**Final Personal Reflection Essay**

Throughout this course, I have learned many things about marketing that I would not have otherwise known. Having taken my undergraduate degree in Graphic Design, I was taught the general principles of marketing and copywriting but mostly focused on visual design as opposed to marketing principles. Getting into the informative details of marketing, such as WOMM, Social Media, and wayfinding, were all useful subjects that have not been formally covered in my past education. On the other hand, my undergraduate degree was completed in the early 2000s, when most of this technology had not yet formed. I am not certain whether I would have learned about this if I were to re-take my undergraduate studies in the current year.

I think that one of the most important things that I learned was that even with the same link, the same information, and the same exposure to knowledge, people come up with different perspectives on how this information should be processed. For example, in some of the earlier VoiceThread commentary, many of us were using the same websites or online content, but we were expressing vastly different opinions about it, even with regards to the same subject.

While it was also discussed in Library Management in addition to this class, I also found the concept of the SWOT analysis to be very helpful. This is something that is simple to do and can be easily relied on, time after time, to check in on the progress of a library or other business. The process for creating a SWOT analysis can be as simple or as complicated as budget and timing allow. Furthermore, a combination of multiple years of SWOT analysis can paint a bigger picture of what continued issues may be appearing in the library system.

My continued frustration, however, was with VoiceThread. Even though I understand the concept of the program, and have relied on it in past and current classes in order to communicate with other classmates, I find the user interface buggy and strange when there are attempts to integrate with Canvas. I was very frustrated at the beginning of class, as in Library Management with Professor Disher, our VoiceThreads were not embedded into Canvas but were considered separate, and were easy to return to via the VoiceThread app. This was a difficult and time consuming process, on the other hand, for this class. It was confusing, much of the time, to go back and try to read or retrieve an older VoiceThread. This made me reluctant to go back and check up on discussions I had had prior.

I am somewhat surprised, though I suppose that in retrospect I should not be, that I have learned so much about user experience from this class, and that it has benefitted me so deeply as far as working on my portfolio. When you are focused on what the user wants to see and how to attract their attention, I suppose it becomes intuitive or natural to also want to make it as easy for them to access this information as possible. I have become really interested in intuitive design over the past year or so of my schooling, particularly this last semester, and I really credit this class for helping to broaden my understanding.

I think the Term Project was honestly the most eye-opening and educational aspect of the class, as I was able to see others attempt the same project concept(s) that I had, but execute and display in different ways. Many other people also did a “Library of Things” project or similar, but none with quite my unique concept. It would be nice in the future to have a bookmark or other physical assets, either in the Solaris Regional Library gift shop or otherwise, but I really felt that the website itself should speak for the content therein. I still have a lot of work to do and a long way to go when it comes to marketing and design skills, but I feel that this class has definitely enriched my understanding.

Throughout this and other classes, I have been reminded that not everyone is a designer, and some people are just doing their best to display information in as neat and orderly a fashion as possible. I think my primary concern is usually visual design, even when I should be looking in another direction. For this reason I would like to review once again the data and texts of this class after the conclusion of said class, and review some of the principles that I may have glossed over the first time without thinking. I always appreciate how people in these sorts of classes come from different backgrounds, with different wants and goals for different types of libraries. While I have struggled to find others in my similar interest field of corporate and special libraries, the few people that are engaged in this direction of thinking have been instrumental in helping me to discover what I would like to do at the completion of my MLIS. Everyone has a different perspective and fresh ideas, and I am always happy to see a different spin on the same perspective.

I think one of the things I appreciate most about this particular class is the combination of current students within, and their positivity and overall kindness when it comes to discussing the work done in class. Everyone was so kind in regards to the term project especially, and I found that incredibly refreshing and helpful, even if there was also constructive criticism or feedback sometimes involved. There is nothing wrong with criticism or constructive feedback, however I believe that in addition to enthusiasm, as you always stress for us to have in regards to marketing, that kindness and open mindedness when it comes to the ideas of others are instrumental in coming up with new and fresh ideas.

As far as personal knowledge gained, I have learned in taking this class as well as others, that there is a lot I still don’t know and need to learn. There is always more information to be absorbed, more nuance to be gleaned, and more techniques to add to one’s toolbelt. While I was a bit dubious about Pinterest (even having used it before), it did sometimes help to put together mood boards for the class. I personally wish there were a better way to display and pin information of that type without relying on Pinterest, however I can understand that it is currently the easiest and most intuitive to use.

It has also been interesting and eye opening to have an overlap between this class and VR special session, particularly in regards to the PhD Gateway Program. I think perhaps I would not have learned as much or have taught myself as much as I did without having that overlap between discussing the PhD Gateway Program and the marketing principles for this particular class. This combination allowed me to have a holistic view of what a user’s experience can be and what wayfinding actually means in its entirety, not just in person but also in the virtual world.

My mind has been opened, furthermore, to the power of things like library SWAG. While I once believed that SWAG was a supplemental tool or an afterthought, I can now see after viewing some of the final projects that these items are essential tools that can draw new and existing users into the pool and keep them returning to the library, not only to read, but to also use other services as well. While it may be fun to design these things visually, their purpose as far as content is not to be undervalued. Brochures and bookmarks that offer programming information become vital tools to spread awareness about the library. A conversation can easily be started, on the bus or elsewhere, and physical evidence of the programs available can be shown. Extra bookmarks can be given away or passed around, and even brochures can be used as bookmarks if need be. What might be interesting as well is the concept of advertising for alternative media, such as YouTube videos or etc. Many of my friends I have discussed some of my library projects with have commented that they haven’t been to a library in years because they don’t read books. This is why I believe that the Library of Things as well as multimedia libraries are essential to the future of libraries. As things become more digitized, there will only be more information that isn’t on paper to sort through, and more need to filter and categorize this information.

Thank you for providing this class and educating us all on what it means to run a marketing campaign for a library. I have had fun, been taught many things, and will hopefully walk away with an eventual job where I can put these skills to use. Happy Holidays!

Rae