

SHOWCASE OF SITES

For creative ways to spruce up

your online offerings,

take a look around

these four alumni Web pages

By Laura Christion Jackson



1. Reunions go online at Dickinson College

Description: To reach out to alumni who couldn't attend its June 1997 alumni weekend, Dickinson College developed a Web site that featured images from a live video feed and digital cameras.

How the idea developed: The college relations office was looking for ways to involve on- and off-campus alumni in a reunion event featuring Rick Smolan, a former photographer for Time-Life and *National Geographic*.

"After talking to the college's instructional media department and computer services staff, we decided to expand the idea by using an Alumcam to capture reunion happenings from Friday afternoon until Sunday afternoon," says Tammie Brush-Campbell, Dickinson's manager of media relations.

The instructional media staff set up a video camera in the student union, where

registration, class dinners, and other activities took place. The live video feed, consisting of a camera hooked up to a TV monitor and a specially programmed computer, allowed off-campus alumni to see new images of their classmates every 30 seconds.

In addition, the college relations staff used digital cameras to take photos of the opening clam bake; a parade; and Smolan's event, an alumni workshop about the Internet. Computer services uploaded these shots to the site as well.

No. of visits to the site: 20,000 during the weekend and the following week.

No. of staff involved: Five: the news services director, the media relations manager, a staff member from instructional media, and two from computer services.

Cost: Because the departments involved already had the cameras and other equipment, the primary cost was staff time for computer services and media relations.

Results: In addition to the high number of visits to the site, the news services staff received a flood of thank-you calls, letters, and e-mail from alumni. The virtual reunion also gained both regional and national attention, with stories appearing in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, in area newspapers, and on local television. The *Chronicle's* online edition also featured the cyber-reunion as its June 16, 1997, Site of the Day.

Advice: Naturally, you'll need to work closely with computer services staffers to

pull off a similar project. But you'll have an easier time approaching them if you have a little knowledge about the Web. Says Brush-Campbell: "Because I was Web literate, we could communicate easily and come up with creative ideas."

To see the site, go to www.dickinson.edu/~padgett/alumaweb.html.

2. Sophisticated online career services at Michigan

Description: The University of Michigan's well-designed career center Web site features job-related links, details on workshops, and a searchable database of alumni who can provide career coaching.

How the idea developed: After opening the Alumni Career Center in January 1997, center coordinator Chanel DeGuzman wanted to upgrade the existing career Web page. She interviewed a number of Web designers in April and May before selecting alumnus Jacques Mabre, who heads the firm Web Elite. The site became available to alumni in October.

Cost: This type of site can cost from \$5,000 to \$10,000. Michigan received a slight discount because the vendor was an alumnus.

No. of staff involved: DeGuzman worked extensively with the vendor and alumnus Phyllip Hall, a member of her career advisory team who has more than 20 years' experience designing and developing computer software applications. She also consulted with internal technical and managerial staffs for input, particularly when negotiating the vendor's contract. In addition to conducting about three meetings with the entire team, she worked one on one with the members and the vendor to complete the site.

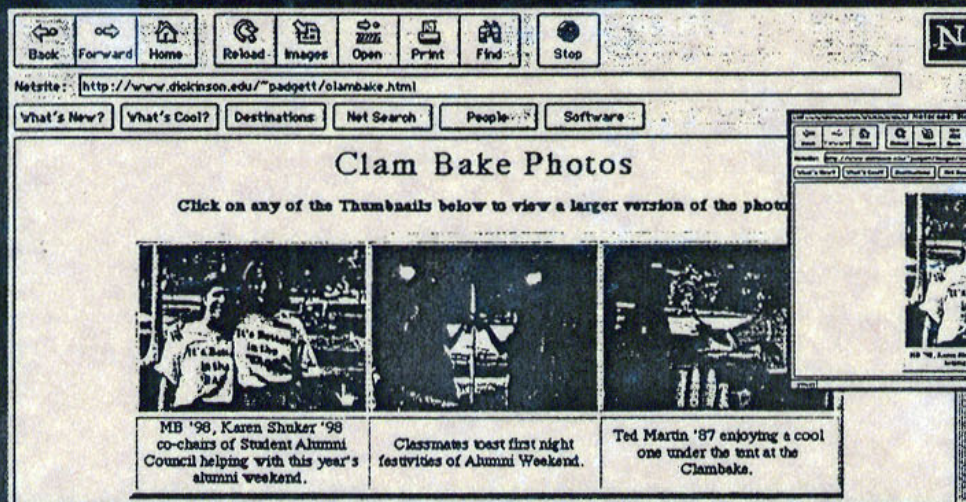
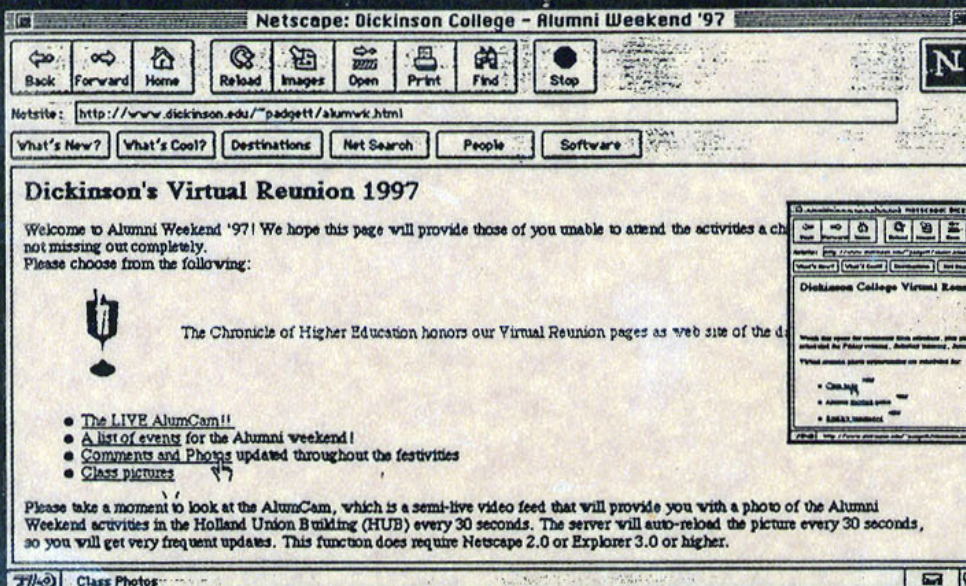
Results: On the site's evaluation forms, "people say the site's useful, inviting, and easy to navigate, so we've accomplished our goal," she says.

Advice: Before you talk to a vendor, DeGuzman says, map out how you want the pages to look or talk to your in-house technical staff and others about what should be on a career site. Interview at least three vendors and get references before making a decision. Last, she says, "Negotiate with the vendor an hourly, monthly, or yearly contract for ongoing support so you can call on your vendor for help after the site is available."

Visit the site at alumni.umich.edu/careercenter.

Laura Christion Jackson is the senior editor of *CURRENTS*.

1. CYBER-CELEBRATION:
Dickinson College used a live video feed and digital cameras to bring its 1997 reunion to former students' computer screens.



2. ON THE JOB:
The University of Michigan's well-designed alumni career site offers practically everything a former student could need to find that next job, including information on career workshops and a searchable database for networking opportunities.

