FELLOWSHIPS
IN INFORMATION DESIGN
THE FIRST THREE YEARS
The Open Society Foundations work to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. To achieve this mission, the Open Society Foundations seek to shape public policies that assure greater fairness in political, legal, and economic systems and safeguard fundamental rights. On a local level, the Open Society Foundations implement a range of initiatives to advance justice, education, public health, and independent media. At the same time, the Foundations build alliances across borders and continents on issues such as corruption and freedom of information. The Foundations place a high priority on protecting and improving the lives of people in marginalized communities.

The Open Society Public Health Program promotes health-related policies, laws, and practices that are based on evidence and reflect the values of inclusion, human rights, and justice. The program works to advance the health and human rights of marginalized people by building the capacity of civil society leaders and organizations, and by advocating for greater accountability and transparency in health policy and practice. The Public Health Program engages in five core strategies to advance its mission and goals: grantmaking, capacity building, advocacy, strategic convening, and mobilizing and leveraging funding. The Public Health Program works in Central and Eastern Europe, Southern and Eastern Africa, Southeast Asia, and China.

Additional information on the Open Society Public Health Program can be found at: www.soros.org/health

Parsons The New School for Design and its parent institution The New School have long been dedicated to development aid, democracy, and design. Within Parsons, the MFA Design and Technology (DT) program, focuses on humanitarian design by creating digital products for the public good. Work in DT strives to embody the value of freedom of information and knowledge as a human right. Since 2007, Parsons DT has collaborated with the Open Society Foundations on The Fellowships in Information Design to further these goals.

The Parsons MFA DT program comprises over 300 students and faculty. Their work ranges from interactive applications (including new media, fine art, game design, information visualization, broadcast design, web design, and mobile media) to robotics and narrative animation. DT students come from over 30 countries to study with the most accomplished designers in New York City and participate on the cutting edge of design through partnerships and collaborative projects. As well as working with Open Society Foundations, the program has conducted design research and projects with companies and organizations including Time Warner, Microsoft, Apple, Sony, Electronic Arts, Advanced Micro Devices, Nokia, the UN, the MacArthur Foundation, Human Rights Watch, and the International Red Cross. The Parsons and Open Society Foundations relationship dates back to 2001 when the organizations began to collaborate on building interactive tools for advocacy and open communication. www.parsons.edu/program/dt/
In an effort to strengthen advocacy on health and human rights issues, the Open Society Foundations and Parsons The New School for Design developed “Field Internships in Information Design.” More commonly known as the Parsons Fellowship, this gives NGOs the opportunity to host a graduate student Fellow from the Design and Technology (DT) program. The need for such a program arose in response to how digital technology has revolutionized access to information and communications. By taking advantage of digital technology NGOs can increase the effectiveness of their advocacy campaigns. The Parsons Fellowship allows DT graduate students to support NGOs in developing effective media and communication strategies by sharing their expertise in information design and media production.

Funding for this program is provided by the Health Media Initiative, part of the Open Society Foundations.

In 2007, the Parsons Fellowship was launched with five NGOs in Africa and the former Soviet Union. Fellows provided four weeks of on-site support, followed by four months of off-site technical assistance. This pilot year was evaluated with such success that the on-site fellowship period now runs for 6-8 weeks. NGOs have benefited from the Fellowship and have bolstered their advocacy campaigns, addressing health and human rights issues such as: access to essential medicines; HIV prevention services for people who use drugs; pain relief and palliative care for people with life-limiting illnesses; community- based care for people with intellectual disabilities and mental illnesses; rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons; and health equity through greater government accountability.

The Open Society Foundations and Parsons are pleased to be continuing the Parsons Fellowships.

**THE NGOs**

**2009**
- Health Action International Africa
- Network of Zambian People Living with HIV/AIDS
- Kenya Hospices and Palliative Care Association
- Hospice “Casa Sperantei”
- Association for Self Advocacy
- AIDS and Rights Alliance for Southern Africa

**2008**
- African Palliative Care Association
- Behind The Mask
- Mental Health and Society
- Hospice Palliative Care Association of South Africa

**2007**
- Malawi Health Equity Network
- Botswana Network on Ethics, Law and HIV/AIDS
- Eurasian Harm Reduction Network
- Social AIDS Committee
- Women’sNet
STOP STOCK-OUTS CAMPAIGN
EAST + SOUTHERN AFRICA

Claudio Midolo (2009)  
Network of Zambian People Living with HIV+/Aids (NZP+), Zambia

Michael Ballard (2009)  
Health Action International-Africa (HAI-Africa), Kenya
Health Action International-Africa (HAI-Africa), Nairobi, Kenya

We work for this cause: HAI-Africa supports efforts across the continent to increase access to essential medicines and to improve their rational use through research excellence and evidence-based advocacy. The organization serves as a regional coordinator for communication, advocacy, and materials in the Stop Stock-Outs campaign in Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Uganda, and Zambia. HAI-Africa’s purpose is to achieve a more balanced structure of power that empowers consumers and promotes competent providers and well-informed donors and governments within the philosophy of health as human right. HAI-Africa’s strength is researching and sharing accurate information and collaborating through advocacy, action-oriented research for policy changes, and improved health for all.

Network of Zambian People Living with HIV/AIDS (NZP+), Lusaka, Zambia

We work for this cause: The main goal of NZP+, a nationwide organization, is to improve the quality of life of people living with HIV and AIDS by directly supporting them in matters of health, civil rights, and representation. The strategy to achieve the goal is twofold. First, the organization provides workshops and focus groups open to the public. Second, the NGO operates at the highest echelons of power, advocating at the governmental level for the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS and, more broadly, for the right of every Zambian to receive proper essential healthcare.

The Challenges

Although medication to combat life-threatening diseases such as HIV, tuberculosis, and cancer are widely available in Africa, stock-outs of these drugs are endemic to the clinics and pharmacies used by ordinary people. Medicine users travel long distances, often on foot, to public clinics or hospitals to obtain drugs, only to find that they are not in stock, or priced too high. Public pressure to protest this situation is limited due to poor information exchange on the ground and lack of awareness of the role that an activist can play in ensuring availability of medicines at both the local and national levels.

The Stop Stock-Outs campaign (SSO) calls on governments and health departments to eradicate the critical stock-out problem by developing a transparent drug supply and distribution system, granting a health budget to meet the population’s basic demands, and allowing civil society to be heard at the top level of the medicine supply chain.

NZP+ and HAI-Africa are skilled in outreach and advocacy, however they lack the technical skills to design tools to coordinate efforts regionally and internationally. Midolo and Ballard worked through the summer of 2009 to address this situation.

The Solutions

Pill Check Week

The mission of Pill Check Week was to expose the fact that essential medicines are frequently stocking out in Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, Madagascar, and Zambia despite government assertions to the contrary. It was vital to present conclusive evidence of stock-outs in a clear and meaningful way that would be publicly accessible and readily available to government officials and media outlets.

On advice from the Fellows the NGOs approved introduction of a new automated system for Pill Check Week that would map stock-outs to the SSO website after receiving reports from medicine users via SMS text. The implementation rests on Ushahidi, open source software developed in Kenya and was first used after post election violence to map atrocities in the region. (It has since been used to track election irregularities in Afghanistan and Malawi).

Ballard identified another tool, FrontlineSMS, which retrieves data from mobile telephones and is compatible with Ushahidi. (As it was originally designed, Ushahidi mapping required an administrator to approve reports that have been sent from FrontlineSMS and to manually assign the report to a location on a map.)

Kenya/Zambia - June/July 2009

Photo by Claudio Midolo / Michael Ballard / 2009 Fellow
By adding an intermediary PHP script, Midolo and Ballard enabled text messages from FrontlineSMS to report directly to an Ushahidi database. The final and current iteration of the Pill Check Week product starts with a stock-out reporter texting a mobile telephone connecting to a computer running FrontlineSMS. Latitude and longitude coordinates based on location information contained within the text are retrieved, and information is implanted into Ushahidi’s database. Ushahidi then reports the information to the SSO website map to generate a red dot at the appropriate location. The red dot increases in size as the number of stock-out reports for the area increases. When an internet user clicks on one of the dots, a pop-up bubble displays reported stock-outs in the region. (Before launching the system Midolo provided a redesigned template for the SSO site including a revised stock-outs map visualization, reorganization of content for easier access, and upload forms for additional content types such as video and biographical stock-out stories).

During Pill Check Week medicine users and data collectors reported on the state of the shelves. The volunteer data collectors, a group including nurses, teachers, and social workers, performed as many interviews as possible asking patients exiting public hospitals and clinics whether they had found the medicine they sought.
COMMUNICATIONS

Media Strategies—Workshops, Press Conferences

In Zambia workshops were organized with members of civil society and health support groups during which the results of the Pill Check Week were reported. Stakeholders were informed of the extent of current stock-outs and an array of advocacy strategies to combat the situation. Many workshop participants offered to be volunteers for the next stages of the campaign. At the end of the first Pill Check Week results from four countries were presented at a press conference in downtown Nairobi. The story was covered by every major Kenyan newspaper as well as KTN and K24 TV channels, blogs, and capital FM.

Media Strategies—Radio Campaigns

Radio is the medium of choice in rural Africa, as television and the Internet are for the most part accessible only in urban areas. Through SSO broadcasts the southwestern African radio audience learned of its fundamental right to receive medical attention in public clinics and hospitals, particularly in the form of essential medicines, which by law are required to be in stock at all times and available for free or at minimal cost. These rights date back forty years to a World Health Organization agreement in which Zambia and other countries agreed to supply essential medicines to their populations. In the broadcasts the Pill Check Week action was described, as well as the data it collected describing widespread stock-outs across the region.

Media Strategies—Documentary Video

Midolo and Ballard teamed up to create a documentary focusing on testimony from medicine users and health care providers in both Zambia and Kenya. It was featured on stopstockouts.org and social networking channels.

Claudio Midolo
Parsons OSF 2009 Fellow

“Open Society Foundations asked me to create a simple video documenting how the essential medicines stock-out problem was felt by ordinary people. NZP+ chose three subjects, each able to describe a different piece of the stock-out scene—a medicine user whose life is endangered due to stock-outs, a nurse who struggles daily to improvise treatment solutions to stock-out problems, and a pharmacist who works with government central supply center and describes the real logistical difficulties for organization and dispatch of medical kits in given areas.”

Michael Ballard
Parsons OSF 2009 Fellow

“The ideal next step would be to gain access to official medicine stock data and distribute it through the SMS system. Medicine users could text in their location and medication to find out where it is available in order to save them a futile visit to a stocked-out clinic.”
Claudio Midolo (Parsons MFA DT 2009 graduate) focuses his research on the creative possibilities at the intersection of digital technology, human creativity, and communication. He is a member of Parsons SMALLab, where he designs educational games for the Quest to Learn School in New York City. As a member of the New York City Learning Network, he creates mobile media with educational underpinnings for kids and teens.

Michael Ballard (Parsons MFA DT 2010 graduate) continues to design for Open Society Foundations as he works to complete his Master’s thesis project entitled “Win/win,” a model for charitable giving through online gambling and casino slot machines that explores the ethics and ambiguous nature of gambling in American culture.
KENYA HOSPICES AND PALLIATIVE CARE ASSOCIATION

Denise Flasz (2009)

Kenya Hospices and Palliative Care Association (KEHPCA), Nairobi, Kenya

We work for this cause:

KEHPCA works to improve the quality of life of persons with life threatening illnesses, such as cancer, tuberculosis, and AIDS, and their families through the provision of palliative care. The Association's mission, based on the philosophy of health as a human right, is to promote and support acceptable, accessible, and affordable care to the growing numbers of persons with terminal illnesses throughout the nation. KEHPCA also aims to create awareness, advocacy, education, training, service delivery, program developments, and fundraising for all palliative care providers in Kenya.

Kenya, Nairobi - July 2009
Photo by Denise Flasz / 2009 Fellow
For the website Flasz provided new information architecture to ease navigation. Different weights and colors of type would now differentiate categories of content. Main links were grouped and reduced to the minimum number necessary for full access. Each content area was provided with multiple points of entry, while images were given a more important role throughout the site to convey the broad cross-section of Kenyans involved in the KEHPCA effort.

The KEHPCA technologist and Flasz decided to rebuild the backend of the website as well, by replacing Joomla with Wordpress. Wordpress allows KEHPCA to update images, videos, and text as well as affording slide-show photo galleries, archives for posts, quick editing, page configuration, and many other options. Wordpress also affords an e-newsletter template that is easy to update on a regular basis, and Flasz recommended it update the current print version.

She also suggested that the current print brochure be revised and published as two separate pieces, and KEHPCA agreed to break the content in its current brochure into two parts. Now one brochure introduces the Association, its mission, vision, objectives, and goals, and provides a form for donations. The second KEHPCA brochure follows the same layout to introduce and explore the concept of palliative care.

Before Flasz returned to New York she worked with staff members so that they could carry on with Wordpress and the new graphical software in Adobe Creative Suite that she had introduced to the organization.

KEHPCA believed that its outreach to palliative care providers across Kenya was negatively impacted by its lack of expertise in design and communications. When the Fellow arrived, the communication tools employed by the organization included a newsletter, a brochure, and a website. KEHPCA staff agreed that the website was difficult to use - its look and feel needed to be revamped.

On a more intimate level Flasz questioned why the organization had not represented the human side of its work in its communications. Both graphic and content alternatives would need to be considered and vetted to make KEHPCA media more welcoming and representative of all the individuals the organization encompassed and served.

KEHPCA encompasses palliative care organizations in the inner city and the deepest countryside. The NGO serves patients and their families, healthcare professionals, aid workers, donors, and government ministries and agencies. How could the communications strategy be varied enough to speak to all the groups under KEHPCA’s umbrella?

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Denise Flasz (Parsons MFA DT 2009 graduate) worked on a Master’s thesis project called “Intangible.” Intangible takes the shape of an electro-kinetic sculpture that reacts to radio frequency waves created by cell phone usage. The sculpture vibrates according to the signal received, allowing users to form possible conclusions about its existence.

For the site update and future use, Flasz shot more than thirty video testimonials (patients, families, and KEHPCA staff) and dozens of photos.

Flasz mapped out a way to continue to extend KEHPCA’s communications program through its web outreach.

For smaller donors the site might offer a printable PDF form to be sent or personally handed to KEHPCA’s office.

MPESA capability would allow Kenyans to make micro-donations through the Safaricom phone service.

Today, Flasz is continuing to support the current IT officer to provide him with tutorials and design/software training.

“At the beginning, documenting patients and visiting them seemed as if it would be a difficult task, and I expected to be shocked because I’d had very little experience with the seriously ill. But in Kenya I saw that many of the patients were strong… as if they were healthy, as if they were not even a little bit sick. The positive attitudes of individuals, their families, and hospice providers gave me all the strength I needed and more, to take with me for the rest of my life.”

Donations: PayPal allows for secure credit card transactions online and could well serve bigger and international donors to the NGO. KEHPCA is considering integrating PayPal into the site to allow for online donations.

For smaller donors the site might offer a printable PDF form to be sent or personally handed to KEHPCA’s office.

Denise Flasz
Parsons OSF 2009 Fellow

KEHPCA’s newly branded blog and website

New promotional brochure
Hospice Casa Sperantei, meaning hospice of hope, is a leading palliative care center in Romania and Eastern Europe. The hospice specializes in providing palliative care for children and adults who are suffering from life-limiting illnesses such as cancer and HIV/AIDS. As well as medical care, the hospice provides psycho-emotional, social, and spiritual support to patients and their families.

Hospice Casa Sperantei also trains healthcare providers to care for patients with dignity. The organization advocates for the rights of patients and works closely with the Romanian Ministry of Public Health to aid in developing a national plan for palliative care. The hospice currently has 100 staff members and hundreds of registered volunteers and it continues to grow.
On Endo’s second day in Romania she was given a tour of the hospice itself, a live-in facility for children and adults receiving palliative care. The Fellow was shown a modern, well-equipped facility, staffed with friendly professionals. To Endo the place felt more like the home of a large, cheery family than an institution. These impressions were in stark contrast to what she had expected from her earlier review of the NGO’s print materials and website, which presented a competent yet dreary service provider.

Also in the first week a mobile homecare team invited Endo to accompany them on a suburban visit. At the house a family member was suffering from extreme pain due to a brain tumor. His breathing was labored and his vision had failed. With great sensitivity the hospice team informed the family that this, most likely, was an end of life situation. The family accepted the team’s advice that although an heroic medical intervention might prolong life, it would more likely increase the patient’s pain and further compromise his dignity. The family agreed that the best course at this point would be to take measures at home to ease the patient’s suffering rather than return him to the hospital. The Sperantei team provided tablets of time-release morphine that would relax the patient’s lungs and allow him to breathe more freely, increasing his comfort in what might be his last days or hours. The hospice team supported the family spiritually and emotionally with through this difficult decision.

After this profound experience, on return to Brasov, Endo felt powerless and depressed. However, she soon experienced a new resolve: perhaps her skills as a designer could make a small yet significant contribution to the vital services that Casa Sperantei provided? She could help the organization with a new graphic identity that reflected its sensitivity, warmth, and humanity while continuing to convey its broad capacity and competency in palliative care.

Endo dove into a review of the current print materials to find a mixed bag of logo treatments, a variety of typefaces, color schemes, and imagery. Her job would be to lend style and impose order on the graphic look so as to give the organization a strong, coherent identity. As educating palliative care workers was as much a part of the hospice’s mission as providing care to patients, the new branding would also encompass the organization’s educational materials.

As for web communications, the organization was not ready to hire a full-time developer or a media specialist due to lack of resources, therefore, any future online development needed to be easily updatable by staff with general computer skills, but lacking in design training. Another problem with the existing website was that it was not robust enough to support an online education platform, one of the organization’s long-term goals.

Endo prepared a comprehensive presentation to the hospice’s board on the challenges in updating the organization’s communications. Her proposals were approved. Endo and the team tackled the website first.

A staff member translated it into English. Then the team worked with the Fellow to reorganize the site structure to provide a more logical flow of information and ease of navigation, as well as new, more up-to-date content.

Remaking the graphic identity proved to be more difficult than revamping the online presence. It turned out that earlier attempts to rebrand had been stalled by experienced hospice staff who were attached to the current logo that showed edelweiss, flowers that symbolize perseverance. This symbol had been used as a motif since the hospice opened in 1992. Endo’s attitude toward the imagery evolved as she realized that the hospice and its edelweiss were symbols of hope for the city. The Fellow decided that indeed there was no need for a complete makeover; instead what was needed was a refinement.

After a review of out-of-the-box, open source, content management systems, Endo and the Casa staff chose Wordpress because of both its capacity and moderate learning curve, which could be quickly mastered by Casa staff and maintained once the Fellow returned to the U.S.
Yumi Endo
Parsons OSF 2009 Fellow

“A mobile homecare team took me to visit a patient’s house in a Brasov suburb. This tour turned out to be an extremely emotional experience. A member of the family was suffering from extreme pain due to a severe brain tumor. He was breathless. He had lost his vision in the past week. It was very difficult to witness his agony, as well as the family’s fear of losing him.”

Yumi Endo (Parsons MFA DT 2009 graduate) is an award-winning interactive designer with a passion for consumer trends, urban culture, and mobile media. She is currently working as a visual designer at frog design in New York. She also designs her own jewelry line often showcased on runways.

Hospice Casa Sperantei’s newly branded website using Wordpress as a content management system

For a marathon running race organized by the fundraising department to support the Casa, Endo helped print t-shirts for volunteers and hospice staff to wear. She then photographed and video taped the event for future use on the site and in printed materials. The staff proudly wore the shirts with the new logos that preserved the edelweiss. Any remaining doubts Endo harbored about the strength of the flower asset for the brand were dispelled at this event which demonstrated the strong bond between Casa Sperantei and the people of Brasov.

Brasov, România - June / July / August 2009
Photo by Yumi Endo / 2009 Fellow
ASA strives to promote and protect the rights of people with intellectual disabilities. The organization actively supports deinstitutionalization and the development of community-based alternatives to institutions. It aims to achieve the full social inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in all realms of civil society.
THE CHALLENGES

People with intellectual disabilities are among the most vulnerable groups in Croatia. They are broadly discriminated against and denied any legal agency. They are not given the opportunity to vote, to marry, or to pursue any type of employment or life outside the institution. ASA is a movement of individuals who speak up and fight together against these and all injustices that occur due to their disabilities.

ASA’s mission statement speaks to the fact that since the labor market is inaccessible to people with intellectual disabilities, they must often depend on social welfare. There are very few community-based service providers for the intellectually disabled in Croatia. Instead, the government places them in large residential institutions. ASA is in opposition to this policy. The institutions do not afford human dignity. Dormitories for dozens of people, rigid rules, and the lack of privacy and personal agency are just a few of the negative characteristics of institutional life.

The Fellow’s assignment was to create a recognizable visual identity for ASA to increase the efficacy of its advocacy campaigns for the rights of all Croatians with intellectual disabilities.

THE SOLUTIONS

After an intensive week-long introduction to the organization, Cotton devised an overall strategy for creating a new, stronger graphic look for ASA. The deliverables included branding, print collateral in two languages, and a template for an e-newsletter. As she got to know some of the self-advocates and their stories, Cotton discovered an organization rich in narrative. Going forward, she recommended that these stories inform all aspects of the organization’s brand identity.

Cotton’s first task was the creation of a logo. She presented key staff with sketches to be refined into four main concepts that would be shown to the entire organization at the weekly meeting. The self-advocates chose a logo design punctuated with an exclamation point which jump-started a conversation on the broader branding process. They discussed Cotton’s suggestions about including stories in their branding and agreed that new assets should embody both their common struggle for equal rights and at the same time the many individual tales to be told.

Cotton designed letterhead and envelope templates in Croatian and English to reflect the new brand identity.

The next task was less straightforward, as Cotton felt strongly that a new poster and brochure for the organization required illustration representing individual self-advocates — providing faces for the stories. Using watercolor renderings of individuals and strong black typography, the print pieces capture both the vulnerability of the self-advocates and their strong desire for and belief in the possibility of societal change.

Cyrus, Parsons OSF 2009 Fellow

“Once in Zagreb I realized that my tasks extended past graphic design to communicate ASA’s broader story. The organization’s tale is many-faceted, comprised of the individual ASA members’s personal testimonies of living with intellectual disabilities.”
Jen Cotton (Parsons MFA DT 2010 graduate) is a designer and artist whose work often contains a political critique of contemporary society. Her practice is centered in making physical objects that are in part tangible, often using ceramics and low-relief sculpture.

When Cotton arrived the organization was preparing for the Conference on the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Croatia, despite being one of the first signatories, had not upheld the convention. ASA would bring this state of affairs to the attention of the U.N. and the European Union. Cotton assisted the organization in creating bumpers and an animated logo for use in a documentary video in which self-advocates described personal experiences of discrimination (the motion graphics Cotton created were intended for use in all future video production). Cotton also produced PowerPoint templates for the self-advocates to use at the convention and beyond for strong, coherent presentations.
AIDS AND RIGHTS ALLIANCE FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA (ARASA)

We work for this cause: The AIDS and Rights Alliance for Southern Africa (ARASA) is a regional partnership of non-governmental organizations working together to promote a human rights approach to HIV/AIDS and TB. ARASA programs include capacity building training (to extend and upgrade existing skill sets of member organizations), awareness raising, advocacy and lobbying, and regional treatment literacy.
Initially ARASA requested that Ewing craft a new approach to the organization’s online presence and capabilities. Soon after his arrival the NGO presented several other pressing design and technology needs: Email was far from stable; automatic back-up was erratic; and the intranet (a crucial connection between the office in Namibia and the two offices in South Africa) was underutilized.

The existing site had several fundamental problems. It lacked a logical hierarchy for its content, making navigation haphazard. In addition, it was custom built, which made continuing development costly in terms of both time and money. The site neither functioned well nor adequately represented the core values of the NGO. Its homepage did little to give a strong sense of ARASA’s identity.

The NGO and Ewing decided on two primary objectives for his summer work. His main task would be to overhaul the current website, providing greater clarity, clear branding, increased functionality, and tools for community building. The second priority was to improve the email system, as it was the organization’s central mode of communication.

The NGO analyzed findings from a communications assessment survey; it was clear that the staff wanted to expand web capacities with an electronic discussion forum, as well as an improved email system. Ewing implemented a forum on the new site, a strong community-building tool. He migrated email away from internal hosting to Google for a web-based system with a redundant local back-up on each individual computer. An added strength to this approach was to free up bandwidth in Windhoek to better map to the faster systems in Cape Town and Johannesburg.

Ewing recommended scrapping the current site and creating a new one with Drupal, an open source content management system. Drupal’s taxonomy affords clear points of entry to the two main streams of ARASA’s work, advocacy and capacity building. Both streams can be accessed through a geographic model — regional, national, or international — or at the level of specific campaigns. From either of these points the user can find events, materials, workshops, news, and presentations. Drupal also provides a turnkey approach that would enable ARASA to maintain and develop the site after the Fellow returned to the U.S.

To better convey the organization’s identity Ewing designed the new homepage to showcase the ARASA Mission Statement and to feature highlights from a recent campaign, as well as the latest news, publications, and events.

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Clay Ewing
Parsons OSF 2009 Fellow

“For a demonstration outside the World Economic Forum on Africa I created a vector-based eyeball graphic that could be scaled to over 9 meters. It was used on placards and to create a large balloon which flew above us as we marched along with many other organizations. The event, as well as ARASA’s involvement, was reported by News24 in South Africa.”

Clay Ewing
Parsons OSF 2009 Fellow

Windhoek, Namibia - June / July 2009

Photo By Clay Ewing / 2009 Fellow
One of ARASA’s mandates is to raise awareness of the HIV and TB epidemics, as well as to raise awareness of the many resources needed to combat the diseases. To this end the NGO marched along with many other organizations at the Cape Town International Convention Center during the 2009 World Economic Forum on Africa. The ARASA campaign branding centered on a large inflatable eyeball as well as many posters featuring the image. The eyeball was designed by Ewing as a vector-based graphic that could be scaled to over nine meters. Its message was that African advocates were watching and would hold rich countries to their promises to alleviate suffering in the developing world.

**VIRAL VIDEO**

To promote funding for the HIV and TB campaign, the treatment and literacy coordinator in the Cape Town office, Paula Akugizibwe, created a slideshow entitled “Lords of the Bling.” Ewing helped her convert statistics and images to a YouTube video synched to the hip-hop song “I’m So Paid” by Akon and Lil Wayne. It contrasts the estimated monies lost to government corruption with funds needed to finance public health initiatives.

Clay Ewing (Parsons MFA DT 2010 graduate) is an interactive designer who is currently experimenting with game design and data mining to explore social connectedness. His Facebook application, Booked, is designed to automate a person’s social life based on his or her profile. For his Master’s thesis Ewing designed an Internet based board game that teaches people the real cost of health care through involving the player in market forces.
Bruce Drummond and Steve Varga served as Fellows at the Parsons home base in New York City, building and maintaining a blog to support Fellows in the field in Africa and Eastern Europe.

Drummond’s and Varga’s roles on the Support Blog varied greatly depending on the phases of the Fellowships (arrival/planning, design, and implementation) as well as the particular skill sets of each Fellow. The New York City team’s work focused on filling in the gaps between their colleagues’ capabilities and the requirements of each NGO.

In addition to building and maintaining the technical aspects of the blog, on a daily basis Drummond and Varga responded to individual forum posts, Skype calls, and emails from the field. The New York duo provided suggestions for research, design...
and technical solutions, visual and interface design, and art direction. Drummond’s and Varga’s work ranged from quick answers to full website builds and implementations.

Bruce Drummond
Parsons OSF 2009 Fellow

“For the Fellows with technical strength, we pitched in on the visual front so that our colleagues in the field could concentrate on the systems. If the Fellow’s specialty was design rather than technology we would work on the backend. This way each Fellow could make the best use of their time on site.”

Stephen Varga
Parsons OSF 2009 Fellow

“The 2009 OSI/Parsons Support Blog provided a common place for Fellows to document their progress, ask for advice, share stories and experiences (through photographs and videos), and connect with us at home and others in the field.”

At Parsons Drummond and Varga are now developing a collaborative website for the Fellowship program. The site will be an open source workplace so that Open Society Foundations/Parsons Fellows and NGOs can connect on strategies and solutions. Organizations and individuals will be able to share best practices and avoid duplicating effort. The site will serve as a gathering place for Fellows and NGOs involved in similar work yet far-removed from one another geographically.

Bruce Drummond (Parsons MFA DT 2010 graduate) is a new media artist, designer, and computer programmer. Currently he is experimenting with emergent tools and technologies to create immersive user experiences through light, sound, abstract visuals, and social media.

Stephen Varga (Parsons MFA DT 2010 graduate) is an interactive designer, developer, and researcher. His artwork encourages participants to construct meaning through interacting with digital systems.

Open Society Foundations/Parsons fellowships in information design collaborative website 2010
Behind the Mask (BTM), Johannesburg, South Africa

We work for this cause: Behind the Mask is a communication initiative around Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Intersex (LGBTI) rights and affairs. Its main endeavors are print and journalistic activism and the publication of an online magazine. The organization’s website gives voice to LGBTI communities and provides a platform for exchange and debate for groups, activists, individuals, and allies. Its mission is to change negative attitudes towards homosexuality and same-sex traditions in Africa.
Yee: Our first simple assignment was an ad to be shown at an LGBTI festival. It took us only an hour to make, but it was a big hit. Maybe we do have something to contribute!

Mauriello: We started weekly Fellows meetings, so the voice of the organization could guide our work.

Yee: Designing something is one thing; teaching how to do it is another. The latter is really more difficult. Nevertheless, it wasn’t long before the BTM staffers and I were in sync. Training became easy and swift.

Yee: Our first simple assignment was an ad to be shown at an LGBTI festival. It took us only an hour to make, but it was a big hit. Maybe we do have something to contribute!

Mauriello: I’m relieved because I’ve gotten Drupal running locally on my machine. I need to learn this system fast!

Yee: This assignment was such a time crunch. Basically our task was to create a 30-page magazine in only a few days. All of a sudden the rush and chaos made me feel as if I were back in New York!

Yee: This assignment was such a time crunch. Basically our task was to create a 30-page magazine in only a few days. All of a sudden the rush and chaos made me feel as if I were back in New York!

Mauriello: We were on our way to a braai (a barbecue). South Africans are serious grill masters.

Yee: My final piece for BTM was a simple leaflet, but the design standards I set myself were very high, as I wanted to do justice to this amazing organization.

Mauriello: The site went through many iterations before we were all happy with it. This is one of the early drafts.

Yee: It was only a brochure, but it needed to express the passion and spirit of Behind the Mask.

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Yee: We marched with BTM staffers to protest the failure of the police to find the killer of a fallen comrade. The march took place in Soweto, the largest township in the southern hemisphere. The energy was uplifting.

Yee: We have gone back to the States and I’m carrying on, working on a manual for international reporters to learn the language for telling LGBTI stories.

Mauriello: The site went through many iterations before we were all happy with it. This is one of the early drafts.

Yee: We marched with BTM staffers to protest the failure of the police to find the killer of a fallen comrade. The march took place in Soweto, the largest township in the southern hemisphere. The energy was uplifting.
THE CHALLENGES

BRANDING

Yee: Behind the Mask had expressed its difficulty in communicating with audiences outside of the LGBTI circle. Past web and print materials were reviewed and several design problems were identified. The world always judges the book by its cover. If the book shows no clarity or appeal in its aesthetics, then delivering the content and message is tough.

How could we create a stronger brand? It was important from the beginning that the core values of Behind the Mask become the foundation of the re-design, so we asked the staff to share information with us on the NGO’s initiatives and goals. BTM allowed Joe and me to conduct weekly meetings that served as time to review project expectations, details, and progress. Each week we looked forward to this “Fellows Meeting,” as our work was driven by feedback from BTM’s contributing journalists and reporters. The powerful voices of Behind The Mask needed to be represented in the graphics. Staff input was at the center of the process. What were the core messages to be delivered to the NGO’s audiences? What image or personality does this organization have? The answers to these questions would have to guide our creative work.

SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS AND WEB DEVELOPMENT

Mauriello: We wanted to leave BTM with a full arsenal of tools to continue to develop and publish media. These tools had to be easy and inexpensive to use.

As for the website, the NGO wanted a complete overhaul. Rather than just delivering information the site needed to be interactive so as to act as an online platform to discuss LGBTI issues and to support advocacy efforts.

THE SOLUTIONS

BRANDING

Yee: The resulting master plan included developing a new and distinct brand identity that was elegant and bold. We established guidelines for ourselves that would continue to serve BTM after we were gone. They included:

- Establish a palette. Use variations of the same colors as design elements.
- Keep it simple. Don’t overwhelm readers or visitors.
- Stick to a font family. Too many different fonts make it hard to read.
- Our mantra became ‘Make it Strong, Make it Bold!’

Once we created a BTM style guide we produced a collection of visual advocacy pieces that spoke to both the LGBTI population and a wider audience — those interested in getting involved to lend support. This kind of outreach was one of our main goals and we felt that we reached it.

SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS AND WEB DEVELOPMENT

Mauriello: As for tools for the NGO to carry on with after our departure, Doris and I set about finding open source solutions. Finally, after research and testing we identified a suite of free products, including Primo PDF Maker and Jon’s Smooth Gallery. We installed the software and trained staff members on proper use so BTM could continue to create and mount effective communications campaigns.

We worked with BTM to identify the scope and feature set for the new version of the site. Drupal, an open source content management system would be ideal, but it was new to me, and the unreliable Internet connection made development difficult. We planned to postpone the major part of the build until we returned to New York. Once there we recruited other students in the Design and Technology Program to help. The finished system includes a news section, an events calendar, multimedia capabilities for streaming both audio and video, and micro-transaction capability for donations. The new site is easy to maintain and keep up-to-date while providing rich and varied content.

Doris Yee
Parsons OSF 2008 Fellow

“I was privileged to be invited to sit in on Behind the Mask (BTM) interviews with LGBTI subjects who had been victims of hate crimes. Minute after minute, hour after hour, these interviews touched me on a level that I never expected when anticipating my summer with the organization. The LGBTI experience is worse than we could even begin to imagine before this fellowship. The discrimination is as unjust as it is tragic.”

Joe Mauriello
Parsons OSF 2008 Fellow

“We were welcomed as part of the team the minute we set foot in the Behind the Mask headquarters. It’s an exciting atmosphere — the staff is driven by its mission and the offices buzz like a newsroom.”
My final piece for BTM was a simple leaflet, but the design standards I set myself were very high, as I wanted to do justice to this amazing organization. It was only a brochure, but it needed to express the passion and spirit of Behind the Mask.
Joe Maurillo (Parsons MFA DT 2009 graduate) works as a web developer and game designer while teaching the same to high school students. He is particularly interested in creating stories through the act of play. Lessons learned while earning a BFA in Industrial Design apply well to his current work in usability and user experience.

Doris Yee (Parsons MFA DT 2009 graduate) continues to consult for Open Society Foundations under the auspices of her own company Design for Social Good. Her focus is design for development, focusing on topics such as social sustainability and urban agriculture. Yee has completed design research and visual advocacy projects in the Netherlands and Africa.
Support for palliative care across Africa is APCA’s mission. It serves HIV patients and their families in over 23 countries, providing diagnostics, treatment, and bereavement counseling through APCA hospices. The organization encourages respectful and culturally appropriate, evidence-based care. APCA is committed to open communication, professional ethics, transparency, and accountability. Its advocacy efforts also target the advancement of the scientific knowledge base for palliative care across the continent.
I will be doing field work with the staff and getting a tour of several hospices and home healthcare providers. Also there’s a rooster outside the office who constantly (crow?), which is funny, better than a car horn. We spent a long day traveling around the area and visiting some home bound patients, as well as outreach centers that cater to groups of people who are able to move around.

The 2nd issue is the lack of power. The power goes out, and the back up generator goes out too, so everything stutters for a minute. The 3rd and fun-est is the really slow download time/speed. The wireless can be really unstable, so I’m constantly dropping off.

I’m off to Zambia Sunday morning @ 2:00am (I don’t get it), to help another Hospice organization, PCAZ.

Zambia was very oddly quiet and eerie, like being in Florida in a way. Gated communities and big houses. Try not to fly Kenya Airlines...

I’m going over the newsletter we designed, teaching Dedan the rudimentary procedures to get the newsletter out, designing, building mailing list, etc.”

The Palliative Care Association of Zambia Communications Toolkit

You can view this toolkit on screen, or print it out
THE CHALLENGES

“Because of the lack of infrastructure in Uganda, such as paved roads and clean water, it is difficult for APCA hospice workers to reach their patients. Outreach efforts are often extraordinary, whether locating those in need of service on the dusty streets of Kampala or deep in the countryside. Using grassroots skills and simple networking tactics, APCA workers hone in on the neediest patients. In smaller villages the NGO organized group meetings; for example I attended one under a eucalyptus tree, where the organization shared information about hospices and holistic, palliative strategies. In the capital’s dusty, winding streets APCA agents would search to identify patients and treat them on the spot.

THE SOLUTIONS

When I arrived APCA operated its communications efforts mainly through outreach without much dependence on media. To strengthen and extend the effort I created an e-newsletter for the hospices and redesigned the homepage of the APCA website.

The newsletter project was challenging because various readerships needed to be accommodated. The template had to be turnkey so APCA staff, relatively inexperienced in production, could continue to publish the newsletter after I returned to the U.S. The new e-newsletter allows for frequent updates and wider distributions.

A lighter but also important task was accomplished in a visit to the Palliative Care Association of Zambia. We spent the day developing a logo and identity system including a color palette and visual guidelines. We also reconsidered the look and feel of the website. PCAZ now has a branded look to give credence and identity to their mandate, as a provider and supporter of holistic palliative care.”

“I’m awed by the skills of the APCA healthcare workers—how they seek the suffering and serve them, with compassion and understanding, without judgment or hesitation.”

Michael Thibodeau
Parsons OSF 2008 Fellow

Uganda - June / July 2008
Photo by Michael Thibodeau / 2008 Fellow
Michael Thibodeau (Parsons MFA DT 2009 graduate) is an interactive designer working at ETrade.com, redesigning the present site as well as mobile applications. His illustrations have appeared in many publications including The New York Times and Sports Illustrated. As a print designer and art director he developed logos, corporate identity, and advertising campaigns for clients in the sports, liquor, and fashion worlds.
The mission of Mental Health and Society is to defend human rights, especially those of people with mental health disabilities. Throughout Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Republics MHS seeks social inclusion for the mentally ill by providing access to education, housing, employment, leisure, and cultural activities, in addition to healthcare and social support. The central goal of the organization is to replace large mental health hospitals with community-based services. The NGO's philosophy is based on the idea that patients have the right to all information about their diagnosis, their prognosis, their medications, their options, as well as about available resources, the mental health system itself, and their legal rights.
Kyrgyzstan is one of fifteen former Soviet Republics. It gained its independence in 1991.

I am spending this week at the Outpatient Daycare Center. A psychiatrist, a psychotherapist, and a social worker work there and deal with each patient individually. They also prepare group activities to treat the patients.

We had a meeting at the United Nations Department of Safety and Security.

Today I learned that the Mandatory Public Health Insurance Fund controls the distribution/quantity/quality of drugs sold at the pharmacies.

However, the Mandatory Public Health Insurance Fund cannot control the ‘import’ of drugs. Kyrgyzstan does not produce drugs and therefore it imports from neighboring countries.

When the Ministry of Health in Bishkek is proposed to discuss transparency at the level of import and distribution of drugs, they do not say they refuse to discuss.

It’s just as hot in Bishkek as it is in New York. Somehow I had expected it to be cooler.

I attend a second United Nations meeting. There is a lot of talking around the subject of the rights of the mentally ill, but action is harder to come by.

The entire office, friends, and family send me back to the U.S. with a picnic in the mountains.”
THE CHALLENGES

“The Mental Health and Society Initiative works in partnership with NGOs to develop alternatives to institutions and advocate for changes in policy toward the adoption and replication of these alternatives by governments. My role in the Mental Health and Society organization went beyond design work. I had to help them convey their message, develop their organizational capacity, and establish communication strategies to use in their short and longer-term advocacy efforts. The existing MHS communications system included a logo, leaflets, a monthly newsletter, and a website. These assets had to be reconsidered to better represent the NGO and its mission.

The first challenge was the language. Kyrgyz people speak Russian and very few people at MHS spoke English. Moreover, their entire communications system was in Russian — the newsletter, the leaflets, and the website. How was I to create new designs that included written work when the text is made up of Cyrillic letters that I did not understand? The second challenge was convincing the director of Mental Health and Society and the staff that the organization’s identity would benefit greatly from devising a completely new approach to branding.

THE SOLUTIONS

The first thing I did was to download Russian fonts from the Internet. My plan was to work from my laptop and to transfer the design files on to their computers later. However, I realized that the leaflets, for instance, lived on their computers in editable formats. I decided that it would be better to alter their files rather than create new ones. In doing so, I had to establish new designs, but at least I had the content, meaning the text, ready. I needed help with the language. Aigul, a social worker at the outpatient center, spent significant time by my side and helped me out with the Russian.

Next, I had to create Mental Health and Society’s new identity. Their initial logo had more of an industrial feel, and I knew that the new brand had to speak of the important work of the organization. I also felt that it had to have pleasing colors implying ‘change’ and ‘hope’. I worked on a look that consisted of joyful people of all ages. Then I spoke to Burul, the director of the NGO, and told her that it was essential that their new identity convey the core values and vital work of MHS. Finally, I showed her the work and she loved it.”

Maral Minassian
Parsons OSF 2008 Fellow

“My role in the Mental Health and Society organization went beyond design work. I had to help them convey their message, develop their organizational capacity, and establish communication strategies to use in their short- and longer-term advocacy efforts.”

Maral Minassian
Parsons OSF 2008 Fellow

Kyrgyzstan – June / July 2008
Photo by Maral Minassian / 2008 Fellow
Maral Minassian (Parsons MFA DT 2009 graduate) is an interactive, graphic designer and artist based in Los Angeles, where she is the Creative Director at Arraydiance, a software and web development company. Maral is also Chair of Communications at AIGA’s Los Angeles Chapter. While in New York she led Mudbucket, Parsons’s in-house design studio. Maral has had frequent speaking engagements in Rome and Tuscany at the Inarea conventions, namely about the modern implementation of Arabic type in design.

Mental Health and Society’s newly designed logo, brochure and stationary

Mental Health and Society’s newly designed website
The mission of HPCA is to promote quality in life, dignity in death and support in bereavement for all living with life-threatening illness by supporting member hospices and partner organizations. It is active in all nine provinces of South Africa and its network cares for 64,000 patients a year.

We work for this cause:

Hospice Palliative Care Association of South Africa (HPCA), Cape Town, South Africa

Laura Lee (2008)
ARRIVAL
Arrived in Cape Town.

Participated in home-based care visit.

Petted a cheetah!

Developed a new brochure.

Visited Tugela Ferry.

Launched new website structure.

Visited Robben Island.

Visited Hospice Philanjalo.

Developed a newsletter template.

DEPARTURE

There are many different people working on different projects, and their collateral material does not have a unified approach. I reworked the website to match the print materials.

Originally, Robben Island was designated as a place for lepers and the mentally ill. Now it is most well known as the prison that housed Nelson Mandela.

Located in a rural area, this hospice provides day services for women suffering from HIV/AIDS. The women enjoy crafts and activities like sewing and weaving.

Created a collection of templates for use after my departure.

Goodbye, Cape Town!”
THE CHALLENGES

“One of my main tasks was to redesign the organization’s brochure. This publication, distributed to patients, healthcare providers, and stakeholders, did not promote a professional, polished image of HPCA. Key messages were buried because there was too much content. Overuse of the logo, featuring a symbolic butterfly, was inappropriately playful. Text was not formatted for an accordion fold, making the piece even more difficult to read.

Sadly, the compassion, spirit, and story of hospice care were not being conveyed.

Because of these issues, this vital publication, distributed to patients, healthcare providers, and stakeholders, was not promoting a professional, polished image of HPCA. The overuse of the logo, along with the fact that there were no photos of patients or hospice care, represented a large missed opportunity to establish credibility and visually depict patients and caregivers.

Given these issues, my main challenges were to cut copy considerably and add visual interest. I started with copy-editing.

THE SOLUTIONS

To revamp the language and text of the brochure, I challenged management to distill core competencies of the organization. This forced concision and allowed me to unpack dense content. By limiting the amount of text in the brochure, legibility improved drastically.

I also refocused the text so that it was more grounded in facts and figures. I added statistics and quotes from the World Health Organization to lend credibility to the organization and its cause.

Then I concentrated on the visual content. I began gathering and taking success-oriented photos, showing active patients who benefited from hospice care. I took care to ensure the photos were balanced, representing a range of ethnicity and age. The photos were then placed strategically to break up the copy and parallel the story told in words.

These changes ultimately translated into a better-paced design and layout that clearly shows the organization’s vision and heart, and the core values of hospice care.”

Laura Lee
Parsons OSF 2008 Fellow

“On-site hospice tours in Cape Town, Durban, and Port Elizabeth enriched my work immeasurably, allowing me to experience hospice care firsthand by getting to know ground level hospice personnel and patients.”
Laura Lee (Parsons MFA DT 2008 graduate) is a multimedia designer working in various media including print, packaging, web, and motion graphics. Her approach to design is anchored in balancing the beauty and charm of the handmade with the ease and sophistication of digital technology. At present, Laura is working at a biomedical company in Los Angeles where she is conceiving, designing, and executing a new suite of collateral materials.
The vision of MHEN is that all people in Malawi will have access to equitable, quality, affordable, and responsive essential health care services. MHEN’s mission is to advocate and lobby for systems that promote the delivery of equitable and quality health care services by influencing policy and practice through research, monitoring, and evaluation.

Michael Edwards (2007) is a member of the Parsons Research Faculty, SMALLab, and the New Youth City Learning Network. He designs social networks and games in the educational and public interest.

“I arrived in Lilongwe on Tuesday and right away updated the logo for an MHEN workshop on Thursday. My main responsibility will be to build a website for the organization. Not only does it need to be up and running by the end of the month, but we’ll need to fit in a couple of training sessions before I leave. And then there are smaller design tasks: letterhead here, color report there, a five hour turn-around on a newspaper ad. MHEN also needed a photographer to begin shooting and building a picture archive. Paul took me on a tour of several hospitals in the region. He described the interplay between public health and government, while I showed him some basic photography tricks so he can continue to document the work of MHEN.

Soon we’re off to Mzuzu, a small city in the north of the country. The meeting includes partners and potential partners who will help prepare MHEN for its scheduled parliamentary appearance in a few weeks’ time. A wide range of professionals attended: doctors, nurses, hospital administrators, human-rights activists, lawyers, and child advocates. Some attendees promise to travel to Lilongwe for the legislative date, ensuring “a full court press.” Among the many topics for advocacy discussed were:

* Providing training for Traditional Birth Assistants and incentives to refer expectant mothers to hospitals.

* Providing training for Health Surveillance Assistants who serve as front-line health care workers in rural areas.

* The pressing need for more equipment like CD4 machines, essential in prescribing Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART) for HIV patients.”

MHEN inspired my MFA DT thesis project. Because accurate measurements are a critical component of healthcare, errors in recording patients’ physical dimensions compromise quality of care. In Malawi chronic staff and resource shortages create a situation where maintaining records is extremely difficult. To address this situation I designed an armband, a thin strip of flexible plastic, that electronically measures and records children’s middle-upper arm circumference, a standardized indicator of a child’s nutritional status.”

Michael Edwards
Parsons OSF 2007 Fellow

MHEN (Malawi Health Equity Network) is a network of partners working to promote the delivery of equitable and quality health care services by influencing policy and practice through research, and evaluation. It is based in Lilongwe, Malawi.
THE BOTSWANA NETWORK ON ETHICS, LAW AND HIV+ AIDS (BONELA)

Charles Earl Love Yust (2007)

BONELA’s mission is to create an enabling and just environment for those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS by integrating ethical, legal, and human rights issues into the national response to the pandemic.

FELLOWSHIPS IN INFORMATION DESIGN // 2007 FIELD JOURNALS

THOUGHTS: PROBLEMS + SOLUTIONS

"BONELA is Botswana’s foremost NGO working in the area of health advocacy in response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Efforts center around using media and training programs to educate the public about HIV/AIDS and treatments available to combat the disease. BONELA also helps HIV residents with legal aid and civil rights issues as HIV people experience discrimination.

My main project was to design a poster about HIV treatment literacy in English and Setswana that would be distributed throughout the country. BONELA wanted the poster to show a photo instead of an illustration in order to demonstrate that a real person was not afraid to admit that he had HIV so as to encourage dialogue about the disease. We pushed this idea further to feature the character in a graphic narrative that modeled evidence-based recommendations for self-care and best practices. The story promoted using condoms while having sex, keeping in contact with health care providers, taking treatments according to a prescribed schedule, seeking changes in treatment if experiencing side effects, and seeking support from one’s family. After creating the poster I helped figure out printing schematics and color coordination before sending it to the press.

Another task completed was to design a logo for BONELA’s Office of Treatment Literacy to reflect the instructional nature of its work.

Upon my return to New York I continued to work with the organization to design an Awards Certificate, a pamphlet, a leaflet for children, and one promoting BONELA’s legal aid services."

"BONELA wanted the poster to show a photo instead of an illustration in order to demonstrate that a real person was not afraid to admit that he had HIV. We pushed this idea further to feature the character in a graphic narrative that modeled evidence-based recommendations for self-care and best practices."

Charles Earl Love Yust
Parsons OSF 2007 Fellow

Charles Earl Love Yust (Parsons MFA DT 2008 graduate) is a multimedia designer and interactive developer at Unified Field, Inc. He has presented his work at M.I.T., SIGGRAPH, and the Manchester Urban Screens conference. He is also an instructor at Parsons.

The Botswana Network on Ethics, Law and HIV/AIDS (BONELA), Gaborone, Botswana

We work for this cause: BONELA’s mission is to create an enabling and just environment for those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS by integrating ethical, legal, and human rights into the national response to the pandemic.

Botswana, 2007
The mission of EHRN is to support, develop, and advocate for harm reduction approaches in the field of drugs, HIV/AIDS, public health, and social acceptance by following the principles of humanism, tolerance, partnership, and respect for human rights and freedoms. Its strategic goal is to reduce drug-related harm, including the transmission of HIV/AIDS and other blood-borne diseases, through facilitating the use of less repressive and non-discriminative policies with respect to drug users and other vulnerable groups and populations, including prisoners, people living with HIV, and sex workers.

The NGO had recently expanded its work into countries such as Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan and so changed its name to the Eurasian Harm Reduction Network. I was tasked to create a communications strategy and update the branding. Partners and member organizations needed to be made aware of the name change while the identity of the organization needed to remain intact. A fresh look would also be used to mark a decade of work in harm reduction.

To facilitate these goals the staff gathered weekly to review my drafts of brochures, emails, and faxes describing the reason for the name change, the official date of the change, and the new web address. Next, the EHRN staff and I turned our attention to the logo. We worked out several completely new approaches, but the NGO ultimately decided that an update would work best to transition the brand while preserving its identity.

In the end, four weeks seemed too little time to accomplish all the design work required. On return to New York I continued to collaborate with EHRN to create assets, including a branded electronic signature, and to advise the staff on further development of the website.

The opportunity to work with EHRN was a great privilege. It fueled my interest in devising ways for non-profit organizations to use technology to support their communities.
“There were three goals outlined for my work for SKA: first, improve the existing website and build a new one for their new initiative SKA Street; second, develop a technical solution for online counseling; and finally, explore other media as a way of expanding public awareness of the organization and its work.

I developed the architecture for two sites, one for SKA (skais.org) and one for SKA Street (skastreet.org), a partner organization that focuses on HIV activism on Warsaw’s streets. As of this writing, the SKA Street site is open to the public although it still requires some additional content from the SKA members. SKA’s principal site is going through some re-development as its members strategize new content, and they are expecting an upcoming public release.

We designed and implemented a custom online counseling form that affords site visitors anonymity. It’s trilingual — Polish, Russian, English — and clients can get help with medical, psychological, and legal issues.

During my fellowship I also updated SKA’s logo and designed and created one for SKA Street. As part of the new organizational branding we produced a trilingual informative brochure.

My partnership with SKA has outlasted the terms of this fellowship as I intermittently continue to assist them in developing the sites.”

— Michael Ballard (2009 Fellow)

John Geyer
Parsons OSF 2007 Fellow

“We designed and implemented a custom online counseling form that affords site visitors anonymity. It’s trilingual — Polish, Russian, English — and clients can get help with medical, psychological, and legal issues.”

Jonathan Geyer (Parsons MFA DT 2008 graduate) designs and builds small and medium sized websites for organizations as well as individuals. He also works on custom data design solutions centered on information visualizations. A former Peace Corps volunteer and Open Society Foundations Fellow, he specializes in work in the non-profit sector.
As its tenth anniversary approached, a priority at Women’sNet was to update and expand the capabilities of its legacy website. I was tasked to create a graphic user interface (GUI) for a new Drupal content management system. Before working on the site’s interface, the two Women’sNet logos needed to be replaced by a single and coherent icon. Although this task expanded the scope of the project, it was crucial to establish a strong graphic identity before proceeding to a site redesign.

Overall, the NGO wanted to update current logo elements, retaining the sun as a central symbol and using the same color palette of pink, purple, and yellow. The main challenge in creating a new Drupal theme was to find a balance in designing a GUI that would appeal to women, while conveying the intersection of technology and South African culture.

We chose a rectangular shape so the logo would work both in print and on the web. The sun was refashioned to be illustrative and welcoming. A texture was applied to the typeface to complement the rendering of the sun.

As the NGO’s name contains the word ‘women’, the female gender symbol was redundant and so omitted in the new logo. For the website, the concept was to show that the sun enables South African women to power the technology. The new logo was modified to work as a header graphic for the Drupal theme. The image of the South African woman was an existing asset that was altered to humanize the look of the site. Additionally, the circuitry image connects women and technology, a core goal of the NGO’s mission.

“Before taking on the site’s interface the two different Women’sNet logos needed to be replaced by a single and coherent icon. Although this task expanded the scope of the project, it was crucial to establish a strong graphic identity before proceeding to a site redesign.”

Linh Pham
Parsons OSF 2007 Fellow

Linh Pham (Parsons MFA DT 2008 graduate) designs user interfaces and interactions to create rich experiences on the web. She is a Senior User Experience Designer at Fotolog, one of the world’s largest photo-blogging social networks based in New York City. Pham is an instructor at Parsons where she teaches introductory web design classes at the undergraduate and continuing education level.

The Women’sNet mission is to use information and communication technologies (ICTs) strategically to create a society where women and girls are full participants in and agents of social change. The organization recognizes that ICTs are gendered tools and aims to address imbalances in women and men’s access to and meaningful use of ICTs. Women’sNet has extensive experience in managing and creating content and using ICTs to promote gender equality. We provide training and help capacitate organizations to make decisions on their use of technology so that it is mission driven, cost effective, and sustainable.

Women’sNet rebranded website, 2007