

Graphic Design II
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Summer II 2011
Professor John Kane

Introduction

The semester project was to create a communications campaign for a non-profit organization of our choosing. I initially explored three different options, before choosing to work with Second Nature:

Second Nature

A company that advocates for sustainability to become an integral part of higher education learning and community. I did my co-op for this company, and feel that this may be my best option, as I know a lot about the company and I am aware of where their weaknesses are in their current communications (and there are a lot).

Little League Baseball

The very popular organization that runs youth baseball. It was a big part of my life growing up, as I played several years of Little League. Their communication is probably already fairly successful considering how many people know about and participate in Little League.

Kars 4 Kids

An organization that collects cars that people donate, using the profits to support children around the country in various capacities. Their radio ads always stuck with me with their catchy jingle, but their logo and website could use some work. While I think they may be a fairly well known organization, there are certainly aspects of their current communications that can be improved upon.

The research

Who they are

Second Nature is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote a sustainable future by making sustainability and green living a foundation of learning in higher education.

What they do

The company initiates and supports nationwide initiatives aimed at college and university presidents designed to fully integrate the practice of sustainable living into curriculum and community.

Their largest and most visible program is the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment (ACUPCC), which is a voluntary commitment that has been signed by nearly 700 presidents to create a Climate Action Plan and to integrate sustainability into the educational experience of the institution.

Recently, Second Nature has launched a strong focus on minority serving and under-resourced institutions, helping them to build green on their campuses.

How they reach out

Second Nature reaches people through the programs that they support, as well as by providing resources on their website to many sustainability-related topics. Through the ACUPCC, the company coordinates with both presidents and sustainability coordinators of colleges and universities to ensure that the institution's goals are on track and/or being accomplished, while also encouraging nonmember schools to sign the commitment.

As a company, Second Nature is not very visible to the public, as their primary role has been simply to support their various initiatives.

Target audience

Given the nature of their programs, Second Nature's primary target is leaders in the higher education sector (Presidents, sustainability leaders, facilities supervisors, etc.).

However, as their mission is to create a sustainable future, students and educators at institutions of higher education could be considered a secondary target.

What they do well

Second Nature has been very successful in creating and supporting various initiatives to accomplish their mission.

The company has a blog which is populated on a regular basis with quality content

Through the ACUPCC, leaders at almost 700 schools in all 50 states have made Second Nature's goal their own and have agreed to create plans with tangible actions. These institutions have also agreed to report on their actions, making them public.

Second Nature has also been able to partner with other like-minded organizations including the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) and ecoAmerica, and through these partnerships have become a prominent figure in the fight for sustainability in higher education.

What they don't do well

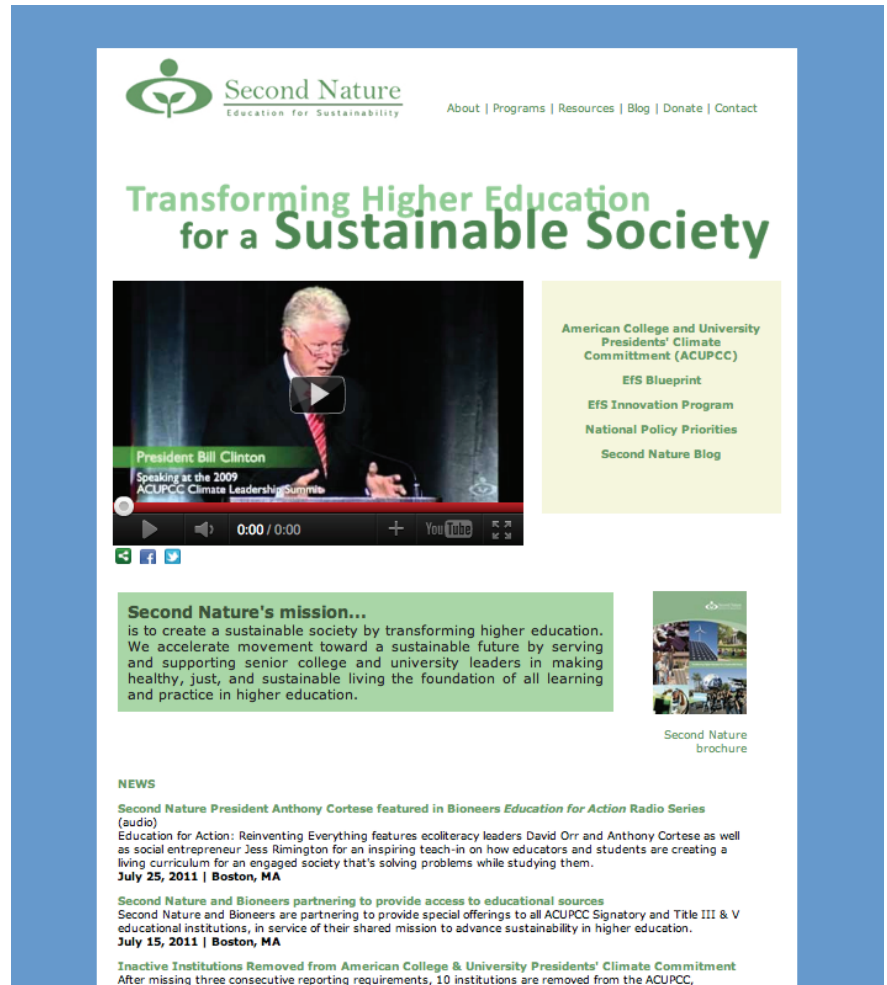
As previously mentioned, Second Nature is not a well known organization in the public sector, despite being around for almost twenty years. While successful in creating and supporting several initiatives, they have not received much recognition for their efforts.

A large oversight of the organization is not addressing the student population. Their mission of promoting a sustainable future is directly tied to the education of those individuals who attend institutions of higher education. Second Nature indirectly addresses the students through a variety of mediums, but have not made an effort to connect to the students themselves.

The company has very poor presence outside of the digital scope. Aside from their company brochure and resources published by employees of the company, they have no print communication. This is an area that they could greatly improve upon.

In terms of web presence, Second Nature is absent from social media sites including Facebook and Twitter, and there is no Wikipedia entry on the company.

Their website is very outdated, and information and resources are laid out very poorly within the site.



Second Nature's identity mark is lacking as well, giving no indication of what the company does or what they advocate for.



The big firms

For research purposes, I researched and looked at commercial approaches to communication, including identities done by Wolff Olins, Chermayeff & Geismar, Pentagram, and Sametz Blackstone Associates. I looked specifically at some of the marks that these companies did, along with their strategy behind the brand.

Samaritans (non-profit)

Wolff Olins

- appeal to wider audience
- make the brand bright and positive
- don't focus on the negatives of the cause



UNICEF (non-profit)

Wolff Olins

- promote success stories
- need to "capture" the cause



U.S. Bicentennial

Chermayeff & Geismar

- evoke the spirit and culture of the groups that are being promoted
- take a well-known image and change it



NYC Parks

Pentagram

- modernize and simplify
- create a color scheme unique to the organization
- create a mark that can become an icon and be displayed or recreated in different media
- keep the names short



NYC Parks



NYC Parks

New England Wild Flower Society (non-profit)

Sametz Blackstone Associates

- research public attitudes on the subject to identify a competitive position
- identify the intersection of the main ideas of the organization

NEW ENGLAND
WILD
FLOWER
SOCIETY



The competition

I also looked at some of Second Natures competition (and, in fact, some of their partner organizations). I wanted to get a sense of what other organizations in the sustainability and higher education industry were doing for their communications, and what I should keep in mind.

AASHE

- large, bold lettering
- an element of sustainability (a leaf) is included in the logo
- easily memorable acronym



Higher Education Associations Sustainability Consortium (HEASC)

- the color green is bold and indicative of sustainable living
- logo gives the impression of groups coming together, i.e. a consortium



PowerShift

- color scheme and ragged lettering suggest and advocacy for environmental issues
- the wind turbine gives a strong visual for alternative energy, a main focus of the group



Sustainability Education and Economic Development Center

- the "D" gives the impression of a seed growing out of it, referencing the name of the company



Green Education Foundation

- leaf coming out of the book symbolizes both education and green living
- slogan wording is to the point and gives off the idea of higher education



Some similarities of the competition

- color scheme (namely greens and blues) are indicative of environmental and sustainable causes
- groups ties specifically to sustainability commonly use a leaf, a common symbol of green living (the Nissan Leaf – the first fully electric car – is also a good example)
- many logos and symbols are typographically simple
- most organization names are specific, explaining what the organization does right in the title. Further this makes for a lot of acronyms
- websites seem to be organized for a number of different groups
- email newsletters are a large part of these company's marketing scheme

Website comparison

A large part of the communications platform is going to be web presence. As mentioned previously, Second Nature's website is simply a terribly designed and organized site.

The homepage has no sense of structure, there's way too much text, not enough visual appeal, and is created using HTML tables. Especially if I want to engage more students in the company's communication, the website will need to be redesigned and reorganized so that it is a space that people want to visit.

I'm envisioning the redesign to have links directing users to sections dedicated to the user group, as well as traditional navigation informing about the company. Further, I will want to integrate the company's video content as well as images from events and other company supported programs.


In comparison, two competitors (and in this case, partners) have sites that are both well laid out and informative, while appealing to a younger crowd.




AASHE's site is a good example of how I'm envisioning the Second Nature site to be. There is a lot of content, but it is organized in a way that is easily accessible for almost anyone who would visit the site. The resources are featured in an attractive and well-ordered way, and the

featured member section brings recognition to one of their member organization in an easily identifiable box. The visual layout is started with the slideshow in the upper left corner of the site, which is probably the first thing that is noticed when a user visits the site.

[AASHE](#) [STARS](#) [Annual Conference](#)

 Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education [Login](#) [Create an Account](#) [Become a Member](#) [SEARCH](#)

[Home](#) [Events](#) [Resources](#) [Connect & Discuss](#) [Membership](#) [About AASHE](#)



STARS (Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System)

Visit the STARS website to register, view completed STARS Reports, and learn more!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

STARS Ratings Pass 100 Institution Mark
8.4.2011

AASHE Releases '2010 Campus Sustainability Review'
8.2.2011

[MORE ANNOUNCEMENTS](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Top Resources

- AASHE Newsletters
- Campus Sustainability Discussion Forums Search
- Bulletin Database
- Campus Sustainability Case Studies Database
- Student Research on Campus Sustainability
- Campus Climate Action Planning Wiki
- ACUPCC Reporting System
- Business Member Directory
- Member Discounts on Products & Services

RECENT BLOG POSTS

AASHE Interview Series: Steven Hackett, Humboldt State University, Chair of the School of Business
AUGUST 8, 2011 | Authored by: [Ashwini Srinivasa...](#) | 0 Replies

Sneak Peek: David Orr's Vision of the Next Frontier of Campus Sustainability
AUGUST 4, 2011 | Authored by: [Margo Wagner](#) | 0 Replies


AASHE Student Diary Series: Creating a Bike Friendly Campus
JULY 29, 2011 | Authored by: [Margo Wagner](#) | 0 Replies

Why Sustainability is Important to Measures of Quality of Life and Subjective Well-Being
JULY 29, 2011 | Authored by: [Niles Barnes](#) | 2 Replies

New Resource: Campus Green Office Programs
JULY 18, 2011 | Authored by: [Ashwini Srinivasa...](#) | 0 Replies

RECENT FORUMS POSTS

Member Spotlight



Butte College
[See Story](#)
[Spotlight Your Campus](#)

AASHE Bulletin

For the latest campus sustainability news, resources, opportunities, and events from the U.S. and Canada:

[Subscribe to the AASHE Bulletin](#)

[View the latest issue!](#)

The appeal of Energy Action Coalition's site is in its simplicity. Large, bold images dominate the top of the page, which leads the user on to other sections or at the very least makes for a visually appealing splash page. The only real content is a news feed below the image slideshow, which highlights the

organization's recent articles and other important elements. The links around them all lead to another part of the site with more content, which makes this user experience driven almost solely by the user and what they are looking to get out of the website.



The identity mark

Second Nature's current logo was in dire need of an update, as it communicated nothing about the company and what they do. For my logo, I wanted to combine elements of the two main focus points of the company: sustainable living and education. I initially came up with a list of words and elements that (I thought) would represent these two ideas.

Education

- books
- graduation cap
- pencil
- notebook
- apple
- diploma

My first attempt at a mark incorporated an element of sustainability growing out of an upside down graduation cap, in one case a leaf, and the other a windmill.

The leaf included a seed at its base, to further the sense of a "deep seeded idea", as well as growth.

In both cases, the graduation cap didn't always read like a cap, especially since it's upside down. For the mark with the leaf and seed, the seed needed to get bigger so that people would really read the mark as a seed, and the leaves needed to get more realistic so as to be as clear as possible. Further, sustainable living constitutes much more than renewable energy, so the wind-mill iteration was scrapped.



Sustainability

- renewable energy
- leaves
- recycling logo/circular symbolism
- seeds/growth



These circle marks were also an initial brainstorm, but the idea was scrapped as the circular nature of the mark is much too specific to recycling, and also does not indicate generic sustainability.

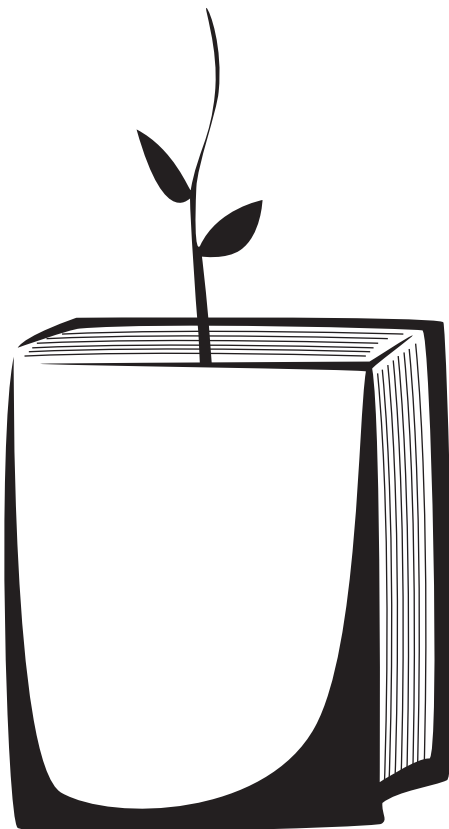


I also experimented with the idea of having the word “second” physically being second to something. I immediately rejected this idea, as I would argue that “Second Nature” is a commonly used phrase to mean something that is independent of the idea of firsts and seconds. With that in mind, I felt as though the “Second” doesn’t necessarily have to appear as though it is second to anything, as it’s simply a part of the phrase.

On top of these feelings, this idea made the type appear “ghostish”, with the mark reminding people of typography in supernatural media.



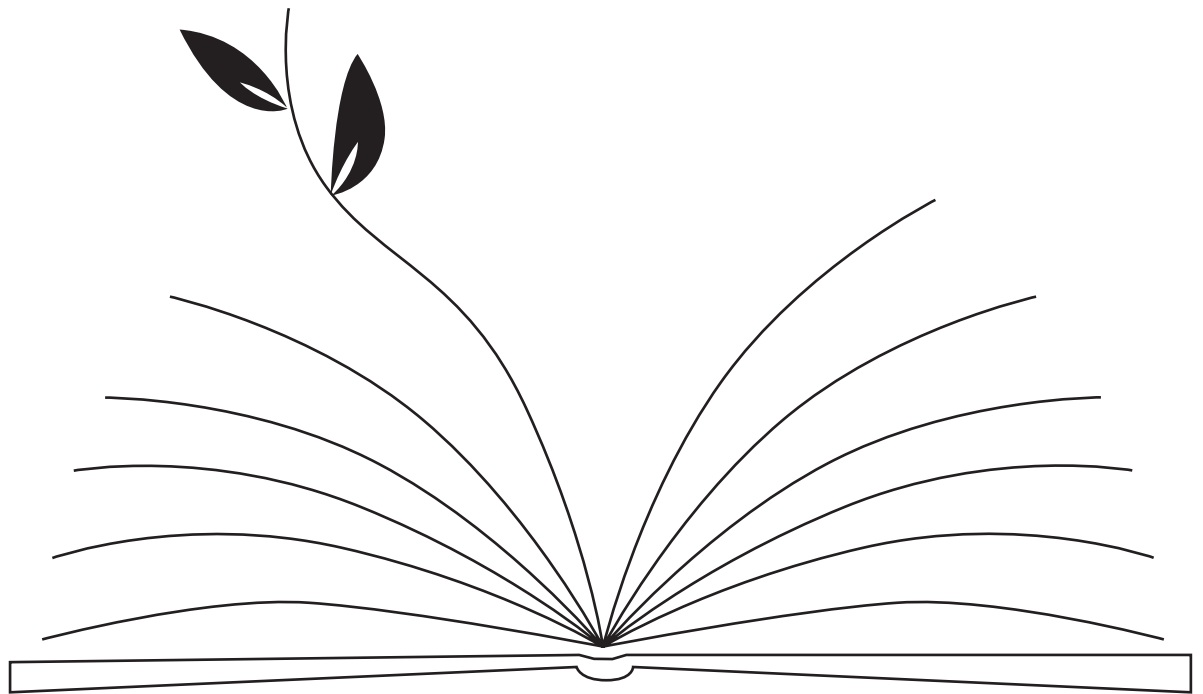
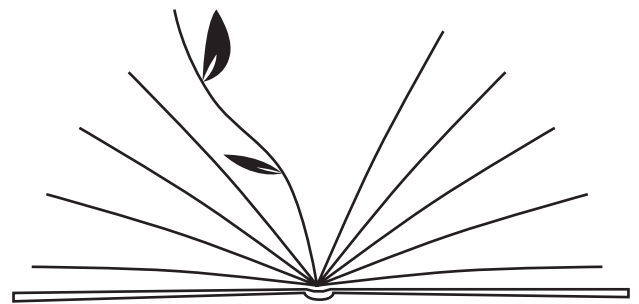
After these initial attempts, and with none of the outcomes really getting across the ideas I wanted, I decided to simply explore several different ideas, anything really that came to mind. I spent a large amount of time creating any and all ideas that came to mind, and the result was a number of marks that worked much better than my initial drafts, and more of a place to start from.



After this massive brainstorm, it became clear that the idea of an open book worked the best to convey the idea of education, and by adding a leaf growing out of the book, the mark also strongly suggested the idea of sustainability coming from education.



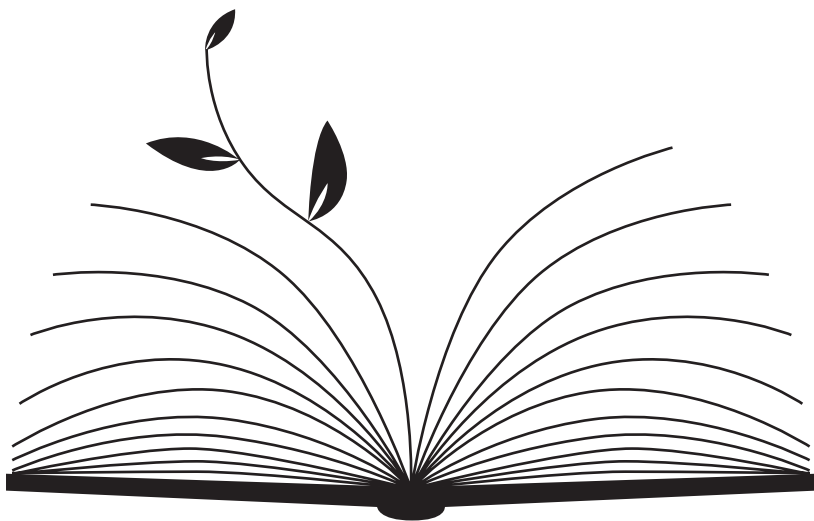
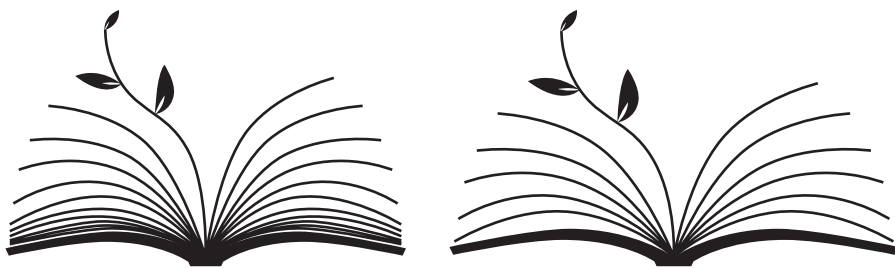
In fact, looking back at the initial few drawings, even the roughest version of the open book mark appeared more mature and serious than any of the other marks, which appeared elementary and corny.



Second Nature

With this general idea of a leaf growing out of the book, I worked on strengthening the mark and making it more successful, in terms of both the book and the leaf.

At the top of the list of things for me to keep in mind was to make everything more realistic. This included making the pages more curved, and also indicates that the mark with the flat covers works the best, as book covers are generally not curved with the pages, especially with a hard-cover book.



It's also worth noting that I played around with the typeface as well. I was previously experimenting with Futura and Caslon, both of which are very common and would not stand out within the mark. I tried out marks using Rockwell Regular, Courier Std Medium, and Clarendon Light. Further, using capital letters makes the text integrate more with the image of the book.

Rockwell does the most with the mark, with the weight of the text referencing the thicker stroke of the book covers.

SECOND NATURE

SECOND NATURE

SECOND NATURE

Although close, I was still not getting the mark to read decisively like a book. Suggestions included making the pages being fanned out and looking more like a semi-circle, having the pages appear a little more wavy, decreasing the stroke of the pages, and making the leaves appear above the implied semi-circle of the pages.



In addition, I increased the tracking of the text, so it would be more integrated with the mark as a whole.

Further, the leaves themselves proved to be an issue as well, not reading as realistically as they could or should. This led to a few explorations, with the most successful being the iteration that has the leaves as the terminus of the stem.



With the basic idea and shape in place, finalizing the mark was simply a matter of making a few edits and adding color. I edited the leaves to look a bit more realistic, and positioned the leaves slightly higher on the stalk. In addition, I decreased the size of the text so it would be more consistent with the width of the mark.

From there, I added a green Pantone color (one with a bit of yellow to it) to the mark, adding the color only to the leaves and the book cover, so as to suggest that the leaves (or sustainable thinking) originate from the book.



S E C O N D N A T U R E

The original mark



Second Nature

Education for Sustainability


The modified mark



S E C O N D N A T U R E

The business papers

My initial designs for the business papers kept the designs simple, feeling as though simplicity of design is symbolic of sustainability. I also wanted to keep a common element through the trio as well, and felt that a simple rule over the contact information of the company would be appropriate, as it could suggest a horizontal field and provide a visual attraction to that contact information. I also decided to stick with the Rockwell typeface, referencing the company mark, again to make the elements feel like they belong to a group.



18 Tremont Street
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Dear Mr. Smith


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Sincerely,

Nicholas Braica
Second Nature



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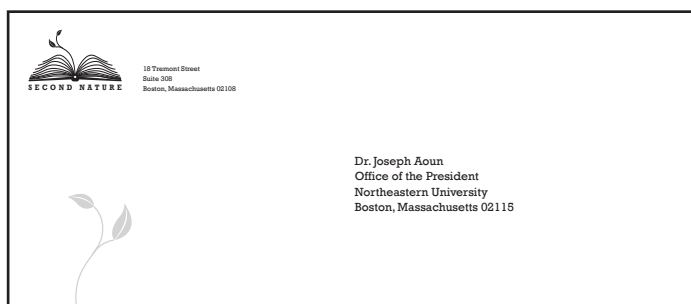
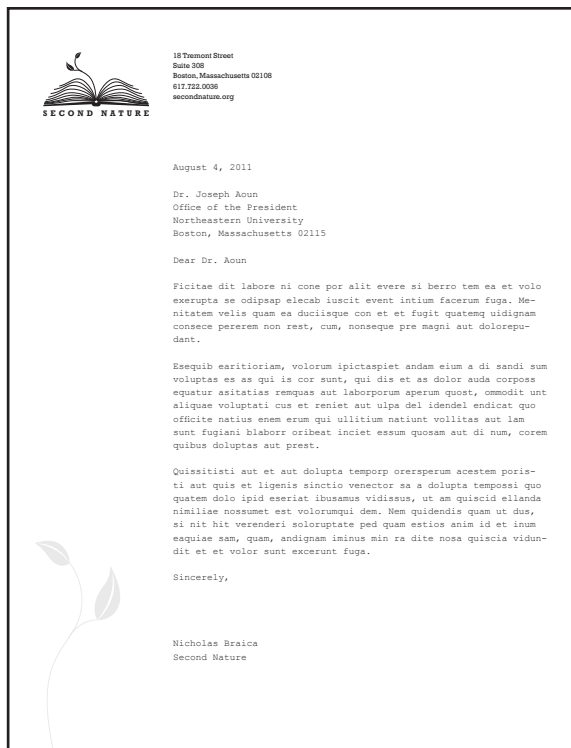
NICHOLAS BRAICA
nbraica@secondnature.org

I decided to create a couple different iterations of business papers. In each of these sets, I tried to keep some things in mind:

For the letterhead, it was suggested that we do not use a proportional typeface, as using Courier or another typewriter-esque font makes the letter a little more personal. In addition, I moved the salutation to just below the first fold, keeping the letter within the three field vertical grid created by folding the paper in thirds. Also, placing some content in the large left side margin made the composition more interesting.

For the business cards, I made all of the text the same size, keeping everything consistent. In addition, I made the person's name capital case, as referencing the typography that was in the mark implied that the person was as important as the name of the company.

For the envelopes, I pulled the return address up to the top left corner, as keeping the return address on the lower half of the envelope could confuse post office scanners. In addition, I tried to keep the positioning of each element as consistent as possible.



August 4, 2011

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Dear Dr. Aoun

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Second Nature



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After a critique of my last three sets, I decided to try a new approach with my text. Because my company mark is so symmetrical and centered, I tried centering the text below it. The result did not work out, however, as it left the space feeling awkward and with strange whitespace.



Nicholas Braica
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Dear Mr. Smith


Ficitae dit labore ni come por alit evare si berro tem ea et volo exerupta se odipsap elecab iuscit event intium facerum fuga. Menitatem velis quam ea ducisque con et et fugit quatenq uiddigan conense percesen non rest, cum, nonseque pre magni aut dolorepudant.


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Second Nature







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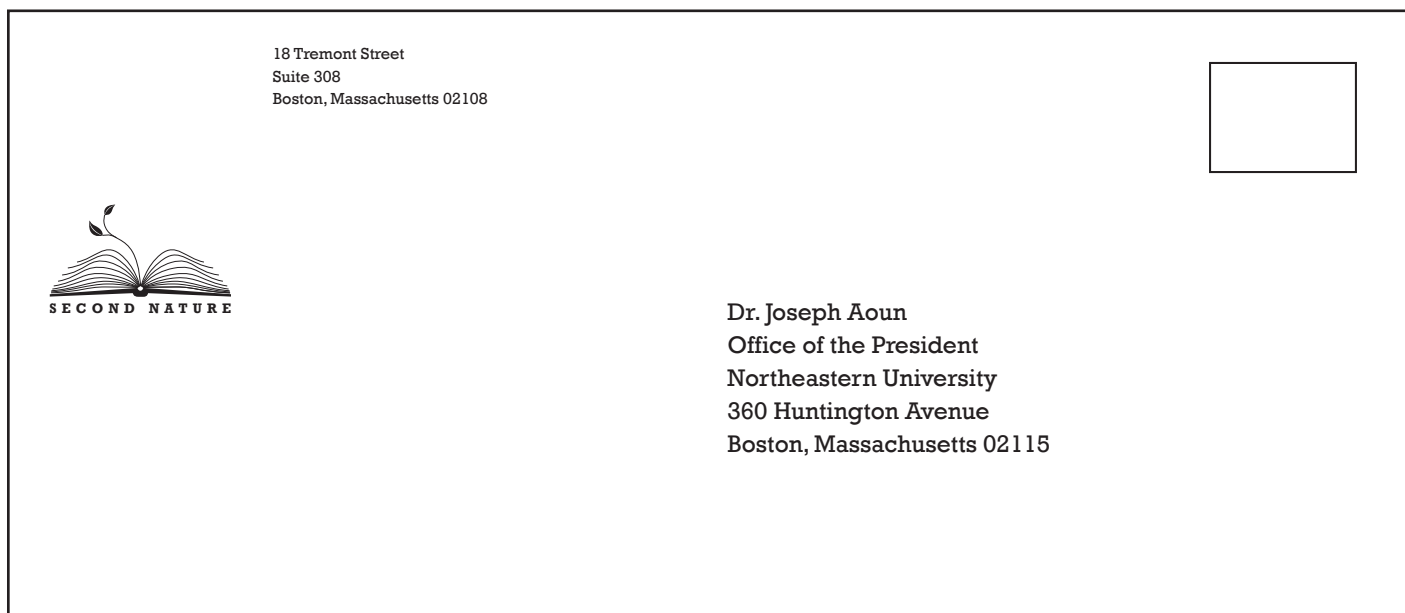
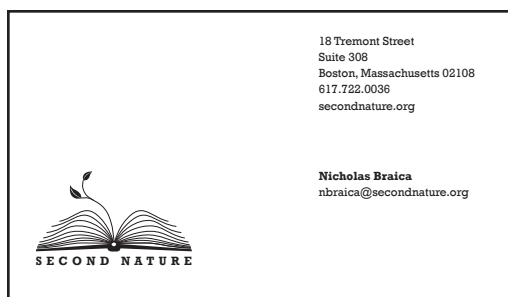
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Finally, I decided to set the company information above and to the right of the company mark, which allowed for the top third of the letterhead to be the most interesting while keeping the mark in line with the salutation. This setup was also able to carry the theme throughout the three business papers. Also in the business card, the white space above the mark allows the organic shape to flow and grow up, indicating some sort of movement.

This generic layout was the most successful in terms of both keeping the space interesting and providing the correct information. Small things were edited, including spelling out the state, removing the leaf highlight from the elements, and increasing the margin on the right side of the letterhead.



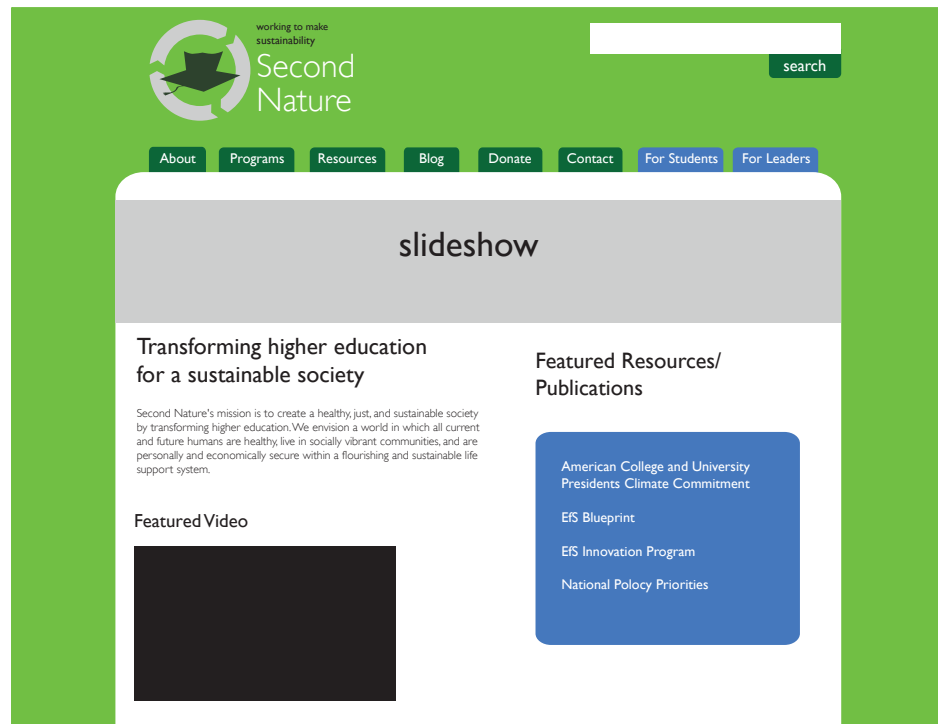
The website

I felt that the website redesign would be a large part of the communications campaign, especially given the poor quality of Second Nature's current site.

One of the main pieces that is lacking on the current site is an abysmal navigational system. I would like to include a couple different navigational systems that appeal directly to whoever is viewing the site. For example, the main navigation will include the common links (about, contact, programs, a link to the blog, other links that are for general use). I would also like to include links for specific audiences, i.e. college presidents and students. The usage of these links will allow for easier navigation if, as a president, for example, you are looking for information specific to a program that you are a part of.

I also wanted to make the site more colorful, and more color-appropriate of sustainable living. While green is used in virtually every sustainability-related media, I wanted Second Nature's green to stand out and be very bold, something that attracts attention. Further, the setup of the homepage needed to be broken up into specific sections that are well labeled so they are easier to navigate.

This layout proved to be a little bit too colorful though, and the main detractor from this layout was that the green background dominates



the space. The white background of the content fades back into the bright green of the background, which, in turn, makes the content of the page fade to the back.

In addition, it was suggested that we look at the websites like we would a print layout; keeping in mind a grid on which the content can go and keeping everything ordered and simple.

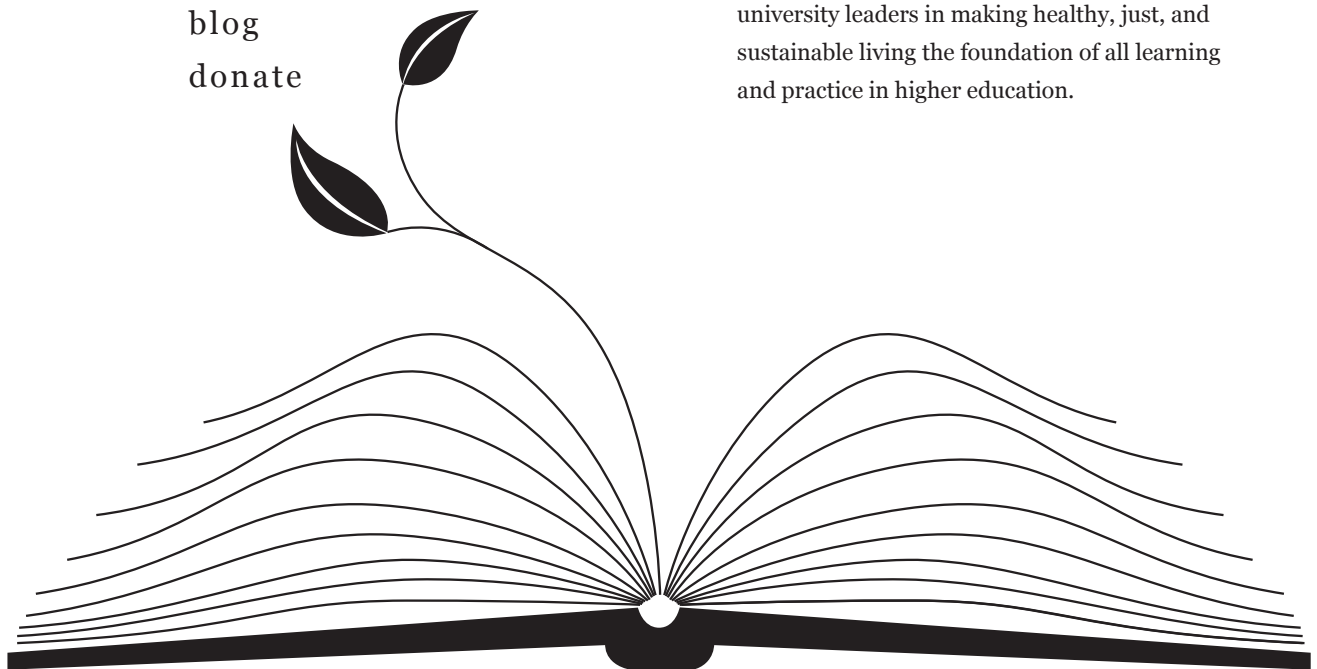
Keeping the idea of simplicity in mind, I decided to strip away all color, and create a simple splash page, with just navigation, the mission statement, the footer, and the company mark.

My idea was to keep the navigation run vertical through the entirety of the site, and on every page except for the splash page, have a smaller version of the mark above the navigation.

I also imagine that the large logo would be a .swf file embedded into the splash page, which will load when the page loads. The animation will be of the leaf growing out of the book, simply to add a more dynamic user experience.

about
programs
resources
blog
donate

Second Nature's mission is to create a sustainable society by transforming higher education. We accelerate movement toward a sustainable future by serving and supporting senior college and university leaders in making healthy, just, and sustainable living the foundation of all learning and practice in higher education.



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Keeping the navigation simple, the active and hover states of the navigation items would have a background, most likely the green that is used in the mark.

The site would be laid out in a five column grid, with the navigation taking up one field, and with content taking up two columns of two fields each. I also imagine the headers would take up three fields.

I chose to use Georgia as the main typeface in the site, as it is a web-safe font for both Mac and PC, and because a serif font is more appropriate for the target of the company.



about

programs

resources

blog

donate

We imagine a just and sustainable future.

We envision a world where all members of humankind are healthy, live in socially vibrant and culturally diverse communities have personal and economic security, fully participate in governance of society and our life support system is biologically diverse and sustainable.

We work to promote a learning environment that provides the awareness, knowledge, skills and values to achieve this vision, a future where current and future generations achieve good health, economic security, social fairness and stability while restoring and sustaining the Earth's life support systems.

Our work toward this vision embraces interdisciplinary learning and includes the community as a whole. By reinforcing the concept that the educational experience of all students must be aligned with the principles of sustainability, we help ensure that the content of learning embraces interdisciplinary systems thinking to address environmentally sustainable action on local, regional and global scales over short-, medium- and inter-generational time periods. Through this way of learning, education comes to have the same "lateral rigor" across the disciplines as it has "vertical rigor" within the disciplines.

Second Nature works to overcome the inherent limits of compartmentalized knowledge without connection to larger system interactions, by demonstrating the interdependencies and interconnections among seemingly

separate and competing social challenges -- such as population, consumption, economic, health, social justice, personal and national security, and the environment. Without such interdisciplinary systemic thinking, the net results to solve these problems are often narrow, ineffective solutions, or worse, actually increase the harm to people and the environment in another place or another time. Systems thinking is essential to developing a shared framework for understanding and dealing with complex, nonlinear systems that are characteristic of both society and the natural world.

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about

programs

resources

blog

donate

Second Nature initiates and supports high-leverage national initiatives and programs aimed at re-orienting the higher education sector toward more sustainable outcomes.

Our key strategies are to:

- work closely with senior leaders in higher education to make sustainability a strategic imperative;
- identify and create opportunities for higher education to lead the way in creating a sustainable society;
- create strong networks and build coalitions among institutions and organizations within higher education;
- foster effective collaboration with other sectors of society;
- enable productive dialogue on accelerating the transition toward sustainability; and
- develop effective methods to transition from awareness to understanding to action.

Our programs



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After this initial work, I tackled sub-navigation, as that will be an important part of this site, given the large amount of content that the company has. The best way to do this with the vertical navigation is to include an indented list underneath the main, over arching category. The hover and active states will include a leaf, separating the sub-navigation from the main navigation.

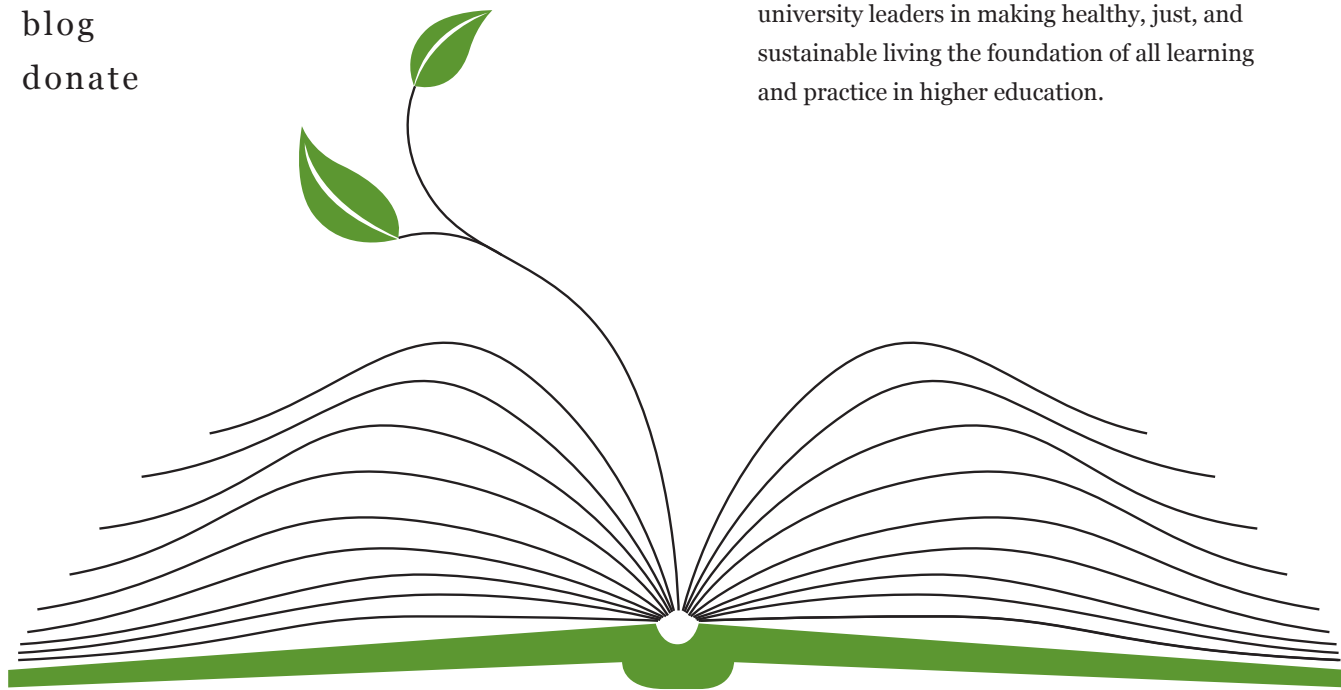
In addition to the sub-navigation, I also addressed smaller details, like the leaf hover states. In addition to the sub-navigation, I would include the same for the splash page navigation. Also on the home page, I moved the navigation all the way to the left of the page, to better relate to the position of the navigation on the other pages.

On the content pages, I moved the company mark on the website over to start at the second field, to leave the navigation at a more dynamic position by having its own vertical column. I also moved the footer from the centered position it was at, to the second vertical field to stay consistent with the rest of the content, as well as the company mark at the top.



 [about](#)
[programs](#)
[resources](#)
[blog](#)
[donate](#)

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