:** cost, obtaining permissions for photos can be time consuming

**Best Practices:** Stories, photos, include donation envelope, color important, but consider budget, include plans for the future, acknowledge donors, finite period of time (one year, two years, etc.) useful to have a standard percentage of budget to spend on annual report, don't assume people know what your organization does, include contact information, consider size of print and layout, create up-loadable format for grants

**Other resources:**

PRSA and PRSSA: Public Relations Society of America and Public Relations Student Society of America (Local Chapter)

[www.prsa.org](http://www.prsa.org) or [www.prssa.org](http://www.prssa.org)

Innovation Space at Virginia Tech-Computer Lab and design assistance

<http://www.is.vt.edu/>

American Advertising Federation Roanoke

<http://aafroanoke.org/> (For information on Create-A-Thon)