



American Guild of Organists

Media Relations

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INTRODUCTION

Members of the American Guild of Organists are very much aware of the challenges facing chapters today. Your Professional Networking and Public Relations Committee wants to help you meet some of those challenges. This Media Relations Handbook is designed to help you better promote and publicize your chapter's events and activities.

Statistics suggest that only 20 percent of the U.S. population actively participates in music. We know that fewer people than that regularly attend organ recitals. Certainly more people would be involved in music in general, and organ music, in particular, if they were aware of the joys and wonder of being involved with it. So, it's up to all of us to spread the word.

The message is that organs and organ music are wonderful to see and to hear. The greatest challenge facing us today is getting our message about the organ and its music out to the general public in a simple but powerful way.

Countless books have been written about the wonder of the organ and the magic of its music, but the most powerful testimony for the organ comes from those who love the instrument and its music; therefore we encourage you and your members to be spokespersons for the AGO and your chapter activities.

- Organ music can nourish your soul.
- Attending an organ concert can introduce you to a new world of sound produced by an instrument which you may have never seen or heard.
- You can marvel at the physical coordination required of the performer.
- You can appreciate how much a pipe organ is a work of art visually as well as sonically.

What this handbook will do includes:

- It will stimulate your thinking about ways to enlighten your community about the joys and benefits of promoting the organ.
- It will provide you with a multitude of ideas for events, community relations and exposure.
- It will give you suggestions on how to launch and promote recitals
- It will help you to build a constituency for organ music and heighten awareness of the benefits of the organ's repertoire and versatility.
- Through these efforts, it will help you and your members encourage new people to hear the instruments, resulting in more people appreciating organ music
- It will help you and your members lay the foundation for generating an interest in organ that will benefit you for years to come.

These materials are available in hard copy from AGO Headquarters for a small charge to cover production and shipping. The online materials will be updated as new information becomes available.

We wish you great success and applaud your efforts in promoting the benefits of music in your community.

The American Guild of Organists
Committee on Professional Networking and Public Relations
Margaret Evans, director
Barbara McKelway
Sondra Proctor
Larry Schou

15 March 2011

ELEMENTS OF WRITING A PITCH LETTER

What is a pitch letter?

A pitch letter can start off as a question or an interesting fact that relates your chapter to your target audience. For instance, if you were writing for a magazine for a local classical radio station, you could start off "Did you know that more people hear live music played on an organ every week than on any other instrument?" Then lead into your pitch: "Did you know that the organ is one of the world's oldest musical instruments?"

Make your letter no longer than one page; include your telephone number so the reporter can contact you. Sometimes pitches are written to accompany press releases, media advisories or even full press kits.

How is it used?

Pitch letters serve one purpose -- to pique the journalist's interest in your story. They needn't tell the whole story. Rather, they are "teasers" for the meat of your story angle.

What does it look like?

Regular business letter formatting is fine.

What should I put in my pitch letter?

Start off with your best shot. In the first sentence, try to give the reporter something that will provoke a reaction such as "Gee, I never knew that" or "That's an interesting angle for a story." Or better yet try to get the reporter to think both things! Don't worry about formalities, and don't bury your angle in hype.

Target your pitch

Even if you have only one version of a press release, you can still target your pitch to a particular media outlet by crafting a specific pitch letter. The purpose of the pitch letter in this case is to frame the story in a way that makes it clear to the journalist that it fits in with that media outlet's approach.

WRITING A PRESS RELEASE

What is a press release?

By definition, a press release is simply a statement prepared for distribution to the media. The purpose of a press release is to give journalists information that is useful, accurate and interesting.

How is a press release used?

Press releases are often sent alone, by e-mail, fax, or regular mail. They can also be part of a full press kit or may be accompanied by a pitch letter.

[AGO or CHAPTER LOGO HERE]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Jill Smith
Publicity, your local chapter name
jill@anytown.com
[phone no.]

**MAIN TITLE OF PRESS RELEASE GOES HERE
IN ALL UPPERCASE**

Subtitle Goes Here [use upper and lower case plus italics]

NEW YORK, NY. (DATE) — The lead paragraph includes the "who, what, when, where and how" of the story. The body of the press release begins with the date and city for which the press release is originated (should be typed in a clear, basic font such as Times New Roman, or Arial and double-spaced). The first paragraph of the press release should contain in brief detail what the press release is about. If the reporter were to read only the lead of a good press release, he'd have everything he needed to get started.

The second paragraph explains in detail why the event or activity is important and why potential audiences should want to attend. Also included in the second paragraph is

generally a quote that gives the release both a personal touch and adds credibility. A 'human interest' angle or anything that pulls at the heartstrings is sure to catch the journalist's eye. The balance of the press release serves to back up whatever claims were made in the lead and headline.

The third and generally final paragraph is a summation of the release and gives further information on your chapter with the chapter contact information clearly spelled out.

Finally, insert a boilerplate statement, describing the AGO, your chapter, and what you do

(include the AGO and chapter Web sites, if possible).

###

(NOTE: the three #'s mark the end of the press release).

If you would like more information about this topic or to schedule an interview with John Smith, please call Jill Smith at _____ or email her at _____.

NOTE: If your press release exceeds one page, the second page should indicate Page Two in the upper right hand corner.

Some Key Things to Remember:

- Stay away from extreme phrases like "breakthrough," "unique," "the best," "one of a kind," etc.
- Always write it from a journalist's perspective. Never use "I" or "we" unless it's in a quote.
- Shorter is better. If you can say it in two pages, great. If you can say it in one page, even better.

A Newsworthy Message Is:

- Something unique.
- A seasonal activity or problem
- An unusual event
- A new solution to an old problem
- The local aspects of a national story

Timing Is Everything:

Contact the media in your area and ask them what their deadlines are since lead times vary greatly for different media outlets. Magazines may require several months between hearing your pitch and publishing a story, while newspapers usually need one to two weeks of lead-time.

Calendars for listings of arts events also have a variety of deadlines. Don't forget to contact your classical radio station, if you have one, to see about possible interviews and on-air announcements.

Radio and television news stations are generally focused on breaking news, which means you will need to act fast and, if possible, create a message relating to the hot topic of the day or week.

WRITING A MEDIA ALERT

A media alert is used to publicize events to TV and radio. It is different from a press release because it includes only the basic information pushing the reporter to attend the event.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-February 22, 2008
Contact: Jill Smith, Publicity, Timbuktu Chapter,
The American Guild of Organists
Phone: (303) 555-6600, ext. 119
Email: jill@anywhere.com

HEADLINE, BOLD TYPE, CENTERED

A media alert is a “who, what, where, when, why, how” outline of a newsworthy event or announcement. It is appropriate in the following circumstances:

- The news it outlines is extremely timely and you need to get the information to the news media as quickly as possible.
- You are sending the alert as a reminder of a previous, very important news release.

A media alert generally is faxed or e-mailed to newsrooms or community calendar editors. Media advisories are short and to the point—not more than one page. A media alert begins with the most important information (often the “what”) and then moves to the second-most important area (often the “who”) and so on.

After the heading, arrange the information something like this:

WHAT: Describe what it is that’s going on.

WHO: Talk about your chapter and its role. Or, list the people who will be attending or are invited to the event or participating in the activity.

WHEN: Provide the date and time.

WHERE: Include very specific location information, including street address and directions if necessary.

WHY: Give the relevance here. Why is this important in your community or to your chapter?

HOW: If applicable, provide information on how people can get tickets, donate, etc.

URL: Your chapter's or the guest artist's URL

****NOTE:** The last paragraph of every alert should be a “boilerplate” about your chapter. An example: The Timbuktu Chapter of the American Guild of Organists is comprised of people interested in the organ and in organ literature in the greater Timbuktu area.

###

BACKGROUND:

- Focus On: Why Is This Relevant To Your Community? Why Should A Reporter Attend?
- Statistics/facts/figures show that the issue is significant.
- Include enough material to grab a reporter's attention, but not too much-- so that the reporter still needs to attend the event.
- Let reporters know if there will be photo or interview opportunities.
- Keep it short, simple and fun!

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO KEEP IN MIND:

Timing will play a large part in distributing your media alert. Ideally you will have already sent out a press release to relevant media.

The media alert will serve as a "last minute reminder" for media individuals.

Generally you'll want to send the media alert the week of the event; Monday the week of the event is the ideal time. If your event takes place on Monday or Tuesday you may want to send it out a bit earlier. Remember that it's always a good idea to make follow up phone calls.

ELEMENTS OF WRITING A PITCH LETTER

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PITCHING YOUR STORIES

When pitching your story to the media, remember you only get one opportunity to make a first impression. Be ready to pitch your story in 30 seconds or less. Identify why your story is significant to the media source and how readers can benefit from your story.

Here are some tips to make this task easier:

1. Research.

Make sure to find media publications that are interested in the arts (for a recital or musical program) or education (for Pedals, Pipes, and Pizza, or POEs), for example. Look for chemistry by selecting publications that would naturally focus on your concert or activity. This is the single most important step to receive the most free publicity exposure. You may have a great release or story, but if it's pitched to the *wrong* media outlet, you can be sure it will almost never get picked up.

2. Call at the right time.

If possible, call a week before your story will break to give reporters time to prepare for it and inform their editors. Call when the reporter is not likely to be "on deadline," usually early in the day the first few hours of his or her workday. Even then, always ask journalists if they have time to hear about your story. Don't ask if they received your release; even if they did they may have forgotten or misplaced it. Assume they know nothing about your story and say something like this:

"Hello I'm [Name] from the [Name] Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, and I have a good story for you about our organization offering a free concert. Is this a good time to talk?"

3. Be Prepared.

Don't make anonymous calls to the media and try to explain your story to receptionists and desk clerks. Call directly or ask by name for the reporter or editor who should have your story. Then, be able to present it in 30 seconds. Tell the story the way the media might tell it to their audience. If necessary, write a script that quickly gets into the heart of the story. Emphasize the newsworthy elements--the importance of the event, the unprecedented angle ("It's the first..."), the significance of the story to the writer's readers and its connection to other issues in the arts community.

4. Make Your Calls Near a Fax Machine.

Even if you already mailed or faxed media alerts or press releases to reporters and editors, be prepared to fax additional copies after your pitch call. Journalists often lose or misplace your releases in the newsroom clutter, and it's easier to send a fresh copy when the story is on their minds.

5. Be Ready With Specifics.

Have detailed information to back up your pitch, and be prepared to give out telephone numbers or email addresses of people who can be interviewed to tell these stories. Know

your information so well that you can answer most questions then and there.

6. Be Persistent But Don't Be A Pest.

Most journalists cannot promise to do your story at the time of your call. When they say they will "look into it and do what they can," that's about all the commitment you can get. If you push further, you risk alienating the journalists and driving them away from you and your stories.

7. Offer To Do More To Make Their Job Easier.

Journalists often have too much to do in too little time. They are more likely to do stories that are easy for them to research and report. Offer to do whatever you can to make this job easier.

8. Be Pleasant And Upbeat.

Your story may have ramifications and be emotionally stirring, but don't let that infect your pitch. Journalists like enthusiasm, but they do not like sermons with their story ideas.

Media publications run on news and supplying news is what will get you free publicity. Mastering how to strategize to receive the best media publicity involves knowing how to match your story pitch to the right publications. Keep researching, keep pitching!

Tips on Email Pitching:

1. Focus Your Subject.

Compose a clear and concise email subject and include your name and/or your chapter's name, etc.

2. Directly Address Your Point - FAST.

Use your first 2-3 sentences in your email to tell the recipient who you are pitching and why. What is the key point you are trying to make? What is the "hook" or angle of your pitch? Reporters don't have time to read an entire email to try to figure it out.

3. Provide a VERY Short Bio.

Zero in on highlights, the ones most relevant to your pitch - don't just copy and paste a lengthy boilerplate bio. A short bio is one paragraph with 5-6 sentences.

4. Avoid Clichés.

Don't use age-old clichés to try to sell your event such as "This concert will be the best concert in this area in years," or "The artist overcame enormous odds to find success." The story should speak for itself without the clichés or hyperbole. Try to distill what makes it interesting or different or newsworthy into one concise statement.

5. Save the Press Release for Last.

Pasting a recent or relevant release at the end of the pitch can be helpful, and a reporter will glance at it if the pitch has grabbed his or her attention.

6. Make Follow-ups Clear.

If the reporter has responded to you and you are now following up, include the previous email exchanges you've had with them to refresh their memory. The worst follow-up emails are the ones that come all too often with nothing more than "Just wanted to know if you were interested in interviewing so-and-so for your article."

7. Do Not Attach Files for Reporters.

Unless you have been given specific instructions to send a reporter attached files, make it a rule never to attach files to reporters. If you can, use links to online resources. If you must send an attachment, never do it with your pitch but instead offer to send other documents and specify the file type and size or at least ask permission. If the core of your pitch is in an attached file, realize that 9 times out of 10, your strongest selling points are going into a trash bin.

The most important thing to remember when pitching by email is that each reporter is different, and each has his or her own preference. It never hurts to email them first and ask what they'd prefer to receive.

SUGGESTED STORY IDEAS FOR YOUR CHAPTER

There are a variety of story ideas that you can use to interest your local media. Events open to the public are always good to use, as well as awards or special recognitions that you or your chapter have received or that you have bestowing on others.

Other suggestions are:

- Upcoming organ recitals, especially those with unusual programming, an outstanding artist, etc.
- Anniversaries, special occasions
- Colorful and interesting Chapter members (for human interest stories)
- Awards and recognition such as the name of the newly installed Dean and other officers after a chapter election
- Organ installation, dedication, re-dedication, anniversary
- Child prodigies
- Special events, concerts
- Education events the Chapter may host such as Pipes, Pedals, and Pizza for young people, a Pipe Organ Encounter for teens, a Pipe Organ Encounter Plus for adults, workshops, master classes, hymn festivals, and regional conventions
- Leadership of such events or participation in them by specific Chapter members.
- Scholarship program activities including: announcement of a new scholarship program, availability of applications and audition schedule for a continuing program, award winners' names, etc.
- Announcement of the names of those receiving Guild certification, plus a description of those levels of certification
- Competition winners from your Chapter, or your Chapter's role in having a local, or Chapter level, RCYO competition

Organs Are Not Just For Churches

Did you know that in the early 20th century, organs reached an unprecedented popularity as instruments for concerts, entertainment, and education? Organs were built in concert halls, municipal buildings, universities, homes, public schools, and even millionaires' yachts.

In 1958 the Dutch-built Flentrop organ arrived at Harvard University and more recently a long-awaited \$1.5 million organ was installed at the University of North Texas Murchison Performing Arts Center.

As you can see, organs are still going strong and not just in houses of worship!

The American Guild of Organists (AGO) is the national professional association serving the organ and choral music fields. AGO serves approximately 18,000 members in over 330 chapters through the United States, Europe, Korea, Singapore, Bermuda, Taiwan, Sydney, and Argentina.

Here are some statistics and facts on organs that might help for a good story idea to spark your interest:

- As an instrument with a broad artistic construct, the organ can play everything from symphonies to jazz. It has been an instrument played by a spectrum of the musical giants throughout history, from jazz great Fats Waller to symphonic master Beethoven.
- The wide range of pipes found in each organ reveals an astonishing palette of musical hues that speak out of each "stop." There are metal pipes, wooden pipes. Open pipes, stopped pipes, pipes with chimneys, cylindrical pipes, conical pipes, tapered pipes, and over-blowing pipes.
- In 1939 Rockefeller Center completed its theater organ at Radio City Music Hall. It proved to be the last large theater organ built in the United States. Each December the organ is played during the famous Radio City Christmas Spectacular!

If you would like to speak with regional organ experts, please feel free to contact me anytime and I will be more than happy to assist you in setting up an interview.

For more information on the AGO, please visit www.agohq.org.

Thank you and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Kind Regards,
Sue Smith

Hello Phyllis,

I wanted to run a segment idea by you that could be fun and interesting for your listeners: **the organ...in all its glory!** With its roots extending back to ancient Rome, the organ was **the world's first keyboard instrument.** It can have as many as 30,000 pipes, from the size of a pencil to the length of a trailer truck, and these pipes can be constructed from a variety of materials and formed into various shapes.

Most Americans today associate the pipe organ with church music, and the instrument remains a little known byway of musical and cultural history. The truth is, the organ has always had a more widespread role in our culture. In fact, it's been played by a large number of musical giants throughout history, from jazz great Fats Waller to Beethoven. It has also enjoyed somewhat of a resurgence in interest in recent years due to the opening of new concert halls, with organs, in Boston, Nashville, Jackson, and Los Angeles, among other cities.

If you're interested in pursuing this, I could supply you with a wealth of audio tapes and video background information, including how organs are constructed and the largest and most unique organs in existence today, as well as arrange a spokesperson for you. The person I would like to suggest is **a child prodigy living in Philarcadia named Janet Christiansen. Janet is an eighth grader and is Organ Scholar at the Philarcadia Cathedral.** She's an amazing talent at her young age and would be happy to talk with you and/or demonstrate her organ playing skills. I've attached a copy of her C.V. so you can get a better idea of her musical background. If you would prefer a Los Angeles-based spokesperson, I could arrange that as well, with, for example, the organist for the Disney Concert Hall or the El Capitan Theatre.

I would be happy to provide you with additional information, if you'd like. In the meantime, I'd suggest you also check out the AGO website (www.agohq.org).

Thanks so much,

Joe Black
The Publicity Center
300-000-0000
jblack@thepublicitycenter.org

HOW TO WRITE A FACT SHEET

What is a fact sheet?

A fact sheet is an important, at-a-glance tool used in public relations to provide an overall view of your chapter. Though fact sheets can stand alone, they are more commonly used to supplement a news release, anchor a press kit, or replace a brochure. If you already have a fact sheet, make sure it is up-to-date.

What are its elements?

A fact sheet is generally one or two pages and includes “the who, what, when, where, why and how” about a chapter or event. Components of a fact sheet include the following:

- Your chapter name, address and phone number should be on the upper left. If using chapter letterhead, disregard this step.
- A contact name, title, and phone number should be on the upper right.
- Triple space down and type the name of the subject. This should be centered and in upper case letters.
- Double space down and type “Fact Sheet,” which should also be centered.
- The body of the fact sheet is set up in two columns. The left side includes the headings, such as history, vision, mission, purpose, future, etc., all in upper case lettering. The right side contains the heading descriptions. The descriptions should consist of short sentences that align under the second column.
- If the document is longer than one page, type “-more-” at the center of the bottom of the first page.
- At the end of the fact sheet, “###” should be centered and inserted.
- Finally, double space down and type the month and year, flush right.

Once you have a completed fact sheet, create a clear and specific distribution plan so you can ensure that your target publics receive the information. Begin with deciding which publics you want to receive the item and the best way to get it into their hands. For example, you may want to include the fact sheet in new member mailings, emails, and on your Web site.

Why is it used?

The point of a fact sheet or action alert is to get the reader to do something. Providing more information than you need to convince him or her is a waste of the reader's time and

risks losing his or her attention. Make it as easy as possible for him or her to take your action. If you want the reader to make a call, give the number.

How long should it be?

- One page is best
- Make it readable - use at least a 12 point font
- Keep the text brief - no one wants to read tons of information in a small font
- Keep the most important information in the first paragraph - what the issue is, what action is needed, and label the main message(s)
- Give references for more information - in electronic communications you can offer links
- The fact sheet must be self-contained - do not refer to previous documents or assume that the reader remembers the information
- Use bullets when you can
- Leave lots of white space
- Make it very clear what you want the reader to do - bold type face, text boxes, and graphics add emphasis
- Give the reader all the tools he/she may need to take action -- do not say "call for more information"; instead give the reader all the information he/she will need

AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS FACT SHEET

- The American Guild of Organists (AGO) is the national professional association serving the organ and choral music fields. The Guild serves approximately 19,000 members in 330 chapters throughout the United States, Europe, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Bermuda, and Sydney.
- The Guild was formed in New York City in 1896. Its first chapter was the Pennsylvania Chapter, formed in 1901. The second chapter, then called the New England Chapter, was formed in 1905. The Guild has been headquartered in New York City since its inception.
- The Guild sponsors competitions in organ performance and improvisation and in organ and choral composition. National and regional conventions, held in alternate years, present the finest performers.
- AGO has received many prestigious awards, such as The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) Award, as well as various grants including ones from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).
- *The American Organist* magazine, published monthly by AGO, is the most widely read journal devoted to organ and choral music in the world.
- The newest chapter of the Guild is the Brigham Young University Idaho Chapter, formed in 2006.
- Currently there are 330 active chapters.

Media Contact:

James Thomashower
American Guild of Organists
New York, NY 10115
(212) 870-2311 x4300
jet@agohq.org

HOW TO WRITE A CHAPTER BACKGROUNDER

A chapter backgrounder is a document outlining the work of your chapter. It is written for the media. You want to include all the information that is relevant to your organization such as your purpose, your constituents, and what you do in the community.

8 Steps to writing a great backgrounder:

Step 1:

Include your chapter name, description and the main activities your chapter does. List the points that would convince someone that your chapter is one of the best arts organizations in your area. Explain why.

Step 2:

Know your members and potential members. Know your audiences. Know to whom you are speaking to and why your chapter is one of the best arts organizations in your area.

Step 3:

Keep the backgrounder professional and straightforward. You want to convey the main points and not impress someone with flashy material. Stick to the facts.

Step 4:

Include background information about your chapter including a brief history of the AGO and your chapter. Tell how you got started and where you are today. Talk about what you hope to achieve.

Step 5:

Be confident and show why your chapter is newsworthy.

Step 6:

Know the number of your current and potential members and the sizes of your audiences for chapter and other organ-related activities. Describe them in detail.

Step 7:

Include the names and positions of the officers of your chapter. Describe your financial situation with regards to your programs and activities. If you have a special fund for scholarships or guest artists, etc., describe that.

Step 8:

Use basic design principles. Keep the document short and easy to read. Use short paragraphs with headings for each section. Use white space to separate the sections. Readers can then browse for the information they need.

THE AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS (AGO)

CORPORATE BACKGROUNDER

Founded in 1896, the American Guild of Organists (AGO) is the national professional association serving the organ and choral music fields. The Guild serves approximately 18,000 members in over 330 chapters throughout the United States, Europe, Singapore, Korea, Taiwan, Bermuda, Sydney, and Argentina.

The AGO was formed as both an educational and service organization to promote the organ in its historic and evolving roles, to encourage excellence in the performance of organ and choral music, and to provide a forum for mutual support, inspiration, education, and certification of Guild members. Its members seek to set and maintain high musical standards and to promote an understanding and appreciation of all aspects of organ and choral music.

Under the leadership of the National Council, a network consisting of volunteer committees and officials at the national, regional, district and local levels directs the activities of the Guild. Headquartered in New York City, the AGO maintains a full-time staff that supports and coordinates publication, administration, and development activities of the organization. For purposes of administration and representation, the Guild is divided into nine geographical regions, with each chapter assigned to one of them.

The goals of the American Guild of Organists are:

- To advance the cause of organ and choral music, to increase their contributions to aesthetic and religious experiences, and to promote understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of them.
- To improve the proficiency of organists and choral conductors.
- To evaluate, by examination, attainments in organ playing, choral techniques, and conducting, as well as in music theory and general knowledge of music, and to grant certificates to those who pass such examinations at specified levels of attainment.
- To provide members with opportunities to meet for discussion of professional topics, and to pursue other activities contributing to the fulfillment of the purposes of the Guild.

The AGO holds both national and regional conventions. The National Convention is held in even-numbered years and reflects the diverse aspects of the Guild and its official work across the country. Held as a function of the national organization in partnership with a selected chapter, it represents a coalition between the national and the host chapter's leaderships. This joint venture combines the talents and creative strengths of each, and represents the larger vision of the whole membership and its needs. The location and

dates of the next National Convention can be found on the AGO website,
www.agohq.org.

The AGO Regional Conventions are held during the summer of odd-numbered years. For more information on regional locations and dates, please visit the AGO website.

Media Contact:

James Thomashower
The American Guild of Organists
475 Riverside Drive, Suite 1260
New York, NY 10115
212-870-2311 x 4300
jet@agohq.org

5 IMPORTANT POINTS ABOUT WRITING A PROFESSIONAL BIO

(you might also use this in writing a bio about an artist)

1. Keep it short

When writing a bio, remember the difference between bio and biography.
Bio = short. Biography = long.

A good bio is short. If it's too long, people won't read it.

Most of the time it's best to limit your bio to three or four sentences. This is particularly true for a professional bio that you would use when being introduced as a recitalist or at the end of an article you have written, or if you are writing about an artist.

When writing a bio for your Web site, you can make it a little longer.

2. Write in the third person

Write your professional bio as though someone else is talking about you.

Use your full name (first and last) the first time. After that, it's up to you whether you want to refer to yourself by your full name, just your first name, or just your last name.

Here are some tips to keep in mind about the use of your name:

- First names are friendly and informal, while last names are more conservative and formal
- Use your first name if you are trying to develop a relationship with your reader
Use your last name (e.g. "Smith graduated from" instead of "Tom graduated from") if you want your reader to be impressed by you
- Use titles (Professor or Dr., for example) if you think the use of them will convey more to your audience. Whichever form you decide to use, keep it consistent throughout your bio

3. Briefly highlight your main achievements

The key word here is "briefly." It's really important to understand that a professional bio is not a résumé.

Think of your professional bio as a little advertisement for you or your artist. Remember, the best advertisements are memorable because they get the message across with very few words.

Ideally, your professional bio will address:

- 1) who you are
- 2) your expertise
- 3) how to contact you

4. Personal information is optional

It is completely optional whether or not to include personal information as to where you're from, whom you live with, and what you like doing in your spare time.

5. Let your personality show

Since your professional bio is an advertisement for you, make it reflect the real you. If you're a down-to-earth person, use unpretentious language. If you have a particular passion, let the reader know. If you love to joke around, include some humor in your bio (but be careful--humor can be tricky).

Make sure all information is current.

Margaret R. Evans
Biographical Sketch

Dr. Margaret R. Evans is professor emerita of Music and University Organist at Southern Oregon University in Ashland and Music Director at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Medford, OR.

She served as national vice president of the American Guild of Organists (AGO) where her duties included chairing the Professional Networking and Public Relations Committee. In that role, she was responsible for coordinating a year-long celebration of the organ designated as the International Year of the Organ (July 2008-June 2009). The showcase event of the celebration was the Organ Spectacular, held on October 19, 2008, which included several hundred events in the United States and abroad, and featured the premiering of an original commissioned work for organ by Stephen Paulus.

A veteran of many organ recitals throughout the United States, Dr. Evans has performed at regional conventions of the American Guild of Organists and at the Summer Organ Festival in Balboa Park, San Diego. She also served as convention coordinator of the northwest regional convention of the AGO held in southern Oregon in 1997.

Dr. Evans holds degrees from Chatham University, the University of Michigan, and the Eastman School of Music (The University of Rochester). She also earned the Performer's Certificate in Organ from Eastman.

The author of numerous articles for *The American Organist* and *The Diapason*, Dr. Evans is a member of the American Guild of Organists, the Association of Anglican Musicians, the American Guild of English Handbell Ringers, and Phi Beta Kappa.

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GENERATING EXPOSURE

If you plan to have chapter events and recitals open to the public, then advertising and public relations should be an integral part of your efforts.

Generating exposure varies greatly, depending on where you are located. In large metropolitan areas, advertising is more expensive and publicity is more difficult to generate. Editors of newspapers and magazines in smaller communities are more likely to care about local activities than big city dailies.

A successful recital or event will require planning, coordination and, of course, hard work. Take advantage of all of the resources in your community. Call on local business people, celebrities and media representatives for their support. Recruit volunteers to help with some aspect of the event or recital. You might even consider locating a public relations or journalism intern from a local college or university to help with media relations.

Public Relations:

A major part of public relations is really media relations – that is, communicating with reporters, editors and radio/TV producers who can relay your message to the general public.

On a local level, you can contact the media in your area to make sure they are aware of your chapter activities. In this kit are tips on how to work with the media and examples of how to write a press release or call an editor. Knowing how the media operates will help you increase your publicity opportunities.

As you write your releases and /or talk to the media, keep in mind that furthering people's knowledge and interest in the organ is the main message. Don't worry – your recital will still get loads of coverage, but you don't want to appear too self-serving. A reporter must look for stories that will be interesting and new to a large number of people.

Reporters are looking for good stories. So what constitutes a good story? Ask yourself:

- If I weren't interested in the organ, would I read this story?
- Is it interesting to others?
- Does it sound like a fun event?
- Am I focusing on the most unusual, colorful and exciting aspects?
- Does this sound too much like an advertisement?

Getting the word out:

There are dozens of ways of getting our message to the public. Be creative and look beyond radio and television. Think about your audience. Who are they? Where do they shop? What do they do for fun? Look for alternative media, such as:

- **Posters:** put up in store, restaurant and grocery windows, at businesses, laundromats, grocery stores, libraries, etc.
- **Flyers:** hand out to your choir members and members of organizations to which you belong
- **Bulletin Boards:** help music teachers to put together bulletin boards about the organ
- **Information about event:**
 - **School Publications:** put information in PTA bulletins.
 - **Club and Church Bulletins or Newsletters:** put information in these
- **Marquees:** ask owners of marquees in your area if they will put up a message about your event (sometimes there will be a fee to do this).
- **Stuffers:**
 - **Utility Bills:** arrange to have inserts about the event placed in your community utility bills.
 - **Bank Statements:** arrange to place inserts in bank statement envelopes. You should apply 6-9 months in advance of the event since most institutions have extremely long lead times.
- **Street banners:** some municipalities will allow these, usually at a fee

PROMOTING YOUR EVENTS AND/OR RECITALS

Television ads: Depending on the size of the market in which you are located, TV may or may not be the most cost-effective way to reach your potential audience. TV ads are not inexpensive. Schedule any TV advertising plans about two months in advance.

News Release: They're called news releases because you should only send them if you have news to announce. Keep them short, simple and to the point. Get the editor's attention in the first paragraph, and be sure you have included all the important details such as your contact information.

Before you send a press release:

Find out who is the most appropriate editor. At some publications, it may be the features editor – at others, the music editor.

If you have good visuals, contact the photo editor. Find out their policy on using photos – every organization has its own policy.

Find out how far in advance you should send materials to make the deadline.

Remember to include the minority or foreign language publications.

When you send the information:

Be sure it is all correct and you have included the “what, when, where, who and why.” Nothing irritates a busy reporter more than having to call back to find out basic details of an event or recital.

Always include a phone number where a responsible representative can be reached during the day (a night home phone number is greatly appreciated, too).

Don't be afraid to follow up with a phone call. Reporters get hundreds of releases and yours may have been one that was overlooked.

Reporters are busy--especially those at daily newspapers or radio and television stations who have several deadlines a day. Find out those deadlines and avoid calling at those times. Weekly papers tend to have one hectic deadline day a week.

Be reasonable. Recognize that the news media have limits on time and space and must try to please a variety of competing groups (that's why we emphasize making your story have a broad appeal).

If they say no, perhaps you need to tailor your message better for that publication or station.

If you have a business co-sponsor, and that business is a regular advertiser in your local newspapers or on radio stations, you have an advantage. The advertising salesperson can get you in touch with the right editorial contact.

Photo releases: if your event/recital has a visual element, make sure you capture it on film and send it to the local newspaper. Remember, editors hate “grip and grin” photos that depict people shaking hands and smiling at the photographer. The same goes for holding a plaque, cutting a ribbon or breaking ground with a shovel. Try to be creative.

Media alert: When you want the media to attend your event, it’s a good idea to send a one-page alert that just tells the “what, where, when, why and who” of what’s happening. If you are going to alert the media, you must have something newsworthy when they show up – no crying wolf. An open house or contest drawing is *not* news. A celebrity performing or an organ-playing marathon could be newsworthy.

Query to TV/radio talk shows: While most of the top rated television talk shows only want celebrities or high-powered guests (particularly in larger cities), most stations have public affairs shows that air in the early mornings that are open to ideas for guests. Cable stations also have original programming for which they need guests. This might be an opportunity to suggest a guest for a segment. Potential guests might be an animated, enthusiastic organ recitalist talking about playing throughout the world, or the person responsible for a Pedals, Pipes, and Pizza who is firmly committed to educating young people about the organ. A local organist could talk about the plans for a new instrument. These topics would work well on radio talk shows, too. Once you’ve formulated an idea, call the producer of the show and suggest the idea to him or her. Have in mind a spokesperson that can deliver the message in an exciting manner. It’s better to have no one on a show than to book a guest who is boring and turns people off to the organ!

Direct mail: Despite rising postage and printing costs, sometimes the best way to reach your potential audience is through direct mail. Does your chapter have a mailing list? Can you get the mailing list from other musical organizations (local symphony, local choirs, etc.)? Can you use a church's bulk mailing permit to mail a flyer?

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Think for a moment about why you chose to join the AGO. Probably because you love playing or listening to the organ or you are interested in exactly how it works and looks. You probably believe in the importance of music. So how can you convey your interest and passion about the organ to those in your community?

Your dedication to music will inspire and stimulate the participation of others. Here are a few things you can do to promote a healthy musical environment in your community:

- Develop and post flyers and that highlight organ recitals, programs, and activities in your community.
- Invite members of your church and choir to organ events.
- If you or someone else in your chapter is a good public speaker, offer to give programs about the benefits of music study, especially organ study, at community meetings, such as the Rotary Club, Toastmasters, Chamber of Commerce, mixers, PTA, etc.
- Encourage your local keyboard teachers to get involved in your organ events. Perhaps offer a workshop on organ fundamentals for piano teachers and students. When it comes to inspiring the love of music, independent studio teachers are effective and influential persons in any community.
- Encourage your local organ technicians and organ builders to have a workshop to talk about how the organ works. Then encourage anyone interested in engineering (especially those at a local vocational high school, community college, or university) to attend.
- Serve as a referral service for local music students desiring organ teachers. Invite teachers to submit résumés of their training and experience to keep on file for potential students. Send a press release about your referral service to local newspapers, especially neighborhood and suburban newspapers.
- Coordinate with local scouting groups to help young people earn badges in music achievement. Offer an organ demonstration to local scouting groups.
- Offer "crawls" of several local organs to school students, music clubs and senior citizens' groups.
- Start a scholarship program for deserving students in your community. Approach local businesses in your area about helping sponsor such a program. Scholarships could be offered for private organ study or the use of an organ for a year. Consider a scholarship for students planning a career in music teaching.

- Make an annual gift to the organ department of a local or regional college or university in the name of your chapter.
- Offer to speak at career day programs of local high schools. Invite organ builders, teachers, performers, and technicians to join you so students will have a better impression of the many career paths available in the music industry, and specifically the organ world.
- Sponsor recitals by guest artists for your chapter and the public. Consider having a regional or national competition winner perform.
- Make AGO brochures available for pickup at local doctors' offices, schools and libraries.
- Sponsor workshops on organ care and maintenance, for members and non-members, including organ students and the general public.
- What can just one person do? Plan a month of networking for retailers, teachers, technicians, students, performers and others from your musical community to heighten public awareness of the value of music study. Distribute the AGO brochures in public places, organize a Benefits of Music Speakers Bureau for PTA's and other service clubs, and publicize the benefits of music at every musical performance, both verbally and in print.
- Underwrite a musical educational activity in a public or private school. Even if the events are not held for your chapter, acknowledgement of your assistance in programs identifies your chapter as a source of support in the minds of the community.
- Offer a "Pedals, Pipes, and Pizza" program or an introduction to the organ for students and the general public. See if chapter members might donate their services to teach students, and perhaps follow up with organ lessons on a gratis or reduced fee basis.
- Distribute *The American Organist* or other AGO newsletters to potential members in your area. Promotional copies of *TAO* are available from headquarters upon request.
- Be aware of and support music and education-related bills in your state legislature. Spread the word and help teachers lobby for passage of legislation benefiting music and the arts.
- Make tickets to organ recitals available to students. If necessary, consider arranging transportation for students.
- Sponsor a chapter young artist playing competition.
- Serve as a volunteer or on the board of civic music groups. Invite the music lovers you meet there to attend organ programs.
- Make the AGO videos available to local public television and public access stations.

- Invite past students of the organ teachers in your community to attend an organ teachers' reunion honoring their service faithfully given to your community. After a performance by past and present students, invite participants to speak about the impact organ study has had on their lives. Introduce each teacher and present them with an appropriate token of appreciation for their service to the community.

- Submitted by Richard Bradley, New York, New York

- Invite the magic triangle of parents, teachers and students (including prospective students) to participate in an "Organ Carnival." While the students are playing games which strengthen their musicianship skills, the parents and teachers are discussing their roles in creating a positive learning experience for the child. Invite a panel to address parental concerns such as encouraging children to practice, getting them to continue lessons through times of discouragement, and providing positive reinforcement at home. Invite a prominent leader from the community to discuss the positive impact music has had on his/her life.

- Submitted by Marguerite Miller, Wichita, Kansas

- Encourage members to study for AGO certification exams and then hold an annual dinner for those candidates who are successful.

EDITORIAL CALENDARS/MEDIA CALENDARS

How Are Editorial Calendars Useful?

Each publication's editorial calendar (also called edcal or media calendar) lists the planned editorial content for each issue, providing you with an invaluable guide to story placement opportunities. An editor is much more likely to publish your story if you tailor your pitch to fit to the publication's editorial needs for a particular issue.

How Do I Obtain A Publication's Editorial Calendar?

Not all publications issue an editorial calendar. Most that do will publish their editorial calendars on their Websites. It's often located under "advertising," since the editorial calendar is used by advertising sales reps to sell ads in the publication. You can also call the publication and ask for the advertising sales department to request a free copy. While you're at it, also request the publication's full media kit.

What's The Best Way To Collect And Manage Media Calendars?

First, identify the publications that are appropriate for your story. Then build a list of media calendars by going to their websites and finding their editorial calendars, requesting a media kit, and assembling a spreadsheet of story opportunities. It's a time-consuming and arduous task that is best done on niche subjects with a limited set of media choices.

What Do I Do When I Find An Editorial Opportunity?

You'll undoubtedly find many story opportunity matches - and you'll need to "pitch" your idea to each of them, customizing your pitch to the audience and needs of each publication. There are many online articles about making a PR story pitch to an editor.

The basic rules are:

- 1) Fit your story to the needs of the specific publication
- 2) Offer story ideas or approaches that are distinctive
- 3) Tell the editor how your story idea meets the needs of that publication's audience
- 4) Approach the editor during "down" times
- 5) Keep the pitch succinct

How Far In Advance Should I Pitch Stories For Specific Editorial Calendar Topics?

Assignments and deadlines for most publications are often months in advance of publication date. It's best to contact the editor with your story idea as far in advance as possible - three to four months is not unreasonable. Since editorial calendars change frequently, re-check the media calendar shortly before contacting the editor.

In summary, utilizing editorial or media calendars is an effective PR tool to identify story opportunities and ultimately to obtain more and better media placements.

SEASON BROCHURE, WEBPAGE, AGO PHONE

You might want to consider making a season brochure, listing all of your chapter events that may be of interest to the general public for the program year. You should be sure to include the correct time, date, location, and a brief description of the program. If there are tickets, include the cost and where the tickets would be available. Although this takes some extra work early in the year to get these details worked out, in the end, the effort is worth it. If people come to one event, you would have the brochures available to entice them to attend another.

Think for a moment about all of the other musical organizations in your area which have season brochures. Perhaps some use color and glossy paper; others might be quite simple and in black and white. They don't have to be expensive. Having a brochure is helpful to everyone and might help enlarge your audience.

Webpage

Your chapter webpage is another way to inform the general public, as well as members. If your chapter does not have a webpage, you can have one free through national headquarters. It's easy to learn how to put information on the page. Contact AGO headquarters for details.

You might want to list all of your activities for the year, perhaps even grouping together those in which the general public might be interested. As in the season brochure, make sure the information is correct and as complete as possible. If details change or new ones are added, be sure to update the webpage. It should be accurate and current. If possible, include a phone number or e-mail address that people could use to get more information or to get questions answered.

AGO Phone

Your chapter might want to have a specific phone number for information about your chapter and its events. Perhaps one member is willing to have his or her phone number used for this purpose. Perhaps you will want to set up a separate phone line with an answering machine that can be updated with current information.

Telephone technology is changing very quickly. In some areas it is possible for people to be contacted by e-mail or text message when a message is left on a phone answering machine; the cost involved might be rather small. Do be alert for changes in technology in your area, if you are interesting in having a dedicated AGO phone.

This AGO Phone can also be helpful in enticing new people to become members.

POSTERS, FLYERS, PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS, and CALENDARS

Posters and flyers can be an inexpensive way to advertise your event. They need to contain the essential information: what, who, when, where and its location, what time, cost, and where to get tickets (if applicable). Perhaps you or someone in your chapter knows a graphic designer or artist who can design a template for your chapter. Then each time you have an event, you merely complete the template. Or, perhaps you have a member who would be willing to design a poster or flyer for each event.

The design needs to be eye-catching, but should not overwhelm the information. You don't want people to remember the design of the poster, but not what it's advertising! It can be copied or printed on an eye-catching colored paper. The size can be 8 1/2" by 11" or larger; it can be produced on heavyweight paper or regular paper. Remember, this is used to get the word out!

You also might like to email the flyer, in PDF format to friends, particularly those who belong to other arts organizations. Then they might forward the flyer to their members.

You can ask each member to post several posters around your community: grocery stores, music schools, churches---just about anywhere there is a bulletin board for this purpose.

You might want to produce flyers. Perhaps you could get permission to stuff these in the programs of another musical event close in time to yours. Perhaps you could put them in church bulletins. Be creative in your thinking as to where these might be seen!

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Some media, such as television stations, are obligated to make a certain number of public service announcements (PSA). These are very brief announcements. Again include what, who, when, where and its location, what time, cost, and where to get tickets (if applicable). Contact your local stations as to the lead time needed to include these announcements.

CALENDAR OF THE ARTS/EVENTS LISTINGS

Some newspapers and public radio and television station newsletters include calendars, on-line or in print, on which your event can be posted. If it's a print calendar, there is probably a very early (one or two months ahead) deadline to meet. Radio stations, especially public ones, frequently will make on-air announcements of events. Many of these announcements can be posted on the station's website. Look into the possibilities of these types of calendars in the media in your area. Don't forget the free newspapers, which are either mailed or distributed at grocery stores, etc. Many people look at these.

DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

The most effective techniques are those used before the fact:

- **Return phone calls.** Leaving questions unanswered invites errors and unintentional bias.
- **Respect deadlines.** Return phone calls promptly. Most of the time, reporters need a response in minutes, not hours or days.
- **Be prepared.** This means creating in advance of meetings a very succinct written summary of your event. Minimize acronyms and "organ" jargon.
- **Do not try to dictate a story's content or tone.** Instead provide enough information so that the story tells itself. Very few reporters set out to write an unfavorable story. Usually it is ignorance or laziness that produces one.
- **Cultivate a good source relationship with reporters who "get it right."** They like to be rewarded for their work, just as you do.
- **Alert the media to favorable stories.** Contrary to popular perception, good news gets in the paper too.

When things go wrong, these techniques work *after* the fact:

- **Promptly ask for the correction of factual inaccuracies.** But be brief and specific, and don't get into a debate over the tone of the article; it will cloud your request.
- **Ask for an appointment with the reporter.** Discuss the issue and explain your event. Do not use this session to achieve corrections to a story. Instead, use it as a way to repair the source relationship the reporter has with you.
- **Alert the press to good stories** well before they break, and supply lots of facts.

What To Do During An Interview....How To Handle It, Then?

- Be well briefed. This may mean rereading materials in TAO or on the AGO, artist, or agent website.
- Anticipate questions. Know the background material about the event and the artist. In an in-depth interview, you're not likely to anticipate all the questions, but the more the better. Try to avoid curves.
- Be sure to answer very carefully. This is how to minimize that "I was misquoted" syndrome. The less you have to say on the wing, the better you're going to like the way the story comes out.
- Rehearse. Unless you're a former Secretary of State, with experience in being interviewed almost daily, the more you rehearse the fewer mistakes you're going to make.
- List the key points you want to make, in order of importance. You may not get to make them all, nor will you be assured that they all get printed, but that list of points is the spine of the successful interview.

For a successful interview, everything depends upon this list of points, because if you're careful, and skillful, you can lead the interview. How? By crafting your answers so that those points are made, even if they are not always directly responsive to the question.

Keep it up and you'll be very subtly running the interview. And if you're calm, friendly and cooperative, the reporter brings no inherent hostility, and his editor doesn't cut it or rewrite it, the story will come out the way you want it to.

MEDIA INTERVIEWS

Don't forget the possibilities of media, especially those interested in the arts, interviewing your performers and/or playing their recordings. If your local radio station has a talk show which frequently has artists interviewed and if your artist has the time, try to set up an interview. If your artist has a CD or DVD, see if your local media would be interested in playing parts of it, and announcing that the artist will be in the area. Sometimes, for public media, it helps if your chapter members offer to answer phones for a fund drive. When your group is announced as the phone answerers, your event can also be mentioned.

MEDIA FOLLOW UP

When to follow-up with the media:

Goals of the initial follow up call:

- To make a quick initial introduction
- To make sure they got the packet, release or pitch letter and/or had a chance to look at it
- To make sure you have all the necessary contact information for them
- To set up a good time to call and discuss the materials and event

The following tips will boost your chances of success:

- Media should be called approximately two to three days after sending the pitch letter.
- Be courteous, and ask if the reporter has time to talk. If not, offer to call back at a more convenient time.
- If the reporter can talk to you, keep your initial pitch to *20 seconds*; afterward, offer to send written information to support your story ideas.
- Know exactly what you're going to say before you telephone the reporter. Have it written down in front of you--it's easier, and you'll feel more confident.
- Everyone likes a compliment. If you've read a story you particularly enjoyed by the reporter you're contacting, let him or her know. This will also show that you're familiar with the reporter's work.
- Be persistent. Remember, not everyone will be interested. If your story idea is turned down, try to find out why and use that information to improve your next pitch. Just keep going, and don't give up. You will succeed eventually.
- If a reporter rejects your idea, ask if he or she can recommend someone else who might be interested.
- Don't be a pest. You can easily be persistent without being annoying. Use your instincts; if the reporter sounds rushed, offer to call back.
- Be helpful and become a resource by providing reporters with information. Remember, they need your story ideas. There are only so many they can come up with on their own.
- Always remember that assistants get promoted. Be nice to everyone you speak with, no matter how low they are on the totem pole. After you establish a connection, keep in touch; you never know where people will end up.
- Say thank you. When you succeed in getting publicity for your chapter, always write a thank-you note to the reporter who worked on it with you. You'd be surprised how much a note means.

Plan your publicity efforts just as carefully as you plan the rest of your event. You'll be glad you made the effort when you see your event featured in the news.

NEW MEDIA

What is New Media?

New media rely on digital technologies, allowing for previously separate media to converge. Media convergence is defined as a phenomenon of new media and this can be explained as digital media. The idea of new media captures both the development of unique forms of digital media, and the remaking of more traditional media forms to adopt and adapt to the new media technologies. Convergence captures development futures from old media to new media.

Blogs, podcasts and RSS feeds are all part of new media. MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter are part of social media (also known as viral marketing), which is a branch of new media.

Please note: these media are changing quickly. Your use of them may require some trial and error to see what works. Also, as new media are developed, there will be new opportunities.

A New Approach To Marketing

Chapters can use blogging to indirectly fine-tune their marketing messages through social interactions. With other communication avenues, chapters may be using the wrong language or addressing the wrong audience, but blogging enables faster feedback. From a competitive standpoint, blogging demonstrates to people that a chapter cares about its audience and members. Many organizations also look to blogs for internal communication, whether it's from the executive director or chapter deans, or as a discussion tool among members. They are used for peer support as well, keeping members up to speed on the internal happenings of the organization.

BLOGS: WHAT ARE THEY?

What Is A Blog?

A blog, or weblog, is a regularly updated journal published on the web. Some blogs are intended for a small audience; others vie for readership with national newspapers. Blogs are influential, personal, or both, and they reflect as many topics and opinions as there are people writing them.

Blogs are powerful because they allow millions of people to easily publish and share their ideas, and millions more to read and respond. They engage the writer and reader in an open conversation, and are shifting the Internet paradigm as we know it.

Technorati (<http://technorati.com/pop/blogs>) is a popular website and a recognized authority on what's happening on the World Live Web, right now. The Live Web is the dynamic and always-updating portion of the Web. Technorati is a site that searches and organizes blogs and the other forms of independent, user-generated content (photos, videos, voting, etc.) increasingly referred to as “citizen media.”

How To Start A Blog

1. Determine a theme. Most bloggers take one of three approaches. Some write on whatever happens to interest them at the moment. In this sense, their blog is truly a “web journal.” Others select a single theme and stick to it. However, this takes a lot of discipline. Still others focus on a primary theme but occasionally deviate from it. If you want to develop a following of loyal readers, the latter two approaches are best. People who have similar interests will keep coming back for more.

2. Select a service. These are only a few of scores of services available such as TypePad.com and Xanga.com. Some of these are free, such as Blogger.com, LiveJournal.com, and Windows Live Spaces (also Xanga.com). Others charge a nominal fee. Examples include SquareSpace.com, Blog-City.com, and TypePad.com. However, even the fee-based services usually offer a 30- to 60-day free trial.

3. Set up your blog. Don't be put off because it sounds technical. It usually isn't. You will have to make some decisions about how you want your blog to look. You'll have to decide on a “theme,” meaning the colors, number of columns, and the overall look and feel of your blog. You may want to include your picture. If so, you'll need a digital copy.

4. Write your first post. Okay, now you're ready to create your first post. If you haven't done a lot of writing, this may prove to be the most difficult part. If you don't have a lot of experience, keep your posts short. You will get the hang of it when develop momentum and stick to what you know. You probably take for granted the fact that you have a great deal of specialized information that others will find helpful—possibly even fascinating. If you don't know where else to start, begin with a “Welcome to My Blog”

post. Tell your prospective readers why you have started your blog and what kinds of things you intend to write about.

5. Consider using an offline blogging client. This isn't a necessity but it will make blogging much easier. An offline blogging client is like a word processor for blogging. It enables you to write when you're not online and then upload your post when you connect to the Internet. Several popular ones are BlogJet, ecto, and Windows Live Writer.

6. Add the bells and whistles. Most blogs allow you to post the books you are reading, music you are currently listening to, and various other lists. TypePad is especially adept at this. You can also incorporate third-party services. This enables your readers to subscribe to your site and receive an e-mail whenever you post a new entry. The best way to get an idea of what is available is to read other people's blogs and take note of what you like.

7. Publicize your blog. You'll want to make sure you're "pinging" the major weblog tracking sites. Most of the blogging services handle this automatically, as do the offline blogging clients. Don't worry if you don't understand this process. You don't need to understand it to use it. Basically, your service or software will send a notification to the tracking sites to alert them that you have posted a new entry. If your software doesn't allow this, you might want to make use of pingomatic.com. This is a super-easy service that will ping fourteen different services. All you have to do is enter your blog address whenever you post a new entry. If you want to manually enter a comprehensive list of ping services, there's a list to get you started.

8. Write regularly. This is the best advice for building readership. If people like what you write, they will come back. However, if there's nothing new to read, they will eventually lose interest. So, the more regularly you post something, the more your readership will grow. Schedule time to write. At some point, it comes down to making a commitment and sticking to it.

Finally, be patient with yourself. Writing is like anything else. The more you do it, the better you get. If you stick with it, you'll eventually get into the rhythm and joy of it.

How Can Chapters Use Blogs?

Chapters can use blogs to write, review and discuss their current programs, activities, upcoming concerts and recitals.

Pitching Blogs - How To Find Them

- Search for them:
blogsearch.google.com/
technorati.com/
www.blogsearchengine.com

Pitching Blogs – Do’s

- Do your homework and research
- Do read commentaries to understand the readers
- Do develop a relationship with the blogger
- Do keep in mind that they are passionate about the topic of their blog; get as excited as they are

Pitching Blogs - Don’ts

- Don’t pitch blindly
- Be honest. Make sure all comment posts and info to the blogger is accurate
- Don’t underestimate the power of blogs

Standard Rules Don’t Apply

- They *can* take gifts and press trips, when other media can’t
- They are their own editors and can say whatever they want
- It’s easy to lose control over messages and correct information

**Remember that most bloggers are often considered as experts in their category and are frequently quoted in major media.

CHAT ROOMS

What Is A Chat Room?

A chat room or chat room is a term used primarily by the mass media to describe any form of synchronous conferencing, occasionally even asynchronous conferencing. The term can mean any technology ranging from real-time online chat over instant messaging and online forums to fully immersive graphical social environments.

Online chat is a way of communicating by sending text messages to people in the same chat-room in real-time. The oldest form of chat rooms is the text-based variety. The most popular of this kind is Internet Relay Chat (IRC). However, there are also talkers and havens. The popularity of these kinds of chat rooms has waned over the years, and IRC's popularity has rapidly given way to instant messaging. Also a notable number of people were introduced to chat rooms from AOL and web chat sites.

There are also graphical user interface (GUI) text-based chat rooms, which allow users to select an identifying icon and modify the look of their chat environment.

What Is The Purpose Of A Chat Room?

The primary use of a chat room is to share information via text with a group of other users. New technology has enabled the use of file sharing and webcams to be included in some programs and almost all Internet chat or messaging services allow users to display or send to each other photos of themselves. Games are also often played in chat rooms.

Chat rooms usually have stringent rules that they require users to follow in order to maintain integrity and safety for their users. Chat rooms often do not allow advertising in their rooms or flooding, which is continually filling the screen with repetitive text. Typing with caps lock on is usually considered shouting and is discouraged. Chat rooms usually have a list of rules for users to obey when they chat online though they are not usually enforced.

Sometimes chat room venues are moderated either by limiting who is allowed to speak (not common), or by having volunteer moderators patrol the venue watching for disruptive or otherwise undesirable behavior. Most commonly chat rooms are not moderated and users may type what they personally choose to send.

How Can Chapters Use Them?

Chapters can use chat rooms to discuss and promote organ recitals, competitions, upcoming special events, fundraisers, news announcements, etc...Chapters can also form communities and share information with others who have the same interest, background and passion for organ music.

How To Add A Chat Room To A Web Page

Adding a chat room to your Web page encourages users to connect with each other and offer feedback. You can find free chat room utilities on the Internet, along with directions for setting them up and maintaining them.

Step 1:

Type 'free chat room' into a search engine and review the listings, then choose a site that offers an easy-to-use, customizable chat room.

Step 2:

Read the Terms and Conditions. If you decide to use a chat room from any site, you must agree to these.

Step 3:

Register with the site. Be sure to use a valid e-mail address, as the site will send the information to this address.

Step 4:

Once you have received the directions, open your HTML editor and position the cursor where the chat room 'entrance' will be located. Copy the directions and paste them at the insertion point. Copying and pasting the information they send you usually ensures an accurate link.

Step 5:

Save your page and upload it to your Web site, then start a Web browser and go to the page. Verify that the link is correct and that the chat works the way you want it to.

Step 6:

Invite a friend to 'test-drive' the chat with you before announcing it to your visitors.

Tips & Warnings

- The site should be geared toward the interests of your visitors.
- Most free chat rooms are hosted by the site you signed up with, so their advertising or banners may appear on the top or side of the chat page.
- Be clear about the rules for chatting on the chat room entrance page. Users should be aware of the rules and consequences before they enter your chat room. Specify no swearing or no inappropriate materials in the rules, and warn that violators will be removed from the chat.
- Create an FAQ page that lists frequently asked questions and answers, such as 'Why should I not type in ALL CAPS?' A: It is considered 'yelling' in a chat room. An FAQ page will allow you to specify rules and give your visitors an example of good etiquette to follow.

- As the chat room host, you are responsible for what goes on in your chat room. If a chat site consistently receives complaints about your room or chatters disrupting them, the chat site may take action.
- Beware of people who use chat rooms to cause trouble. Make them aware there are serious consequences for their actions (i.e., reporting them to their ISP).

PODCASTING

What Is Podcasting?

Podcasting is a form of audio broadcasting on the Internet. The reason it became linked with the iPod in name was because people downloaded podcasts (audio shows) to listen to on their iPods. However you don't have to listen to podcasts only on iPods; you can use your computer with some music software such as Windows built-in Media Player or other portable music players (iPod competitors) such as Creative Zen or iriver. It really doesn't matter, as long as you have some way to play music on your computer, you will be able to listen to podcasts.

A podcast is an audio file you create in an MP3 – a format, which contains your own radio show or any audio you wish others to have that you upload along with an RSS (Really Simple Syndication) file to a server (your website for instance). Your intended listeners download using one of several programs that have been created to retrieve your audio file automatically, so they can listen to it at their convenience on their own iPod or MP3 player. There are other audio file types that are used for podcasting but in general as long as you have a music player on your computer you should be able to listen to a podcast file.

What Makes Podcasting Different?

You subscribe to podcasts much like you subscribe to blogs. In fact, podcasts are often distributed through a blog; provided your feed reading software handles podcasts, you should be able to either instruct your reader to download new podcasts whenever they become available or manually choose which podcasts you want to download by clicking a link to the audio file. These files can then be listened to on your computer or you can transfer them to your portable player to listen to later. Some podcast feed reading software programs are configured to download and transfer the podcast directly to your portable player automatically. You can plug it in and walk away a few minutes later with your latest podcasts downloaded.

How To Download A Podcast

At the core a podcast is an audio file that is automatically received from the Internet and then synced to your MP3 player. The files are received by subscribing to what's called a podcast feed. Sometimes you also hear this called an RSS feed.

Maybe you have seen the small orange icons on some web pages. This icon is a link to a news feed. Blogs use this kind of feed to deliver new content to their subscribed readers.

The same kind of feed is used to deliver podcast shows to your computer. You don't need to know how the feed works to subscribe. You just need to know that you can subscribe to a podcast feed to get the latest shows when they are released.

You don't have to remember to check for new shows. You don't have to download it. It's done for you. You can think of a podcast as being like a magazine, as you subscribe to it and receive new content regularly.

Even though subscribing to a feed is the most convenient way to receive podcasts, you don't have to subscribe to listen. Many podcasts can also be streamed from the web or downloaded directly as an MP3 file.

Be Aware Of Music Rights

Podcasts usually contain talk back radio style content rather than music. This is mainly because of copyright law. If you broadcast music you don't have the rights to use, then you are taking a risk. Consequently, podcasting has seen the rise of the home-based radio-like personality rather than popstars, with individuals recording talk-back shows from home and distributing to people all over the world. The popular podcast hosts have audiences numbering in the tens of thousands.

An Internet podcast star can potentially reach a much larger audience than any traditional radio personality ever could. With potential numbers in the millions, it's easy to see why there is so much hype behind the technology and why many people are eager to get behind it. Podcasts and blogs are leading a new content distribution revolution on the web that you are going to hear a lot about in the future.

How Are Podcast Made?

Anyone can create a podcast. All over the world, people are creating podcasts on subjects ranging from movies, to technology, to music, to politics and whatever else you can think of. This is new original content made by passionate people who want to share their creativity with the world. There are many different ways to create podcasts depending on your computer platform (PC or MAC).

The cost to start podcasting is so low that anyone can do it. Most podcasters are everyday people like you and me. They could be talking to you driving in their car, sitting in their living room or speaking at a conference. You get to glimpse into their life and into their interests.

Podcasters are creating very raw and real content and listeners are responding. Free from corporate radio and broadcast regulations, you can create whatever kind of show you can imagine.

Some podcasts are "talk show" style. Others introduce you to the latest bands and music. With podcasts you can stay current on the news, get a glimpse into someone's life, listen to movie reviews and the list goes on.

Most podcasts are made by people who are very passionate about their subject, and who are more passionate about their music than organists? Passion is infectious and interesting

to listen to. Since the birth of podcasting, a huge variety of shows have shown up on the Internet. In addition, many major media outlets are also now offering podcasts.

How Can Chapters Use Podcasts?

Chapters can use podcasts to audio broadcast their organ recitals, events and live concerts (assuming they have broadcast permission). Chapters can also create radio/talk shows or any other audio that keeps members, sponsors and donors up-to-date on what's happening with their individual chapters and with the AGO.

****Note: Creating content such as Podcasts and RSS Feeds require specialty knowledge and can't be covered adequately in this document. However, there are many resources available both online and in print.**

RSS FEEDS

What Is RSS?

RSS stands for "Really Simple Syndication." It is a way to easily distribute a list of headlines, update notices, and sometimes content to a wide number of people. It is used by computer programs that organize those headlines and notices for easy reading.

What Problem Does RSS Solve?

Most people are interested in many websites whose content changes on an unpredictable schedule. Examples of such websites are news sites, community and religious organization information pages, product information pages, medical websites, and weblogs. Repeatedly checking each website to see if there is any new content can be very tedious.

Email notification of changes was an early solution to this problem. Unfortunately, when you receive email notifications from multiple websites they are usually disorganized and can get overwhelming, and are often mistaken for spam.

RSS is a better way to be notified of new and changed content. Notifications of changes to multiple websites are handled easily, and the results are presented to you well organized and distinct from email.

How Does RSS Work?

RSS works by having the website author maintain a list of notifications on their website in a standard way. This list of notifications is called an "RSS Feed." People who are interested in finding out the latest headlines or changes can check this list. Special computer programs called "RSS aggregators" have been developed that automatically access the RSS feeds of websites you care about on your behalf and organize the results for you. RSS feeds and aggregators are also sometimes called "RSS Channels" and "RSS Readers."

Producing an RSS feed is very simple, and hundreds of thousands of websites now provide this feature, including major news organizations like the New York Times, the BBC and Reuters, as well as many weblogs.

What Information Does RSS Provide?

RSS provides very basic information. It is made up of a list of items presented in order from newest to oldest. Each item usually consists of a simple title describing the item along with a more complete description and a link to a web page with the actual information being described. Sometimes this description is the full information you want to read (such as the content of a weblog post); other times it is just a summary.

How Can Chapters Use RSS?

Chapters can use RSS feeds to broadcast information about current programs, activities, upcoming concerts and recitals. Also through RSS, chapters have a better way to notify members of new and changed content and other upcoming events.

Other Uses

In addition to notifying readers about news headlines and changes to websites, RSS can be used for many other purposes. There does not even have to be a web page associated with the items listed -- sometimes all the information readers need may be in the titles and descriptions themselves.

Some commonly mentioned uses are:

- Notification of the arrival of new products in a store
- Listing and notifying readers of newsletter issues, including email newsletters
- Weather and other alerts of changing conditions
- Notification of additions of new items to a database, or new members to a group

One RSS aggregator is all that one needs to read all of the RSS feeds, be they headlines, alerts, changes or other notifications. RSS is shaping up to be a very popular and useful means for communicating.

****Note: Creating content such as Podcasts and RSS Feeds requires specialty knowledge and can't be covered adequately in this document. However, there are many resources available both online and in print.**

YOUTUBE

What Is YouTube?

YouTube is a video-sharing website where users can upload, view and share video clips. YouTube uses Adobe Flash technology to display a wide variety of video content, including movie clips, TV clips and music videos, as well as amateur content such as videoblogging and short original videos. It is owned by Google, Inc.

Unregistered users can watch most videos on the site, while registered users are permitted to upload an unlimited number of videos. Related videos, determined by title and tags, appear onscreen to the right of a given video. In YouTube's second year, functions were added to enhance a user's ability to post video 'responses' and subscribe to content feeds.

Hundreds of millions of these videos are watched every day.

Why Is It So Popular?

YouTube is hugely popular for a good reason: It makes it easy for people to upload and view videos online. There's a video on YouTube for just about any topic you can think of. With so many viewers, subscribers, and comments, it is becoming one of the most popular ways to advertise online.

For performers, charities, and others who simply want to get in touch with the public, it has been extremely useful.

Getting Your Video Published on YouTube

Publishing a video on YouTube is not difficult. First you must create an account, and then follow the directions on how to publish your video. There are also websites which give you directions on how to do this.

Channel Type

Members of YouTube.com are invited to be a part of groups called "Channel Types" that make their channel more distinctive. The types are:

- YouTuber: a general viewer of YouTube
- Director: moviemakers displaying their videos for YouTube viewers
- Musician: musicians or bands covering songs or displaying originals or giving lessons on songs, scales, chords, etc.
- Comedian: comedians displaying their comedy bits for YouTube viewers
- Guru: people who are experienced in a certain field make videos of what they do

How Can Chapters Use Video Sharing?

Chapters can use video sharing to promote and showcase past concerts and recitals. Chapters can also emphasize current programs, activities, and/or other upcoming events.

Here are some other video sharing websites you might wish to explore:

- **Google Video** - Uploading this site requires downloading the Google Video Uploader. Website allows plenty of metadata, including a transcript, and you can value your content by assigning a sale price to each clip. You can also give users a "day pass," giving them access to the content for a limited time, but not ownership.
- **Jumpcut** – Scales all videos to a larger size than other sites, but videos don't autoplay and there is not an indication of what portion of the video has already been downloaded.
- **Vimeo** – The site is nice and clean and uses a flash wrapper to play native formats. No download is required and it contains simple and easy uploads.

VIRAL MARKETING

What Is Viral Marketing?

Viral marketing (also known as *buzz marketing*, *grass roots marketing*, *organic marketing* and *word of mouth*), 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.

Off the Internet, viral marketing has been referred to as "word-of-mouth," "creating a buzz," "leveraging the media," and "network marketing." On the Internet, it's called "viral marketing."

Viral marketing is a marketing phenomenon that facilitates and encourages people to pass along a marketing message voluntarily. Viral promotions may take the form of video clips, interactive Flash games, advergames, e-books, brandable software, images or even text messages.

In business, it is claimed that a satisfied customer tells an average of three people about a product or service he/she likes, and eleven people about a product or service which he/she did not like. Viral marketing is based on this natural human behavior.

The goal of marketers interested in creating successful viral marketing programs is to identify individuals with high Social Networking Potential (SNP) and create Viral Messages that appeal to this segment of the population and have a high probability of being passed along.

How Can Chapters Use Viral Marketing?

Chapters can use viral marketing to disseminate information and updates on current programs, activities, upcoming concerts and recitals. No doubt you've gotten e-mail messages where you are asked to pass on the message to x number of people, and don't break the chain! So, if you can come up with a very innovative way to advertise your event or program, you may then be able to get it out on the Internet or via email or text messaging.

TWITTER AND TEXTING

These are also good ways to communicate. The technology is changing very rapidly. Don't overlook these as ways to communicate with your members.