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Enacting ethos online: Using classical rhetoric to analyze visual Web design

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by

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Chapter 1: Introduction

When instructing my students on the importance of visual elements in various compositions, I often find myself relying upon the overused phrase, "A picture is worth a thousand words." The familiarity of this phrase helps people, students and professionals alike, who are in early stages of developing visual literacy comprehend just how much influence visual elements can truly have on a document. It is always my hope that my students will carry the profound meaning of visuals with them as they journey farther into their majors, where the veterinary students will see the power of anatomical drawings and the engineers will appreciate schematic maps, where math and economics majors (who protest in English 150 that they have no need for visual literacy) will grow to respect a well-constructed graph of the numbers they cherish so deeply. Yet before they can value the visual literacy they have gained in my class, they all have one question: why?

The answer is not simple. While it is easy to tell them that a picture, chart, or aesthetically pleasing layout can convey meaning and improve the effectiveness of a document, the reasons *why* visual elements do have so much influence are based in very complex concepts that are difficult to understand and explain. Fortunately, in foundation composition courses at Iowa State University, the textbooks that instructors use often rely upon the rhetorical principles that students have been learning for written arguments to teach visual literacy. After understanding how pathos, ethos, and logos can assist a written argument in his or her essay, a student can more easily appreciate that these same principles can be put to use in selecting images for an essay—the easiest and most valuable visual element for first year composition students, in my limited teaching experience, to execute effectively (and tastefully). One of the most commonly used textbooks for English 250 at Iowa State University, *Everything's an Argument*, has an entire chapter devoted to encouraging students to utilize visual arguments. Though this chapter, "Visual Arguments," is arranged within the section of the book that discusses the presentation of arguments, it

nonetheless presents students with the knowledge of how to read and use visuals, giving the reason that "anyone reading and writing today has to be prepared to deal with arguments that shuffle more than words" (415). The authors do not use the same terms of ethos, pathos, and logos, which were used in earlier parts of the books devoted to written argument, but the terms are still present, in slightly different words. Students are instructed to consider how visuals reflect the author's authority, credibility, and character (425); the benefits of using graphs and charts to display data in a logical and meaningful way is discussed at length (427-434); finally, emotional aspects of images and designs, including the "emotional power of color" (436) are recommended as valuable argumentation tools. The guiding principles included in *Everything's an Argument* are generally intended for selecting images; however, they can easily be applied to things like document layout—headings, fonts, color—and, taken one step further, to documents that rely less on written text and more on visual design—like posters, brochures, and (most importantly for my argument) Web sites.

For those involved in the study of rhetoric, terms like ethos, pathos, and logos—so foreign to our students—are familiar representatives of an ancient past, core concepts that for myself conjure an image of Aristotle's bust. The link between these terms and the superstars of ancient rhetoric—both in my mind and in rhetorical pedagogy—is a clear indication that rhetoric is firmly rooted in the classics, inextricably tied to terminology and theories that originated with Aristotle, Quintilian, Cicero, and other figures of antiquity. The notion that the classical beginnings of rhetoric are foundational, basic principles accessible to modern authors of documents will form the basis for my study. An equally important notion is that classical rhetoric, which first involved oral arguments and discourse and later focused on written texts, can also be applied to a third "type" of document: the visual.

Moving Toward the Visual

The evolution of a theoretical framework in any discipline indicates that the discipline is thriving and robust, adapting to its surroundings as the world around it continues to

advance. For rhetorical studies (specifically professional communication) as a discipline, the evolution of the theoretical framework is linked to the progress of technology and the transformation of communication forms. In the modern world, the discipline is moving along with the rest of the world into a future ruled by visual forms, demanded by the electronic medium in which documents are increasingly being created and stored.

While scientists of the seventeenth century once used quill pens and parchment paper to write down the results of their experiments, which would be disseminated to a select crowd of their peers, modern scientists now catalogue their results in electronic databases available to scientists around the world. Electronic databases, Web sites, and digital copies have replaced printed documents, and these mediums for storing, displaying, and creating information do so in ways that no print document could, by allowing user interactivity and increasing the sophistication of visual information. Information is no longer static; the digital age has led to an era where information changes on a time scale measured not in minutes, but in milliseconds. Because audiences in the modern world not only expect but demand that information be made immediately available, authors of professional documents—encompassing everything from student posters to Web sites, from single-sourced documentation to marketing materials—rely heavily on visual document design to communicate their ideas in an accessible and attractive way.

Just as the works of Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, and other rhetorical theorists of the classical period have been and still are readily applied to written and spoken texts (in both a theoretical approach and in practical application), so too can these classical theorists be used in a discussion of visual document design, specifically on Web sites. When used in reference to a visual element of a document, classical rhetoric can assist creators of digitally based, visually focused content in determining the persuasive elements necessary for the success of the communication "document." By returning to the classical roots of the professional communication field to discuss more modern forms of authorship—that which relies upon

the visual—our field and the "authors" of these visually-based documents can regain the classical influence that is our heritage. Practitioners of professional communication can gain a unique perspective on the relationship between visual, oral and written texts—a relationship where creative and analytical methods can be shared between mediums. Not only does the use of classical rhetoric in visual design secure a return to and renewed respect for classical influences, it offers benefits in analysis and production that other, non-classically centered approaches do not. Additionally, the use of classical rhetoric might usher into professional communication a more accessible and successful mode for instructing professional communicators in the art of creating persuasive Web sites.

Purpose and Structure

The origin of this inquiry lies in my observation of the obvious ways that visual elements in communicative acts can be persuasive in the same terms as written and oral communications. Specifically, I have observed (in teaching and in my work as a professional communicator) that visuals are not simply pretty touches added at the last minute to a document, but are purposeful and meaningful elements that are closely tied to Aristotle's original means of persuasion: ethos, pathos, and logos. My own observations of ethos—a complicated and historically significant concept for rhetoricians—as it applies to professional communicators spurred a desire to investigate further how classical ethos in particular is a valuable tool in creating persuasive visual design on Web sites.

Simply put, my intent in this thesis is to discover the ways that classical ethos is enacted in the visual text design of Web sites, demonstrated by a practical application in which I will analyze two Web sites for their successful use of ethos in design. One Web site comes from a corporation (SHAZAM, Inc., a financial network) and the other from a non-profit literary journal (*Flyway: A Journal of Writing and Environment*), and both sites rely on visual elements to achieve a basic purpose—to represent the organization to the public.

Chapter 2 explores the classical rhetorical models for ethos, as well as some modern interpretations and divergences. I include Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian as representative of classical ethos, authors whose numerous and valuable definitions of ethos will be critical to the practical application and implications of my study. Though these authors may not all define ethos in the same way, my concern is for classical ethos and so their interpretations of the concept are necessary to situate my later analysis in classical terms. I attempt to formulate a definition of classical ethos that applies to modern texts, particularly the visual and digital.

A review of literature documenting similar efforts to mine—by modern authors who have infused their work in visual rhetoric with classical principles—is integral to my assertion that classical rhetorical principles used for analyzing and producing written and spoken texts can and should be readily applied to visual texts. While authors in rhetoric and design have used classical rhetoric to examine visual elements, their numbers are few. The modern authors that I include in Chapter 2 utilize classical terminology in unique and imaginative ways that, if the trend were to be emphasized on a greater scale, could change the way the discipline thinks about visual text design.

Several authors advocate the potential for rhetoric in visual design, including classical rhetoric (particularly ethos) in Web sites. La Grandeur (2003) discusses the value of classical rhetoric in visual design of Web sites, with a particular emphasis on the three artistic proofs of logos, ethos, and pathos. Buchanan (1985) offers a designer's perspective on the usefulness of classical rhetoric in visual design studies, ultimately determining that classical rhetoric can improve the overall understanding of design in culture. Ehses (1984) case study on *Macbeth* theatre posters and rhetorical terminology supports my assertion that rhetorical terms are useful for the student and professional communicator in creating and understanding the effectiveness of visual designs. Hutto (2008) examines ethos in biomedical journals, illustrating that this particular term is important to visual persuasiveness of professional communication. Visual communication forms applicable to the work of professional

communicators is addressed by Kostelnick and Roberts (1998), including ethos as practiced in various levels of design (from typeface to total document appearance). This supports the practicality of using classical rhetoric in teaching professional communicators about visual analysis and design, and the model that Kostelnick and Roberts use in their textbook serves as the basis for my own rhetorical analysis of Chapter 3. I return LaGrandeur's examination of specific Web sites' uses of ethos, which illustrates the dual nature of ethos as both positive and negative—valuable for the creator to establish, but also too easily falsified through superfluous digital media. A slightly different take on ethos—a communal ethos—is found in Hunt (1996), who discusses Web presence and the ways that professional communicators should rethink credibility (as community-based rather than separately created).

There are a number of modern authors who take an opposite view regarding the place of classical rhetoric in visual communication theory—and who I include in my literature review. These authors diverge from classical rhetoric in their analyses of design rhetoric, adopting modern theories—particularly semiotics and prototype theory—that are undeniably valuable to the field of rhetoric. However, I advocate that classically based analyses of visuals deserve attention equal to that given to more contemporary theories, including those mentioned here. A review of these divergences from classical rhetoric illustrates the depth of the field and also supports my position that classical rhetoric still has much to offer in analyzing online designs.

Before analyzing the Web sites, I give a rationale for adapting the rhetorical principle of ethos from its origins in written and oral communication to the third mode of the visual, specifically in an online context. Such adaptation requires a discussion of what classical ethos as I define it means in the context of visual Web site design. Ethos has typically been used in discussions of written and verbal texts, yet my assertion is that it applies just as readily to visual text design, and to Web sites—and has significant implications for professional communication practice and pedagogy.

In Chapter 3, I will establish a methodology for the subsequent rhetorical analysis of the use of ethos in the two artifacts (as well as in comparison artifacts) to demonstrate the power of classical rhetoric in analyzing and creating visual document designs. The two artifacts in the practical application are the SHAZAM, Inc., corporate public Web site (http://www.shazam.net), and the *Flyway: A Journal of Writing and Environment* Web site (http://www.flyway.org). SHAZAM, Inc. is an electronic funds transfer (EFT) network that serves financial institutions across the United States. *Flyway: A Journal of Writing and Environment* is a graduate student-produced literary magazine at Iowa State University, in the Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing and Environment program.

A rhetorical analysis of these Web sites will determine the extent to which ethos has been utilized successfully. Specifically, I will analyze each organization's Welcome page and About page for the use of ethos. Welcome pages are the first part of a site that most visitors see, and as first impressions are lasting, the welcome page establishes the purpose of the site, as well as the authority and demeanor of an organization—attributes (in various ways that I will explore later) of ethos. The same is true for an About page; this section of a Web site allows an organization to directly state its purpose or main message to the visitor, a visibly rhetorical action that enhances the ethos established on the Welcome page. Any number of other pages of these Web sites could be used in a rhetorical analysis, but my personal impression of the function of Welcome and About pages is that they are the most rhetorical and therefore, the most useful for my study (even if not the most visited or visible portions of the sites).

In Chapter 4, I summarize the implications of my study for the field of rhetoric, specifically professional communication and visual persuasion. What I hope will result from the rhetorical analysis in Chapter 3 is a more comprehensive understanding of how modern documents that rely on the visual can be (and are) created with intentions similar to those of written and oral texts, with the use of classical rhetorical principles of persuasion. Ethos—so

critical to the perception and persuasiveness of an organization—can help professional communicators produce quality arguments, written, spoken, or visual. Professionals who practice rhetoric can use principles like ethos to analyze and design the work that they do in a way that is meaningful, understandable, and useful.

Overall, the discipline can gain an insight into how the practice of rhetoricians, though continually gaining knowledge, never *really* changes. Foundations in classical rhetorical concepts will always remain the basis for how we study communication and rhetoric, and for many outside the discipline, these concepts are already in practice. A visible, active revival of classical foundations is essential to keeping the tradition alive and infusing what we already know into what we're learning about the field. Otis M. Walter, writing 25 years ago, saw then that the classics had a special, enduring place in rhetorical studies: "We might find classical rhetoric taught as answer to radical or root questions a stimulating discipline, leading us to answer unanswered questions, to modify old questions, or find new ones" (422).

Some might call my wish to infuse the modern discipline of rhetoric, specifically in an online or visual context, with an active use of its foundational principles a romantic notion. Perhaps it is. Yet I firmly believe that my study goes even further than the value of uniting modern and historical ideas, by offering the discipline a new (old) language with which to teach and analyze rhetoric in the modern world. It is the language of classical rhetoric, revitalized and refurbished, put to use in a discussion of the mode of communication that the evolution of technology has made the principal preoccupation of the discipline, and of the world at large: the visual design elements of documents.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Ethos, as a part of rhetoric, has changed forms and origins many times throughout the thousands of years of its existence. Classical rhetoricians envisioned ethos in different and similar ways as modern scholars—making ethos a complex and multifaceted part of rhetorical studies. An understanding of how ethos functions for professional communicators who are creating persuasive documents (in any mode) can only be reached through an exploration of the history and evolution of ethos, including how it is enacted online. Such an exploration begins in the classics and moves through time to modern divergences from and interpretations of classical theories of ethos.

Classical Notions of Ethos

Classical rhetoric is defined by the thinkers who gave names to the concepts that comprise persuasion: Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, among many others. These three men identified ethos as a critical source of persuasion for rhetors, one that is based generally (though the definition evolved through the years) on credibility and character. Without their contributions to rhetoric and the concept of ethos, it would be very difficult for modern professional communicators to do their jobs successfully—and persuasively.

Aristotle

In *Rhetoric*, Aristotle focuses upon rhetoric in oral communication, though the transference of his theories to writing, a rising mode of communication at the time, has been assumed in rhetorical education (though not explicitly stated in his text). While Aristotle does not address the visual as a form of communication, images and designs have a persuasive purpose that in the fourth century BCE was not at the forefront of Greek communication needs (at that time, spoken communication was the focus, as it was used widely in the thriving democracy as a tool for representation). Aristotle defines rhetoric as “an ability, in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion” (1.2.1), with those means

taking the form of inartistic and artistic proofs (ethos being one of the latter).

Aristotle gives ethos a unique role as a substantial method of persuasion as one of the three artistic proofs created in a speech and invented by the speaker (1.2.2-4). The alternative view on ethos is that it is situated, rather than invented—an attribute already developed and in place prior to the oration—and this view is taken up by later classical scholars, such as Cicero. For Aristotle, ethos is essential to persuasion because "we believe fair-minded people to a greater extent and more quickly [than we do others] on all subjects in general and completely so in cases where there is not exact knowledge but room for doubt" (1.2.4). Other concepts of ethos locate it only in the exordium of a speech or as a prior knowledge of a speaker, but Aristotle emphasizes ethos as present within an oration—as actually being created in the oration itself: "this [ethos] should result from the speech, not from a previous opinion that the speaker is a certain kind of person" (1.2.4). This concept of ethos, as created by the text and not as a preconditioned response by an audience, will be useful in my later analysis as it supports the notion that a Web site and its design features can *create* ethos for a corporation in the realm of the Web.

Aristotle identifies three elements that establish ethos: "practical wisdom [*phronēsis*] and virtue [*aretē*] and good will [*eunoia*]" (2.1.5). Practical wisdom is essentially expertise in the subject, while virtue is moral character and honor, and good will is linked with "disposition toward the audience" (Baumlin 6). To omit any or all of these would be a mistake for the speaker, because persuasion is impossible without them (2.1.5). One major objection by rhetoricians throughout the ages to Aristotle has been the use of language like "seem" and "appear" when discussing the role of ethos in rhetoric; for example, Aristotle asserts that "a person seeming to have all these qualities is necessarily persuasive" (2.1.6). The study of rhetoric, as a discipline, has needed to defend itself against accusations of being manipulative for over two millennia, and so a theoretical framework that advocates insincerity is not helpful in asserting the value and virtue of rhetoric. However, the morally

ambiguous language of appearances is explained by the early contention in Book 1 that Aristotle makes regarding his view of ethos: that it only pertains to what the speech presents as persuasive, not the audience's prior knowledge of the speaker. Each instance of persuasion calls for the establishment of ethos, and Aristotle interprets each instance to be independent and unrelated to the audience's preconceived notions about the rhetor—a level playing field for all rhetoricians.

The importance of *phronēsis*, *aretē,* and *eunoia*—classical terms that sound foreign to most professional communicators—is as true today as when Aristotle wrote *On Rhetoric,* though the means of conveying wisdom, virtue, and good will may have changed as cultures have shifted (an idea that I will address shortly). In a modern context, these three elements are critical to persuading viewers of corporations' Web sites, just as Aristotle once observed them as persuading the audiences of orators. These elements help to maintain attention through an assertion of expertise, helpfulness, and good intentions. Without establishing at least one, if not all, of these elements of ethos, an organization inhibits the persuasiveness of any communication. Audiences are not receptive to inexpert or impractical Web sites and would not be persuaded by a Web site that does not demonstrate an element of good will.

Aristotle also includes in his discussion of rhetoric a long list of character types that a speaker may use with audiences, whose members have identifiable traits (2.12-17). The list is an overview of the character traits of fourth century Athenian youth, adults, and seniors, and the effect of fortune, wealth, and power upon character. These chapters are primarily psychological profiles, and although Aristotle does not offer suggestions for how a speaker can adjust his or her ethos to the traits of these groups, earlier passages (1.8.6) indicate this may have been Aristotle's intention. Aristotle recommends that a speaker understand the complication of constitution—that the speaker know what audiences from various cultural backgrounds will need to hear. To be precise, Aristotle advises that a speaker "should be acquainted with the kinds of character distinctive of each form of constitution; for the

character distinctive of each is necessarily most persuasive to each" (1.8.6). While the specifics of these character types may no longer be as relevant today, the idea that a speaker should understand and adjust to the cultural variations within an audience is fundamental to understanding the art of persuasion.

Many modern theorists find that Aristotle's framework of rhetoric (including ethos) is limiting in the way that it breaks down human characters and relationships into defined categories that the sciences of sociology and anthropology tell us are inaccurate and simplistic. James Baumlin argues that "Aristotelian ethos presumes that human nature is knowable, reducible to a range of types, and manipulable by discourse. Here, though, we must consider whether classical theory squares with current anthropological understanding of human character" (7), an understanding that cultures and character are inextricably linked in ways that Aristotle did not explicitly recognize in the *Rhetoric*. Although Aristotle's discussion of governmental influences on audience disposition is related to ethos, the discussion is only in terms of the ethos of the rhetor and not of the audience. Baumlin asserts that modern sociological and etymological studies shed light on how the ethos of a rhetor truly influences an audience (7); this is done by broadening the definition of ethos from "solitary speaker…to encompass collective acts" (Hunt 521). Early Greek culture knew ethos as a term meaning "habitual gathering place" (Halloran 60), and it is likely that Aristotle would have known this meaning (even if that is not evident in his writings).

Cicero

Skipping ahead a few hundred years in the rhetorical timeline to the Roman orator, Cicero, and his *De Oratore* (55 BCE), ethos is given a new identity that has only a few things in common with Aristotle's conception of ethos. However few they may be, these similarities are important in identifying the definition of classical ethos used in my analysis, particularly the existence of the three proofs and the location of these proofs in arrangement.

Like Aristotle, Cicero recognizes that rhetoric comes in three parts—"proving that our contentions are true, winning over our audience, and inducing their minds to feel any emotion the case may demand" (2.154)—ideas that are analogous to logos, ethos, and pathos, respectively, though Cicero does not call them by these names. In fact, as James May (1988) indicates, there is no Latin equivalent for Aristotle's ethos in *De Oratore* (5). Additionally, Cicero's use of a different word (*conciliare*) actually changes the emphasis, from a portrayal of an orator's character to an orator's actions (5). Aristotle advocates that the three artistic proofs occurred throughout an oration, and Cicero agrees; speaking on arrangement, Antonius exhorts that the proofs of logos, ethos, and pathos "just like blood in the body, flow throughout the whole of the speech" (2.310). However, Cicero and Aristotle differ on the source of ethos during an oration.

Aristotle conceives of ethos as created by an oration, not by the reputation preceding the orator (1.2.4). George Kennedy notes in his translation of *On Rhetoric* that Aristotle likely saw persuasion based on reputation as an inartistic proof (38). This disregard for reputation, according to Kennedy's speculation, was likely a result of the Greek court rule that required defendants to represent themselves, meaning that they had to create in their speeches good impressions despite their reasons for being at court (38). Cicero, on the other hand, conceives of an ethos that relies on reputation and authority: "People's minds are won over by a man's prestige, his accomplishments, and the reputation he has acquired by his way of life" (2.182). May asserts that linguistic and other differences between Ciceronian and Aristotelian ethos may be a result of incomplete information in Cicero's time, as well as Roman social influences on the role of character and reputation (9). May asserts that Romans of Cicero's time upheld family reputation, or *mos maiorum*, as pivotal to status and authority in society, and that the nobility were regarded as already have goodness of character by birth (6). For Cicero, then, an ethos without reputation would be inconceivable (May 9).

If Romans of Cicero's day held character as something that cannot be easily changed, then why the concern for appearances? Aristotle's often troublesome indication that much of persuasion is about appearances is continued in Cicero:

> Moreover, so much is accomplished by speaking thoughtfully and with a certain taste, that the speech may be said to mold an image of the character of the orator. Employing thoughts of a certain kind and words of a certain kind, and adopting besides a delivery that is gentle and shows signs of flexibility, make speakers appear as decent, as good in character—yes, as good men. (2.184)

This seeming conflict of interest—that character should be constant but yet also created in an oration—is explained by his earlier explanation that "such things [as character] are easier to embellish if present than to fabricate if totally lacking" (2.182). Cicero's concern with appearing to be good is really just a recommendation to emphasize the positive that already exists, to enhance the preexisting goodness of the orator—as Quintilian will later assert and as the Roman preoccupation with the inherent goodness of nobility explains.

The most significant difference between Ciceronian and Aristotelian ethos is the relationship with emotion. For Aristotle, ethos is distinct from emotion; pathos governs the feelings inspired in the audience by the oration, while ethos "has nothing to do with emotions, but concerns the audience's nonemotional evaluation of the reliability of the speaker" (May and Wisse, 35). Cicero takes a different approach to the role of emotion in the establishment of ethos; the audience must "be won over to feel goodwill toward the orator" (2.182). This is accomplished through the mild emotional encouragement of the audience. Cicero recommends humility and gentleness as a method of persuasion:

> But this entire mode of speaking is most effective in cases where there is not much opportunity to use some form of sharp and violent emotional arousal to set the juror's heart aflame. For we don't always have to employ vigorous

> oratory, but often we should rather speak in a quiet, low-keyed, and gentle manner…[.] And if this is handled agreeably and with taste, it is actually so powerful…that it often has more influence than the case itself. (2.183-184)

The implication is that ethos becomes more than the character of the speaker created by the words of an oration—it becomes an element of style, of presentation, that combines with Aristotle's version of ethos as a source of invention, to persuade the audience in powerful ways. In modern contexts, one might say that this combination of pathos with ethos is what some call professionalism—a manner of address and appearance that inspires a certain amount of emotion in the viewer to cultivate respect.

Quintilian

As a Roman rhetorician living in the early parts of the first century CE, Quintilian expanded Ciceronian ideas about ethos, pathos, and emotion. Like his predecessor, Quintilian finds ethos and pathos to be similar in function—both are appeals based on emotions, which he extols as "the most powerful means of obtaining what we desire" (6.2.1). Quintilian agrees with Cicero in that pathos describes "the more violent emotions and ethos as designating those which are calm and gentle….the former command and disturb, the latter persuade and induce a feeling of goodwill" (6.2.9). Quintilian acknowledges that a gentle, understated expression is no easier for the orator to accomplish than a more passionate demeanor—and that both are equally important. However, he goes further than Cicero in recognizing that moral character is essential to persuasion, and that "the ethos which I have in my mind…is commended to our approval by goodness more than aught else and is not merely calm and mild, but in most cases ingratiating and courteous and such as to excite pleasure and affection in our hearers" (6.2.13). In some ways, this is akin to Aristotle's concepts of virtue [*aretē*] and good will [*eunoia*] in the way that the demeanor of the orator expresses a kindly attitude toward the audience—and in turn wins the favor of the audience for that orator.

The question of falsifying ethos also emerges, as it did for Aristotle and Cicero, for Quintilian, who addresses the problem by insisting that the perfect orator must necessarily be good in character as well as talented in oration (Book 1 Preface, par. 9; see also 12.1.1-4). Of the exhibition of the character of an orator, Quintilian goes on to say:

> Ethos in all its forms requires the speaker to be a man of good character and courtesy. For it is most important that he should himself possess or be thought to possess those virtues for the possession which it is his duty, if possible, to commend his client as well, while the excellence of his own character will make his pleading all the more convincing and will be of the utmost service to the cases which he undertakes. (6.2.18)

Just as Cicero conceived of an orator whose character should be widely known as good, Quintilian demands that an orator with a true knowledge of eloquence be a good man—and through this goodness, the orator can be most persuasive. Cicero observed that it was near impossible to entirely fake good character, and Quintilian adds to this that emotion is also difficult to fake; sincere emotions must be felt and demonstrated by the orator in his speech if the audience is to feel these same emotions (6.2.27). At this, Quintilian again shows that his ethos, like Cicero's, is closely linked with pathos—what the orator is feeling or expressing is reflected in the audience by the members' reactions.

Classical Ethos Defined

From this brief survey of the classical trajectory of ethos through Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, a picture of ethos as a complex and often convoluted rhetorical concept emerges. While the definitions these authors have provided cover a wide range of perspectives, they do share similarities that establish a broad version of classical ethos useful for my rhetorical analysis. Classical ethos, as Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian conceive of it, could be summarized in three points:

1. Ethos conveys a rhetor's trustworthiness (Aristotle) and goodwill (Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian) to an audience.
2. Ethos can inspire a positive, persuasive emotional reaction through an understated tone and a sense of goodness on the rhetor's part (Cicero, Quintilian).
3. Ethos can assist in overcoming prior perceptions (Aristotle), but may also rely upon previous reputation to persuade an audience (Cicero, Quintilian).

This three-part definition of classical ethos, which is an amalgamation of the principles from Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, will be useful in the rhetorical analysis of Chapter 3. I will primarily concentrate on the first 2 elements of ethos in my analysis of the Web sites.

Modern Visual Rhetoric Based in Classical Theory

Rhetoricians are now concerned with visual arguments and need visual literacy instruction—that much has been established. Yet there are many theorists who advocate a version of visual rhetoric that has little to do with classical principles in the analysis and creation of designs in professional communication. My assertion is that such theorists are missing the value of returning to the classical roots of rhetoric—a value found in the historical meaning and accessibility of classical terminology. A number of authors have written extensively on the use of classical rhetoric in visual communication, including more specific work in the area of ethos on Web sites.

While theorists who advocate a non-classical approach may provide numerous valuable insights into visual communication, so too does classical rhetoric, in ways that must be recognized and implemented so the field can acquire the most thorough knowledge of visual rhetoric possible. Kevin LaGrandeur, in "Digital Images and Classical Persuasion," explores the merits of classically based visual analysis, with specific concern for the artistic proofs of ethos, pathos, and logos. LaGrandeur observes that some theorists "have turned to postmodernism to theorize the digital medium in general. The gist of such theorization is that the characteristics of new media like the Web…enact the postmodern *texte*. The focus of

this thinking tends to be on aspects of chaos and fragmentation represented by such digital media" (118). LaGrandeur unites digital media and images, viewing them as so closely linked that they are nearly one in the same. He surmises that digital media (and images) can be quite the opposite, becoming "integrative, intertextual, and complex" (118). These characteristics are accounted for in classical rhetoric, which LaGrandeur claims "provide us with excellent, codified ways to think about the persuasive efficacy of images and words as interdependent and interactive things" (119).

To illustrate the persuasive nature of visuals, LaGrandeur refers to Aristotle and Gorgias. Aristotle asserts that rhetoric is the art of discovering "the available means of persuasion" (1.2.1) and in modern times, for LaGrandeur, those "means" include digital and visual content. Although typically discussed in the form of oral and written argument, persuasive visual arguments also rely upon the three artistic proofs of logos, pathos, and ethos. LaGrandeur interprets Aristotle's use of image as metaphor in artistic proofs as an ancient parallel for modern concepts of images (print and digital, rather than spoken or written into language) (120). Gorgias' celebration of artistic proofs in his *Encomium of Helen* is evidence, according to LaGrandeur, of the ability of images to persuade. The visual imagery in the language, along with references to the ways in which frightening and pleasing sights stir emotion in the audience, indicate that Gorgias recognizes the persuasion of images and their role in emotion and rational thought (121). LaGrandeur explains modern reincarnations of Aristotle and Gorgias before using classical principles to analyze three instances of Web images, which I will discuss later in this review. Ultimately, LaGrandeur considers classical rhetoric to be the best method for analyzing the persuasiveness of visuals on the Web.

Classical rhetorical theories belong not only to self-proclaimed rhetoricians but also to scholars in fields like design, where rhetoric assists designers in understanding the meaning behind the shapes, colors, and materials they work with daily. Richard Buchanan

encourages the use of rhetoric in design theory and recognizes the unique value of classical rhetoric in establishing a theory "in which the puzzling diversity of design communication as we encounter it in everyday products is made more intelligible, providing the basis for better public criticism and evaluation of design" (5). Buchanan mentions other theories of rhetoric that have been used to describe visual communication, particularly semiotics (4), but he prefers classical rhetoric for its interest in argument and persuasion. Foundational to Buchanan's assertion is that technology—what he sees as the driving force behind the evolution of design practice—is persuasive. Just as a traditional argument, given by a speaker, seeks to change the attitude or action of an audience, so too does technology. Buchanan identifies the key similarity between a speaker that persuades his or her audience, and the "designers [who] have directly influences the actions of individuals and communities, changed attitudes and values, and shaped society in surprisingly fundamental ways" (6).

Rhetoricians are deeply concerned with the ways in which speakers, authors, or in Buchanan's argument, designers, achieve persuasion successfully; there must be a rhetor, an audience, a subject of communication, and an argument present for the act of persuasion to be complete (Buchanan 8). In the context of designs, the designer is the speaker, the audience is the consumer, "the practical life" is the subject, and the argument is made through the object created (8). In this way, designs become arguments, methods of persuasion that are nuanced and deserve careful study. Design arguments, like written or spoken arguments, rely upon certain principles that assist in persuasion, and Buchanan identifies the relevant elements of design argument as "technological reasoning, character, and emotion" (9), which are noticeably synonymous with logos, ethos, and pathos, the artistic proofs of classical rhetoric.

Buchanan's practical application of classical principles to design argument focuses on tangible objects like spoons (9), lamps (13), and wrenches (16) to demonstrate reasoning, character, and emotion; although this is a distinctly different kind of design analysis than

Web site design analysis, his efforts in linking designs with arguments and persuasion are valuable. If one accepts his premises of technology as persuasive and design objects as arguments using ethos, pathos, and logos, then it follows that classical rhetoric has merit in improving the analysis and creation of designs of all sorts, not just kitchen appliances and decorative couches. Buchanan appreciates the value of rhetoric in all areas of design, and also the value for the field of rhetoric as it continues to grow and expand: "If designers can benefit from explicit talk about rhetorical concerns, those who are interested in rhetoric can benefit even more from studying how design continues to influence and shape society by its persuasive assertions" (22).

Hanno H. J. Ehses' article, "Representing Macbeth: A Case Study in Visual Rhetoric," could be appropriately categorized as a non-classically based application of visual rhetoric, based upon the author's emphasis of semiotics (discussed later in this literature review) as fundamental to visual rhetorical analysis. However, Ehses advocates a sort of combination of semiotics and classical rhetoric—the study of deriving meaning from signs blended with the study of persuasive elements of communication—that provides another instance of the utility of rhetoric in the design process. Ehses evaluates the state of rhetoric as having left behind the negative connotations associated with persuasion; this has been replaced with an association with choice and reason (54). The positive implications for rhetoric in general indicate a potential utility in other areas where persuasion is significant—in modes other than oral and written communication, such as design.

The traditional five canon model of rhetoric—*inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria*, and *pronunciatio*—serves as the foundation for Ehses' study; he identifies the third stage, *elocutio*, as his focus because it addresses rhetorical figures of speech. The rhetorical figure "is an artful departure from the ordinary and simple method of speaking" (55), a figure that provides the blueprint for how to express an idea in a creative and meaningful way. In his use of rhetorical figures like antithesis, metaphor, and metonymy (56-57), he departs from the

category of classical rhetoric—the artistic proof of ethos—with which my own analysis of visuals will be concerned. Additionally, Ehses follows his summary of the rhetorical figures with an explanation of how semiotics can be combined with rhetoric to determine the ways that visual designs have meaning and can be created in a persuasive manner, with goals based on rhetorical figures of speech. Semiotics is a branch of visual (and often rhetorical) study with which I am not concerned. However, Ehses' case study has implications significant to my own study, regarding the utility of rhetorical terminology in designing visuals.

Ehses' case study asked a group of graphic design students to learn rhetorical figures of speech before designing theatre posters for the play *Macbeth*. The expected outcome was that the use of rhetorical figures "would help to shed more light on the process of concept formation, sparking a greater diversity of interpretations, and, therefore, a greater range of original poster designs" (62). Indeed, the students benefited from the use of rhetoric in their designs, as it aided in their creativity (62). Ehses' conclusion that rhetorical figures "are exploration tools that can spur lateral thinking, giving designers the awareness of possibilities to make the best choice" (62) is in agreement with my assertion that other elements of classical rhetoric, like ethos, can assist in the analysis and design of visual images. His conclusion also supports my observation that classical rhetorical terms are accessible to people not already trained in complex rhetorical theories (as with his design students, who were unfamiliar with rhetorical concepts but executed them successfully). Visuals, as Ehses observes, are becoming increasingly predominant in society, and "the surprising adaptability of rhetoric" (62) makes rhetoric an essential tool in managing image creation and analysis.

LaGrandeur, Buchanan, and Ehses all assert that rhetoric has a definite role in visual analysis and creation, which forms the basic assumption behind my thesis. Classical rhetoric, as these authors have demonstrated in their studies, can be applied in numerous ways to the creation and analysis of designs. Additionally, classical rhetoric has been demonstrated to be meaningful to visual studies despite a history as a mode of discussing oral and written

communication. Finally, classical rhetoric is useful in visual communication study because the terms and theories of classical rhetoric expand the ways of designing a persuasive visual, particularly for those untrained in rhetoric. It is now necessary to narrow the discussion to one particular area of classical rhetoric: the persuasive element of ethos.

The Place of Ethos in Visual Creation and Analysis

Ethos, essentially defined as the credibility and character of a communicator, is a foundational principle in rhetorical study. Credibility, in modern interpretations, is akin to competence and believability—a characteristic of great importance for any organization that seeks to maintain the attention of an audience. While there are many ways of achieving ethos in a given text, my thesis focuses upon the establishment of ethos through visual elements.

Visual elements can mean a number of things in a document; headings, white space, font choices, photographs, charts, and graphs all fall under the broader category of visual elements. David Hutto concentrates on scientific graphics, his catchall term for charts, figures, and tables used in scientific publications (112), and the ways graphics represent the ethos of a scientist. While a term like ethos is used in discussions of persuasive arguments—and science is not generally perceived as persuasive—the ethos of an individual scientist contributes to overall credibility of the new breakthroughs that he or she is presenting in an article. Scientific graphics are essential to the field of science because science relies on visual manifestations of data and concepts (112), similar to the growing ubiquity of visuals society as a whole. Because graphics are essential to science, the scientists who write articles and create graphics are represented by their choices of graphics—scientists' credibility rests upon the quality and effectiveness of the graphics they use. Hutto observes that the rhetorical appeals of pathos, logos, and ethos are all demonstrated in various ways by the visuals used in scientific articles, but that ethos is key to the success of the article and of the scientist (114). Ethos as the key to effectiveness for an author is part of my own study, which seeks to determine how ethos is a relevant concept to be kept in mind when designing and analyzing

visuals produced by organizations.

Hutto analyzes two scientific journals, *Journal of Cell Biology* and *New England Journal of Medicine*, for ethos in the graphics included in the journal articles, both in print and online. His methods include Aristotelian concepts of ethos—good sense, good character, and goodwill (116)—as well as techniques of evaluating scientific ethos developed by modern rhetorical scholars Lawrence Prelli and Michael Lynch (which are not specifically relevant to my study of organizational ethos). Hutto follows Aristotle's model of ethos as situated or created—inherent to the speaker or created in the communication. By examining the institutional (impersonal) situated ethos of the journals, Hutto ignores individual author reputations and focuses on the scientific goals of the authors and journals; he concludes that staying current and exhibiting practicality are the two primary ways that the journals exhibit ethos through graphics (116-117). For created ethos, Hutto observes articles in each journal using the methods of Prelli, Lynch, and Aristotle for the ways that authors establish ethos using graphics (117). Graphics of all types were included in the journal articles, including photographs, bar graphs, diagrams, and tables, although Hutto presents only the mostly frequently occurring types of ethical appeals in graphics. Characteristics like competence (119), precision (121), elegance (122), and goodwill to the audience (125) are demonstrated in various graphics, and Hutto asserts that these characteristics establish ethos for the authors of the articles in which the graphics are found. The value derived from this examination of journal articles and scientific graphics is twofold. We can see that graphics assist the ethos of an individual author, by increasing credibility and "the willingness of readers to listen to the logic being offered" (129). However, as Hutto affirms, the graphics also establish ethos for the journal (129). This study raises the question of how an unnamed author, chosen to write an article and design images by an organization for publication, can create or represent ethos for the organization—a question frequently encountered by professional communicators in the workplace.

The purpose of this thesis is not to investigate the intricacies of authorship in a corporate or digital workplace, but the concept of organizational ethos is highly relevant to my own study of the Web sites produced by two very different organizations (one corporate, the other nonprofit). One source that examines in a practical way the crucial role of ethos in professional communication is the textbook, *Designing Visual Language: Strategies for Professional Communicators*, by Charles Kostelnick and David D. Roberts. The authors identify six "visual/verbal cognates," or strategies of analysis that apply to verbal language as well as visual communication, and included in that list is ethos, which is paired with tone. Kostelnick and Roberts define ethos (along with tone) as "readers' subjective responses to the visual language, its voice and credibility" (21), a similar definition to the one Hutto uses in his study. The six visual/verbal cognates are used throughout the text to identify effective design strategies of documents at four levels: intra-level design (e.g. typeface choices, text field placement), inter-level design (e.g. headings, bullet points, spatial differences), extra-level design (e.g. data graphs, pictures, icons, symbols), and supra-level design (e.g. usability, organizational strategies, orientation). Like Hutto, Kostelnick and Roberts identify the presence of ethos in design choices, this time in modes more specific to professional communicators. By using specific rhetorical elements, such as ethos, to analyze different levels of document design, Kostelnick and Roberts give professional communicators a valuable tool for creating documents with rhetoric in mind. I utilize this rhetoric-centered design approach in my own analysis of the Web sites.

Web sites are a very specific form of professional communication, with design characteristics that are distinctive and unlike print documents in many ways. Buchanan, Ehses, Hutto, and Kostelnick and Roberts have all given testimony supporting the utility of classical rhetoric in visual analysis and creation; however, none of these authors has focused specifically on Web sites' visual ethos. Several authors identify specific elements of Web design that establish ethos, particularly Kevin LaGrandeur and Kevin Hunt.

LaGrandeur's model of Web site visual analysis includes pathos and logos in addition to ethos, and while these are equally valuable, they are not the primary focus of my thesis. To determine the ethos of images on Web sites, LaGrandeur asks "how effectively do digital images work in concert with written text, or by themselves, to enhance the *ethical* appeal (credibility) of the makers of digital messages?" (125). Also of concern is the way that digital media, presentation, and typographic choices enhance the ethos of authors (125).

Three cases of Web site analysis are provided, and in all three, LaGrandeur demonstrates the complex role of visuals in establishing ethos. In the first case, LaGrandeur examines a professional Web site meant to inform and advertise services. His assessment of ethos is based upon the relationship of images and words—the images are professionally created and the words balance the images in amount and in content (126-127). Colors are subdued, preventing a gaudy advertising theme. His second case is based upon a student assignment in a technical writing class, in which a group of students produced a Web site. The site in question is based largely on an image, which is the main problem for LaGrandeur; credibility is established, as he states in his methodology, through a balance between text and images and design elements, and the second case has too little relevant text to balance the flashy colors and large image. Third in his analysis is a Web site of a hate group, the Lone Wolves, in which LaGrandeur identifies the ways that "images, including typography, when interlaced cunningly with textual content, can lend undue credibility and dangerous emotional force to a site" (130). In this sense, visual ethos becomes an unethical tool of persuasion; professional visuals can make an otherwise content-poor Web site persuasive, so that good-looking graphics lead the viewer to assume that the intention behind the artifact is also good. Visual ethos can highlight the credibility and goodwill of a Web site that already has that kind of integrity prior to design, but it can also fool the viewer.

La Grandeur identifies this false ethos as the incentive for using classical rhetoric in teaching visual analysis and Web design; as he asserts, "Teaching an awareness of the power

and effects of images would provide students of Web design with a better sense not only of how to use them, but also of how to defend themselves against their power" (129). Indeed, rhetorical study has long been extolled as a defense mechanism. In a time when the ability to persuade is no longer limited by education or social stature—when anyone with access to Adobe Photoshop and basic HTML skills can create a Web site that persuades an audience to action or emotion—it is crucial to emphasize the need for ethical visuals and the creation of sincere ethos.

Kevin Hunt establishes a specific notion of credibility on Web sites based upon a communal ethos. A Web site is only one out of hundreds of millions of other sites (if not more), a part of "the cacophony of individual and organizational voices that make up the Web" (519). Hunt insists that professional communicators involved in Web site design must know how to utilize design to "establish an online presence" (519) which "acts as a means of convincing potential Web readers of the organizations' professionalism, credibility, usefulness, or value" (520). Web sites are a method of persuasion, and they accomplish their goals of persuading audiences through links and visuals that also argue through reasoning and emotion; Hunt suggests that the combination of all visual and persuasive elements work to establish the overall credibility of an organization (521). Working from a modern interpretation of ethos as a part of a collective act, Hunt asserts that online, "establishing ethos involves situating the organization's values in a specific social context, a context in which those values, experienced and shared by users who 'enter' into the organization's virtual site, become realized" (521). He later calls this "communal ethos" (522). The social, communal version of ethos is new to professional communicators, and its successful implementation requires that communicators recognize the connections that can be formed between information sources. Although modern Web designers may have forgotten the origins of the Web, Hunt maintains that the traditional internet community valued connections between sites and celebrated the idea of a "virtual community" (522) that

forms the basis of a communal ethos. While these views may seem a little rustic, as Hunt was writing in 1996, communal ethos exhibits potential in a practical application.

Hunt uses three aspects of communal ethos—"individual creativity, connectivity and interactivity, and reciprocity" (522)—to examine the effectiveness of several Web sites. Individual creativity is an element of ethos that indicates an organization values multiple perspectives; rather than a stoic ethos based on uniformity and structure, the depiction and celebration of individual viewpoints displays a strong communal ethos (524). One site that Hunt examines does this by showing a team photo, a classic example of organizational ethos, combined with the ability to "meet" individuals by clicking on their faces in the photo and going to their own Web sites. Connectivity and interactivity is "based on the idea of creating or strengthening connections between people within a specific interest enclave" (525). One site in the analysis provides links to the many related sites, such as clients (525); this also serves the additional purpose of providing a more traditional ethos valued by advertisers, where an organization provides references to clients who benefited from the organization's services. Reciprocity "entails providing useful information that is not necessarily directly related" to the organization (526). Hunt supplies an example of a computer company that provided practical information on using computer software not related to the company's own hardware. This establishes ethos by showing that the organization has a true interest in the user's needs. The reciprocity of giving information that isn't necessarily related to one's goals opens the doors to increased Web site access—more kinds of information provided by a site increases the likelihood that users will come to that site by chance.

A communal ethos like the one that Hunt describes is applicable in the 21st century—ten years after Hunt advocated its use by professional communicators—because the values of the audience have returned to a desire for community. Many larger community organizations, such as botanical gardens and civic centers, link to nearby attractions and restaurants; even if this advertising of other local vendors comes at a cost for the vendors, users of the

site appreciate the community-oriented approach. Other evidence includes the increasing presence of social networking sites and their use by organizations to draw users to their home pages (you can become a fan of companies like Coca Cola, Nike, and Target on Facebook). These examples indicate a new source of individual creativity, connectivity and interactivity, and reciprocity—of communal ethos.

The range of authors and studies that have utilized classical rhetoric, and ethos in particular, is vast. There is little doubt left that classical rhetoric is of value in visual analysis of professional communication creations, from printed articles to Web sites. However, there are many other authors who advocate theories of visual analysis and rhetoric that diverge from the classics, favoring more modern theories springing from fields like psychology.

Modern Visual Rhetoric That Diverges from the Classics

The authors who do not base their theories of visual rhetoric on classical principles provide insight into the development of rhetoric and the advances made in design and visual communication theory. I do not advocate that they are wrong, simply that there are many schools of thought on ethos and visual communication, and the classical interpretation of ethos still has much to offer, despite its age.

One theory that has considerable significance in the study of modern visual rhetoric is semiotics, or the study of signs. Semiotics has influenced fields as diverse as graphic design, product development, and technical writing, and many others, and without semiotics, little would be understood about the formation and interpretation of language and communication. Prototype theory is another model for studying visual communication, based largely on cognitive psychology; it is especially informative in its examination of the relationship between visuals and cultures. Semiotics, prototype theory, and the many other modern theories that I do not mention in this brief review all provide unique and indispensable insights into visual rhetoric, and yet classical rhetoric remains a viable and valuable framework for visual analysis.

Semiotics

Semiotics is, in short, the study of signs in all senses of the word—gestures, words, language, music, art, and so on. Rhetoric and semiotics are two separate studies of communication that may overlap, and certainly do so in helpful ways in analyses of visual communication. Gui Bonsiepe, writing in 1965, asserts that "rhetoric has fallen not so much into disrepute as into virtual oblivion. It has come down to us from ancient times with an aura of antiquity about it that makes it seem, at first sight, unsuited to handling the message of the advertiser, which is the rhetoric of the modern age" (37). Bonsiepe's major claim is that "classical rhetoric (which deals purely with language) is no longer adequate for describing and analyzing rhetorical phenomena in which verbal *and* visual signs, i.e. word and picture, are allied" (37). However, Bonsiepe concedes that a modernized rhetoric could be useful in analyzing visual and verbal rhetoric, and the best way to modernize it is through semiotics. After identifying what he views as the most applicable part of classical rhetoric—style—and the rhetorical figures that provide the flourishes within style, Bonsiepe describes how semiotics divides rhetorical figures into two categories: syntactic and semantic. In semiotics, syntactics addresses the formal structures of signs and semantics addresses the meanings of signs (Bonsiepe 37; Chandler). Syntactic rhetorical figures, then, are those that modify the normal structure of signs (words or ideas); examples include alliteration, repetition, and parallelism (Bonsiepe 38). Semantic rhetorical figures modify the meaning of signs (words or ideas), such as hyperbole, metaphor, or antithesis (Bonsiepe 38). These rhetorical figures are then illustrated in a variety of advertisements that are accompanied by Bonsiepe's explanation of the relationship between the visuals and the verbal figures.

One branch of semiotics that is particularly relevant to professional communicators working with visuals is visual social semiotics. A relatively recent analytical tool—as recent as the 1990s—visual social semiotics is, according to Claire Harrison, unique amongst the many theories of visual analysis "in stressing that an image is not a result of

a singular, isolated, creative activity, but is itself a social process. As such its meaning is a negotiation between the producer and the viewer, reflecting their individual and social/ cultural political beliefs, values, and attitudes" (47). Harrison argues that visual social semiotics can assist professional communicators, especially those working on the Web, in comprehending the persuasive nature of visuals—in both an analytical and creative context (47). The visual social semiotic framework identifies three kinds of images—iconic, indexical, and symbolic—that each have subsequent "meta-semiotic tasks to create meaning" (50), or metafunctions. The three metafunctions are representational, interpersonal, and compositional. Ultimately, Harrison envisions professional communicators going through each metafunction for each kind of image, identifying aspects of images that have particular social significance and answering the critical questions that Harrison has outlined as essential to fully understanding the meaning of images. While it is undeniable that semiotics, and visual social semiotics in particular, can be an informative method of analyzing Web site visuals, the goal is the same as for a classical rhetorical analysis, which is a determination of the effectiveness of the means of persuasion, namely visuals. Semiotics simply puts a social/ psychological spin on the same ideas embodied in classical rhetoric—that ideas, words, and even images, can have particularly significant impact on an audience.

Prototype Theory

Prototype theory, an offshoot of cognitive psychology, explores the cultural significance of visuals and the ways that miscommunication of visuals might occur. Kirk St. Amant examines the benefits of prototype theory for professional communicators who are designing Web sites with wide ranging cultural impact, ultimately determining that this framework can help communicators avoid miscommunication by identifying the visual expectations of various cultures (89). Prototype theory is based on the concept of prototype learning or classification, in which people categorize objects and images around an expected, preferred version of that image or object—the prototype (St. Amant 79). As St. Amant

points out, these prototypes aren't accidental; they arise from the continual exposure to the particular version of the object (79). For example, each individual has a prototype version of a dog, a "mental picture" of a dog that comes to mind when he or she hears the word. My own prototype for dog is a basset hound—my childhood dog—but for another person, it might be a Labrador retriever or even a mutt.

Prototype theory "involves a comparison process in which new objects are compared to different prototypes in a user's memory" (St. Amant 79). New objects will vary in their acceptability or credibility in fitting the prototype—according to St. Amant, an essential component of prototype theory in Web site design (80). St. Amant observes that prototypes do two things: "identify the category of items to which an object or image belongs and… assess how good a representation of the related prototype category is" (80). The more an object matches an individual's prototypical concept of that object, the more acceptable or credible it is as a representation—and in Web site design, adequacy is not enough. Web designers want to avoid the confusion that an inadequate or merely passable image creates for viewers. St. Amant offers considerable evidence for the kinds of confusion that arises. Specific items, like electric plugs and mailboxes (76), can be misinterpreted because of the many forms that these items take— for example, U.S. mailboxes and electrical outlets look different than those in England (76). Even selling methods, such as disparagement of competitors, can be culturally inacceptable, as in India (77). Another commonly forgotten design feature with strong political and cultural meaning is color. For example, St. Amant describes the perception of orange, which is seen by Americans as a cheerful and modern color, as politically divisive to inhabitants of Northern Ireland, where it represents loyalty to Britain (77).

The vision that St. Amant has for prototype theory in professional communication includes an exhaustive and detailed research phase in which communicators analyze foreign Web sites for the prototypes of that specific culture (82), and the eventual development of a

"design checklist" (81). Like semiotics, this is a valuable process that would likely yield a more effective and culturally sensitive Web site. However, there are such strong parallels between the results of prototype analysis and classical rhetorical analysis that it seems unnecessary to entirely discount the latter framework. Kirk St. Amant makes a justifiable claim about the uses for visuals on Web sites: "Factors such as layout, design, and graphics often serve as either credibility markers individuals use to determine if a Web site merits consideration or as navigational items used to access information on a Web site" (73). St. Amant's first category, of visuals as "credibility markers," is similar to the Aristotelian interpretation of ethos as the persuasive character of an author/speaker/designer created in a text. If prototype theory analysis is as concerned with credibility as St. Amant indicates, then it would have the same conclusions as a classical rhetorical analysis of ethos, the primary difference being the amount and kinds of questions that a communicator must answer in his or her analysis.

As I stated previously, I do not believe that semiotics, prototype theory, or any other non-classical theory is *wrong*. Classical rhetoric simply deserves equal attention in modern rhetorical discussions of the new forms of communication that are in demand, namely visual forms like Web sites. It is an indispensable framework that should not be left gathering dust on the bookshelves of professional communicators practicing in the 21st century—it should be used as actively as any other of the valid, valuable theories of visual rhetorical analysis.

Classical Ethos Goes Online: From Oral to Written to Visual

At the beginning of this literature review, the context for ethos was in the oral medium. Aristotle's rhetorical framework was, in his day, intended for use by orators, and the same was true for Cicero and Quintilian. Over the years, rhetoric began to include written texts in the discussion of persuasive appeals as that medium became pervasive—as writing and reading instruction became accessible, the rhetoric of writing letters and religious doctrines became the focus of the field. Though visuals have long been recognized as forms

of communication—as art, advertising, and assistants to written and verbal texts—the rhetoric of the visual is a relatively modern study. As Carolyn Handa observes, "words, clauses, or sentences are not the only elements that can be yoked in a faulty way; so can images and visual elements. Colors, fonts line thickness—all can connote feelings and attitudes. Mere punctuations marks can make statements. Typeface sets a tone" (225). In other words, visual elements are persuasive, purposeful—rhetorical.

It might seem obvious or at least acceptable that a visual text like an advertisement is rhetorical—they are, after all, meant to persuade viewers to purchase items or otherwise act in favor of the advertiser, and persuasion is the defining aspect of rhetoric. However, it is a harder pill to swallow for rhetorical purists to accept that something like document design—headings, bullets, punctuation, spacing, fonts, paper selection—is also persuasive. Yet the scholarly turn toward visual rhetoric indicates that there is a growing concern for the persuasive, argumentative abilities of visuals in all contexts and mediums. Two excellent anthologies that cover everything under the visual rhetorical sun are *Defining Visual Rhetorics* (Hill and Helmers 2004) and *Visual Rhetoric in a Digital World: A Critical Sourcebook* (Handa 2004). The essays and articles included in these books provide proof enough that the visual is an undeniably prominent—and permanent—fixture in the field of rhetoric.

If the visual was the pervasive medium for persuasion in the 20th century, the futuristic 21st century counterpart is undoubtedly the rhetoric of the digital. Digital rhetoric encompasses all other preceding forms—written, oral, and visual—and further complicates them with issues of usability, information architecture, authorship, and myriad other issues that plague academics and practitioners alike in journals of professional communication. The influence of visual design on the persuasive ability of a digital text is significant, as the combination of design elements and the multidimensional aspect of texts (through links, videos, animation, and sound) works in traditionally rhetorical ways (through appeals like

ethos, pathos, and logos). I used a computer to compose this text, and many others will never hold a paper form of it in their hands; their eyes will scan it on screen, and the way that I have chosen to display this text on screen will influence how it is read. The visual design of digital texts is a complicated niche of rhetorical study, and is rapidly becoming more essential as the digital medium overwhelms all others.

The rhetorical analysis that follows hinges upon the acknowledgement that digital visual rhetoric is not only deserving of attention, but is absolutely critical in building a better rhetorical framework for students and practitioners of rhetoric and professional communication. Ethos is not the only relevant classical rhetorical principle that can be used in visual Web design analysis, but the concern of classical ethos for credibility and professionalism coincides with the complications of the digital medium. Web sites often lack the authorship that provides credibility through authority, and many sites exist that have quality information but through design errors fails to establish that credibility. Therefore, I focus in my analysis upon ethos as a fundamental analytical tool for improving and criticizing the designs of Web sites.

Chapter 3: Rhetorical Analysis

Rationale for Web Site Choices

The choice of artifacts for this rhetorical analysis is not arbitrary, and a specific rationale exists for why the SHAZAM, Inc. and *Flyway* sites were chosen.

SHAZAM, Inc. is an electronic funds transfer (EFT) network that serves financial institutions, such as banks, savings and loan, and credit unions, as well as merchants. Many customers are small town organizations in the Midwest, but the network, in operation for almost 35 years, provides services in 30 states to over 1600 financial institutions (SHAZAM, Inc., "About SHAZAM"). SHAZAM is not the largest EFT network in existence, but it is one of the oldest; it has remained independent and member owned since its inception. One of the primary functions of the company Web site is to provide information to interested customers—requiring it to have a corporate appearance—but those responsible for the Web site identify the most frequently accessed portion as the ATM locator, used by individual cardholders (not bank representatives).

Flyway: A Journal of Writing and Environment is a graduate student-produced literary magazine that has been in publication under various names for 15 years. In 2008, the editors of the magazine decided that a change of image was in order, and so *Flyway: A Literary Review* adopted a new image as a journal of writing and environment, in an effort to match the Iowa State University Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing and Environment. While neither the journal nor the major are strictly about environmentalism, the value of place and environment in creative writing is considered critical. The editor's note of the Spring 2008/Fall 2008 issue—the first under the new image—states that environment, for *Flyway,* is defined as "the places where we make our lives…all work is written from a some*place* which influences the way writers' words and ideas arrange themselves on the page" (Flyway: A Journal of Writing and Environment, "About Us"). The ideas of place and environment influence the appearance and design elements of the Web site.

These two artifacts were chosen for three reasons: location of the representative organizations, my relationship with them, and the type of communication needs for each organization. Both organizations are locally based yet far-reaching—SHAZAM is based in Des Moines, Iowa, but is a national network, and *Flyway* is produced at Iowa State University but has readership outside the area. The advantage that location provides to my investigation is that the examples included here represent small, local organizations that have a growing audience due largely to the existence of electronic communication.

I am affiliated with the parent organizations of both Web sites, and so I am familiar with their goals. I was a technical communication intern with SHAZAM for over a year, and I am the design editor for *Flyway* and partial creator of the Web site. I will maintain subjectivity in the analysis of the *Flyway* Web site—it was chosen because I know the goals behind the Web site, not because it is my own creation.

Finally, I have chosen the Web sites of two very different types of organizations to represent the widespread influence this kind of analysis can have on professional communication. SHAZAM's site is a corporate site, professionally created by a Web designer, and was selected to show how professionals in the work world can and do use, if unconsciously, classical rhetorical principles in visual design, and how those principles can be utilized to improve visual designs for corporations. *Flyway* represents a non-profit Web site, student created, and was chosen to demonstrate that these principles are of equal importance for visual designs in a non-professional setting, and to serve as an additional example of how classic rhetorical principles are critical to the success of visual designs.

Method of Analysis

In Chapter 2, classical ethos, an intricate concept with various definitions, was concentrated into a set of three basic tenets based on the theories of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian. According to this simple definition, ethos should:

1. Establish the rhetor's trustworthiness (Aristotle) and goodwill (Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian).
2. Inspire a positive, persuasive emotional reaction through an understated tone and a sense of goodness on the rhetor's part (Cicero, Quintilian).
3. Assist in overcoming prior perceptions (Aristotle), but the rhetor may also rely upon previous reputation to persuade an audience (Cicero, Quintilian).

Online visual ethos—as with any other kind of ethos—would have to exhibit trustworthiness and goodwill toward the audience and inspire a positive and persuasive emotional reaction through an understated tone and a sense of goodness on the orator's part, evidenced in part through the Web site design. For the purposes of this study, the contradictory third tenet of classical ethos—essentially, the question of situated or invented ethos—will be ignored. Yet knowing that the concept of ethos as defined above is present in the design of a Web site is not enough. The means for establishing ethos in a design must also be defined.

Kostelnick and Roberts identify four levels of visual design: intra, inter, extra, and supra (85). These levels of design vary from the actual letters on the page or screen to the overall document or Web page format, and each level operates in "coding modes: textual, spatial, and graphic" (87). These three modes are what comprise the total design of a document or Web page (Kostelnick and Roberts 87). Table 1 shows the visual design matrix and the design elements of each level and mode.

The design elements shown in Table 1 combine in various ways to build a document's rhetorical meaning—through the six visual/verbal cognates identified by Kostelnick and Roberts (14). Ethos is made evident through each of the levels and modes through thoughtful and appropriate execution of design elements. In my analysis, ethos will frequently be combined with Kostelnick and Roberts' interpretation of tone as the uses and definitions of each are similar.

Table 1 Visual design matrix from Kostelnick and Roberts. Each design level (vertical) has three modes (horizontal).

	Textual	Spatial	Graphic
Intra	**1** type style: Palatino, Helvetica, Times type size: 10, 11, 12 point case: italic, bold, shadow, outline	**2** spacing between characters: normal, condensed, expanded; kerning in/out spacing between words vertical spacing: superscript, subscript	**3** punctuation marks: periods, commas, parens., dashes symbols: dollar signs treatment: underline, strikethrough
Inter	**4** headings, levels of headings numbers or letters that signal items in lists	**5** paragraphs, indentation, hanging indents, lists justified vs. unjustified, centered text line lengths, margins text arranged in tables, organizational charts, decision trees leading	**6** bullets and other listing devices gray scales highlighting text (e.g., boxed inserts) linework in tables, organizational charts, decision trees
Extra	**7** labels, call-outs and captions for pictures and data displays numerical labels on *x*- and *y*-axes of data displays legends for data displays	**8** data displays: size of plot frame (*x*- and *y*-axes), orientation of plot frame (vertical or horizontal); space between bars, lines pictures: size, viewing angle, perspective	**9** line weights or shading on pictures or on data displays (bars or lines on graphs, gridlines, tick marks) details on pictures–line drawing vs. photograph use of color for pictures or data displays
Supra	**10** page headers or footers navigational bars major sections or chapter headings or numbers tab labels–internal and external to the page titles on the cover or the spine of the document initial letters signaling the start of an article or major text segment	**11** shape, thickness, size of the page (81/2 X 11, legal size, scrollable length of the screen) orientation of the field (portrait vs. landscape) section dividers embossing placement of data displays and pictures in the document	**12** color or texture of paper page borders boxes, lines, or gray scales around pictures or data displays pictures or icons placed behind the text or spread over the whole document for cohesion lines in page headers or footers

Since I am advocating that classical rhetorical analysis is a useful tool for professional communicators, my analysis will consider the work needs of professional communicators. Rhetoric is about asking questions—seeking solutions to problems of persuasion. A professional communicator designing a Web site will be representing the interests of an organization; the design of the Web site is determined by those interests. The needs of the

organization leads to the first question that the communicator should ask: What does my organization need out of this Web site? The organization will need a persuasive Web site that will draw in the audience—whether that audience is intended to make a purchase, use a service, give a donation, or other forms of support. With that question answered, the communicator would then ask, what is my organization trying to persuade the audience about? The simplest answer would be, to give support to the organization (in whatever form is most desirable). But how do professional communicators get an audience to give their support willingly? *Ethos*. Credible, trustworthy, benevolent—all these adjectives are desirable, and all are synonyms for ethos. Organizations want audiences to use these words to describe them, and the best way to do this is through the establishment of ethos.

Of course, it is important to note that ethos is always present in some way; even the lack of intentionally created ethos is a kind of ethos, albeit a sloppy and incomplete one. However, by establishing a professional, purposeful ethos via the design of a Web site, a professional communicator can persuade an audience that the organization that owns the site is credible, trustworthy, and benevolent—and persuade that audience to give support and continue to explore and use the Web site.

This leads us to the next and perhaps most crucial questions that the professional communicator must ask: What kind of ethos will be most effective for reaching our persuasive goal? How can that ethos be established or implemented successfully? The former question—regarding what kind of ethos is most effective—depends entirely on the nature of the organization. The latter question, about the methods of establishing ethos, depends upon the answer to the former. Both questions stem from Aristotle's recommendation of knowing the expectations of an audience—the conventions that build a more persuasive ethos. Aristotle observed that much of what the rhetor must do in an oration relies upon what the audience expects. These expectations of the audience and the ability of the rhetor to

fulfill these expectations combine to create ethos. Let me demonstrate how the questions of selecting appropriate ethos function through two fictional examples.

1. GreenLeaf is a non-profit organization that, through donations, buys tracts of rainforest in Brazil. The founders of the organization hire a professional communicator—let's call her Kim—to design a Web site to promote the message and goals of their organization, as well as providing donor information and membership purchases. Kim must first determine the kind of ethos that is most effective for reaching the goals of the Web site—to promote the GreenLeaf goals and to expand the donor base. Certain common patterns of ethos could be eliminated; patriotic colors are frequently used to convey a concern for community (as well as inspire emotional responses), but Kim knows that a patriotic ethos won't work for GreenLeaf because it does not share the same concerns. Since the organization is centered around nature and ecology, establishing an ethos that conveys a concern for nature would be an ideal starting point. From there, Kim would ask the second pivotal question—how can I convey natural ethos? Knowing a little about design principles will help Kim in this task, as she must find elements of Web design that represent nature—perhaps by using leaves for icons or bullet points, or an abundance of the color green.

2. Ideal Investments is an investment firm that caters to middle class citizens—working people who have little to no knowledge of investing but who want to prepare for retirement. Rob is the professional communicator tasked with redesigning the company's Web site, which is intended to provide information about the services the company provides, give contact information for setting up a meeting with an investment representative, and allow online access to investment portfolios. Rob recognizes that in a weak economy, when trust in the market is low, the company must make an extra effort to establish a professional, streamlined ethos of trustworthiness and authority —the answer to the question of what kind of ethos

will be best for Ideal Investments. The methods to establish that kind of ethos are varied, and Rob will have to choose those most appropriate for the company. Ideal Investments has a clear visual identity in all of its advertising and products—with specific colors, fonts, and graphic details. Rob knows that to convey professionalism, he should use the visual identity. To convey trustworthiness through the design, Rob might display photos of the very people that the company serves—working families, Baby Boomers on the verge of retirement, young people entering the workforce—alongside a prominently displayed heading that directs the audience to a message about the economy or confidence in the market.

It should be noted that classical ethos is not the only factor in either of these situations. Clearly, elements of pathos, logos, kairos, and any number of other classical concepts are brought up in the path to building persuasive Web sites. Modern theories regarding usability, perception, and cultural reactions are also part of the job for both Rob and Kim. These hypothetical professional communicators, however, are both using classical rhetoric to find solutions to the situation at hand. Even though other theories might come into play, both of the communicators are contemplating classical ethos during the designing of the sites. Moreover, these communicators may not even be thinking specifically about ethos—Rob might call it *character*, and Kim may use *credibility*, but the purpose is still the same. Classical rhetoric is still present, even under the disguise of a less intimidating vocabulary.

Another important observation in these two examples is that both Kim and Rob are employing various levels of visual design elements in all three modes—the model given by Kostelnick and Roberts. Everything from font choices to color selection, photograph composition to heading placement, must be considered in designing a Web site, and each of these elements will impact the ethos of the overall site. Again, Rob and Kim do not use such specific terminology as “extra-level graphic design” in imagining the pictures and symbols on their Web sites, yet the designers are operating within the framework that uses these terms.

It would be logical for them to employ the rubric (See Table 1) to categorize the different design options available, from intra-level to supra-level design.

The analysis in this chapter combines the questions regarding ethos type and implementation with the visual design levels. I will address all four levels and all three modes of design, but will concentrate specifically on: type choices; headings; bullets and listing devices; pictures, logos and symbols; navigational bars and links; and color and graphics use across the site. The analysis will investigate the ways that these design elements establish a classically conceived ethos as displayed on the Welcome and About pages of each Web site.

SHAZAM's Online Visual Ethos

Because SHAZAM is a financial network, it must display a professional, businesslike ethos; money is a very serious matter for most people, from cardholders to bank presidents, and an unprofessional Web site would send the wrong message about SHAZAM's goals and sincerity. If Aristotle had included financial institutions in his original outlines of cultural expectations in the *Rhetoric* (1.8.5; 2.12-17), he would have observed that professionalism was among the most demanded characteristics. This is, of course, a generalization, but most people would generally accept that the Web site of any corporation should be as professional as possible. But how is a professional ethos developed?

Although SHAZAM's Web designer is not trained in rhetorical analysis and does not use terminology like ethos to describe her work, ethos is still present in the design decisions that she has made because there is a presence, a certain character, displayed in the design. She likely contemplated the most advantageous kind of character that the site should portray, and investigated the means of portraying that character. The ethos illustrated in the visual design elements of the SHAZAM site matches the classical definition outlined earlier: an ethos that establishes the rhetor's trustworthiness and goodwill, and which inspires a positive,

persuasive emotional reaction through an understated tone and a sense of goodness on the orator's part.

Intra-level Design on SHAZAM's Welcome and About Pages

Making appropriate typeface choices is critical to developing ethos online, and yet it is also difficult to determine exactly what typeface choices are best. Kostelnick and Roberts suggest "matching the typeface with the subject, and creating a professional look" (149) as the two key design principles for establishing ethos. Studies have been conducted to determine the emotions or ideas that certain typefaces evoke, but these studies are frequently too dependent on the perceptions of the participants—perceptions which may be vastly different in another rhetorical context. Certain typefaces, however, are universally accepted as appropriate for particular subjects and uses. For example, serif typefaces are generally appropriate for text while sans serif are used most often as headings; embellished or ornate typefaces are for special texts, such as invitations or advertisements during the holidays.

Given these conventions and recommendations, it is no wonder that the SHAZAM Web designer selected sans serif typefaces (there are at least three used) for the Welcome page (See Fig. 1). The effect of the sans serif typefaces is a clean, professional, and modern ethos. The Web site is for a financial network—a serious business—and the typefaces reflect that seriousness. Additionally, the sans serif typefaces do not detract from the text, which is easy to read and quickly scan. All of this combines to create an ethos that is trustworthy—one look at the Welcome page shows authority and seriousness in the design, which represents the authority and seriousness of the company.

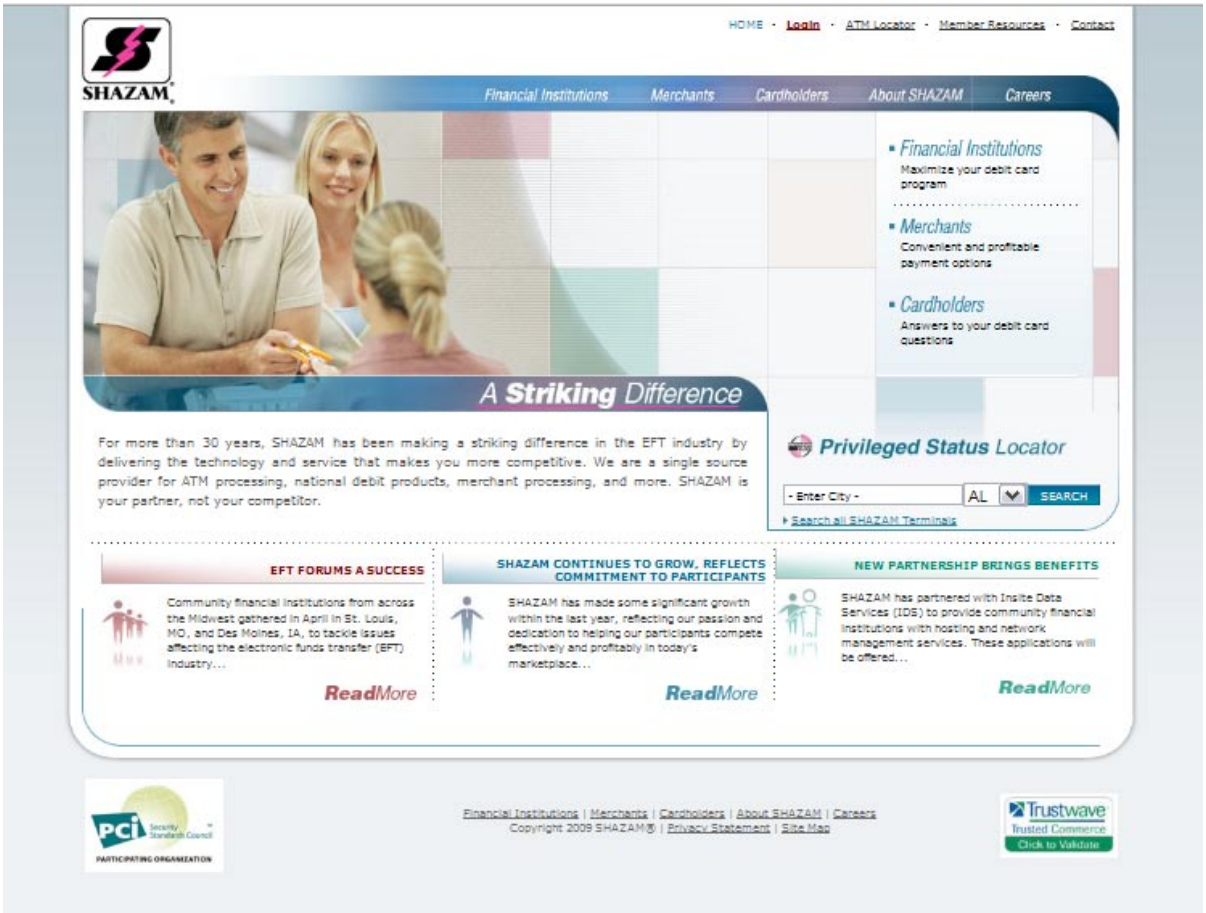

Figure 1 The SHAZAM Welcome Page features sans serif typefaces for a clean, professional look.

While the typefaces are all sans serif, oblique and bold treatments are used to differentiate between certain headings and body text. The headings to the right—"Financial Institutions," "Merchants," and "Cardholders"—are examples of the use of oblique to set apart a heading from the body text, which is roman. Bold is used to call attention to important ideas or action words, such as "A Striking Difference," where striking is in bold; this is the company's public slogan, and the word "striking" is a play on the company logo, of the letter *S* with a pink lightning bolt slicing through it. Again, this builds a professional ethos because the typefaces are kept similar for continuity, but with slight variations to add visual interest—a thoughtful and aesthetic touch that does not distract from the overall message of the text.

The use of all capital letters can sometimes be interpreted as an overstatement or as yelling; it can also be used to draw attention to a small piece of information. On the Welcome page, this has been employed in the three news items at the bottom of the page. The all-capital headings for these items draw attention to them in a subtle way; the words are not large, but are slightly different from the other headings on the page, which indicates that these items are not quite the same as the other headings and links. Indeed they are not, as they are promotional items meant to highlight recent activities and accomplishments for the company, rather than simply providing information as many other links do. By calling attention to these in a subtle way, credibility is established; customers like knowing the accomplishments of the companies they use, but also appreciate modesty.

On the About page (See Fig. 2), sans serif fonts and oblique and bold treatments are repeated to create the same professional, minimalist ethos as on the Welcome page. However, oblique is used to a lesser extent in this window, with fewer links and headings that need differentiation from body text. The only aspect of the About page that is significantly (and rhetorically) different at this level from the Welcome page is the addition of five lines of serif typeface in the "SHAZAM Advantage" box to the lower right. Although it is minimal, the sudden switch to a different typeface is abrupt and disruptive to the attentive viewer. As Kostelnick and Roberts observe in their recommendations for intra-level ethos, "trust can also be eroded through inattention to editing details" (150). There is little explanation or rhetorical advantage to using serif typeface in this box, and so ethos is somewhat diminished, as this mistake is unprofessional and careless (albeit common).

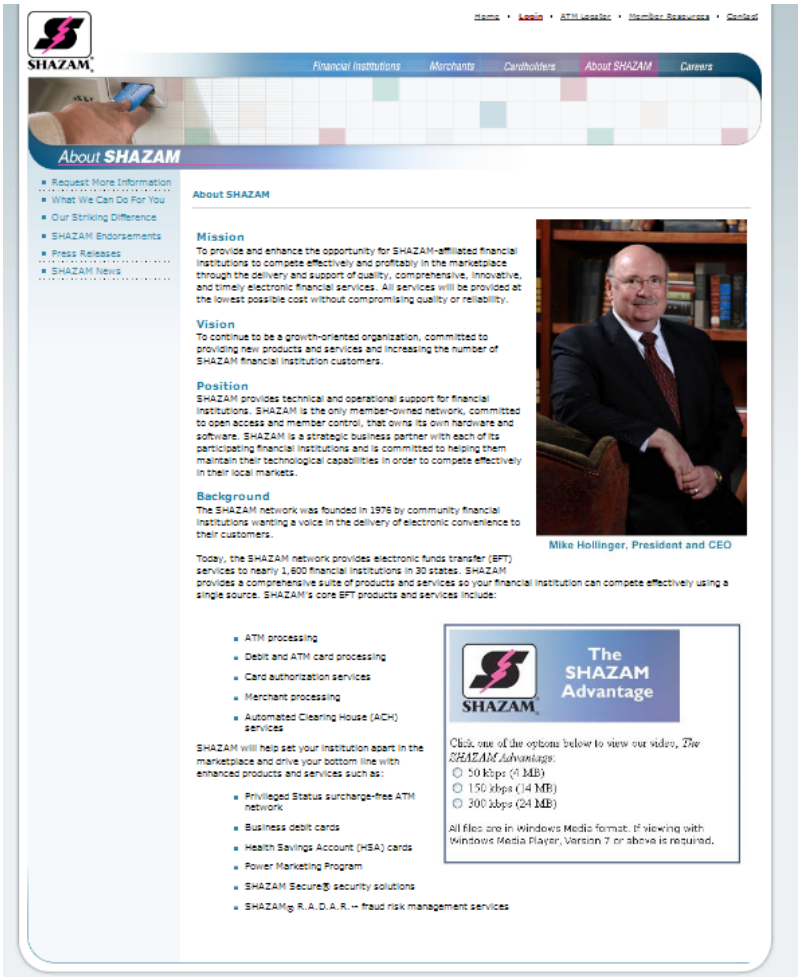

Figure 2 The SHAZAM About Page uses sans serif typefaces, except for the addition of some serif text in the SHAZAM Advantage box on the lower right.

Inter-level Design on SHAZAM's Welcome and About Pages

At the inter-level of design, headings and bullets have been used to continue establishing the professional, minimalist ethos shown at the intra-level of design. Headings are used in combination with bullets to delineate the three links to the right of the page (See Fig. 3) for the primary users of the site: "Financial Institutions," "Merchants," and "Cardholders." These are intended to be the focal point of the Welcome page, as the headings are also links that take users to the pages they are most likely to use. Using clear heading levels and bullet points to call attention to these links is very business-like; it is shows that

the company understands the needs of its primary customers, an element of credibility and goodwill.

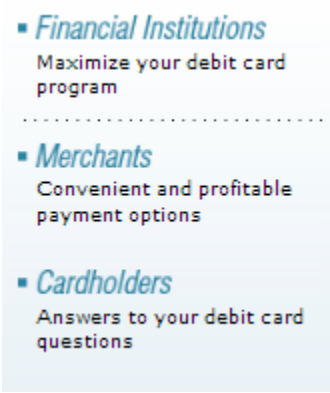

Figure 3 The SHAZAM Web site uses heading and bullets to categorize and direct visitors.

The About page utilizes headings and bullet points to delineate topics and list information on SHAZAM services. The mission, vision, position, and background are all given headings, which help draw the reader to these positive attributes. Clear headings provide viewers with direction and indicate that the designer was organizing information specifically to assist readers—which establishes goodwill toward the audience. Links to subsequent pages related to the About page are indicated with bullets on the left of the page, which provides a list of options for viewers to choose. Information on the company is further organized by using bullets (toward the bottom of the page). Even the graphic choice of bullets on both pages—squares—is more effective and modern than round bullets, and the square bullets match the square background, a thoughtful and pleasing addition.

However, overuse of headings and bullets can also detract from ethos. Because there is little difference between the levels of headings on the Welcome page—the headings are all oblique and larger, but randomly placed and without specific purposes as headings—the organization of the page seems chaotic and distracting. The problem continues on the About page, where headings cease to function at the bottom of the page; the many bullet points seem random and without direction as they are unrelated to the last heading given, background. Ethos is weakened on both pages by these oversights.

Extra-level design on SHAZAM's Welcome and About Pages

The Welcome page randomly rotates between three pictures each time the page loads, with three different texts that also randomly rotate (See Fig. 4). The texts do not always appear with the same picture, and the picture only changes if the window is refreshed or when the user returns to the page. Each picture features someone holding a SHAZAM debit card, with a large smile. All three are photographs, which lends realism to the site—establishing an ethos of sincerity as the site is showing real people with the debit card, rather than a line drawing or logo of a SHAZAM card. The perspective of each photograph is a face-on image of the subjects, although it is interesting to note that in one photograph the subjects are not making eye contact with the camera. Because the photos do not match the rotating text, it is difficult to determine a rhetorical meaning for this. However, all three photographs are prominently placed, making the happy debit card users the focal point. By making these people so visible, customers visiting the site will see how other people use SHAZAM—for its debit card services. This is a critical expectation that visitors to the site have, especially if they're unfamiliar with SHAZAM. Customers who are familiar with SHAZAM's services will relate to the subjects in the photos—a key element to establishing ethos identified by Kostelnick and Roberts (347)—whether the customers are cardholders or representatives of financial institutions. The photographs also add to the ethos of the Welcome page because of their highly professional nature. These are high quality photos—crisp, bright, and full color—that have been expertly blended with the square pattern background so that the subjects and their surroundings seem to be combined with the graphic backdrop.

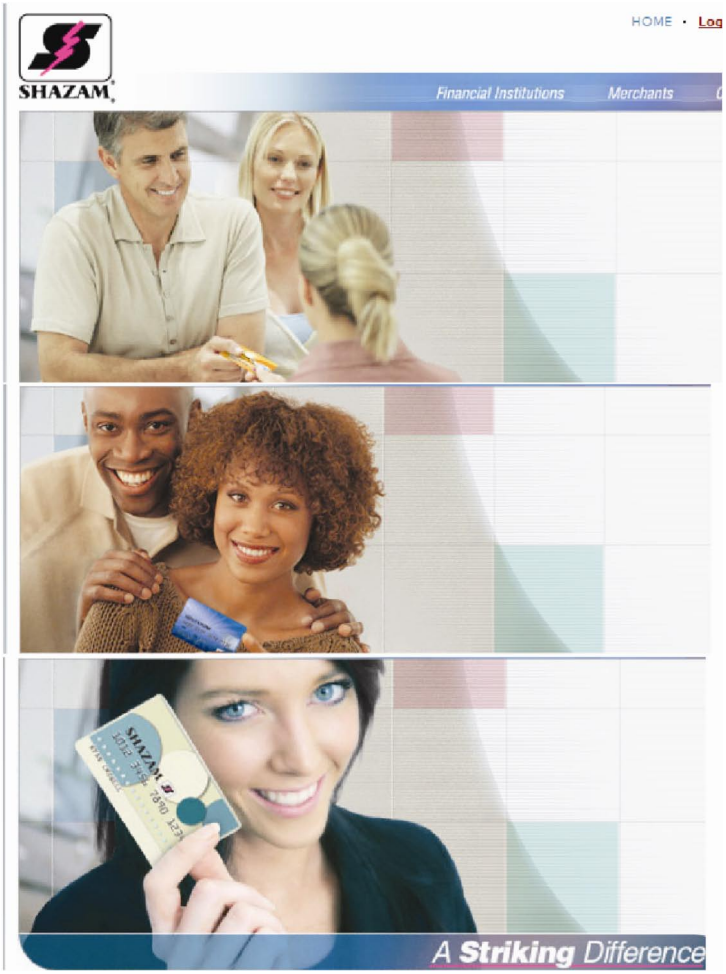

Figure 4 The SHAZAM Welcome page features three different photos, all of which establish a professional ethos.

The ethnicity and gender of the subjects also affects ethos. Of the six people depicted, four are Caucasian, and four are female. While this may not directly influence the ethos of the site, customers from other ethnic backgrounds may not relate as well to the images shown. Depicting a higher ratio of females holding debit cards may be an attempt to give power to females—putting them in charge of financial decisions—and potentially strengthens persuasion of female visitors to sites. Again, relatability may be at stake, as only two males are shown, and both of them are alongside their female partners.

On the About page, the primary focal point is the largest photograph on the page, of President and CEO Mike Hollinger (See Fig. 5). The composition of the photograph has serious implications for the ethos of the About page. Not only is it a professional,

high quality photograph, but the impression given by this picture is austere and academic. Hollinger is shown wearing formal business attire (which he does not wear on a day to day basis—the company has a business casual policy), indicating that he holds authority. His attire also shows that he understands the ethos that a successful individual in the corporate world must demonstrate—an ethos of impeccable taste and respect for business principles. The setting for the portrait—a library furnished with leather-bound books and a fine velvet chair—is very formal and academic. Many other CEO portraits might be in front of a photographer's backdrop, against city skylines, or settings that represent the business of the CEO. The selection of an academic location like a library further supports the serious ethos established by other design elements. Visitors to the About page are searching for more information about SHAZAM, and few other images could provide as strong a visual cue as to the company's values. Additionally, Hollinger is positioned so that his wedding band is visible, though it is not large or remarkable; presenting this symbol of dedication establishes trustworthiness through the association with family values. The seriousness of the setting is offset (in a positive way) through Hollinger's slight smile; this softens the solemnity of the library setting and adds an element of goodwill by comforting the audience.

Figure 5 The composition of Mike Hollinger's photo on the About page has specific rhetorical results.

The other photograph on the About Page is of a male hand inserting a SHAZAM debit card into an ATM. The image illustrates the main function of SHAZAM as a debit card network for ATM and point of sale use. Users who visit the About page are likely interested in learning more about SHAZAM, so an image that shows the primary business of the company is an intelligent visual aid and establishes goodwill by helping the viewers. Like the photos on the Welcome page, this photo is professionally rendered and has been blended with the square graphic motif that runs throughout the entire site; not only is this indicative of technological expertise in graphic design, it also increases cohesion among the site's pages. A recurring theme helps visitors feel as though each page is part of a larger, credible package that is theirs to explore.

Logos and symbols, like photographs, are important aspects of extra-level design, and can significantly alter the tone and ethos of the overall design. On the Welcome page, there are two company logos present: the SHAZAM lightning logo, and the Privileged Status

logo (See Fig. 6). Both of these are displayed as they are found on debit cards and ATM machines—providing a credible link to the real world functions of the company. Logos are the face of a company, widely recognized by many people, even those who do not use the company's services (e.g. a Visa cardholder recognizes the American Express logo), and are important to establishing the credibility of a company. However, both logos on the SHAZAM Welcome page are of minimal size and visibility, being located on either side of the page; credible ethos is not strong in these logos because their decreased sizes and inconspicuous placement diminishes the connection to the publicly known face of SHAZAM. A viewer may wonder if SHAZAM is attempting to disassociate itself from these logos, which is not a favorable message to send to viewers—being ashamed of one's corporate logo is not only odd but unprofessional. Conversely, the About page features the SHAZAM logo twice, and at much larger sizes than on the Welcome page. The company logo is the only one present on the About page, which is appropriate given the content of the page (regarding the services and background of SHAZAM); the large size and prominence of the logo has an opposite effect from the tiny, inconspicuous logos of the Welcome page. Here the logo is proudly displayed, establishing an ethos of credibility in the company's identity.

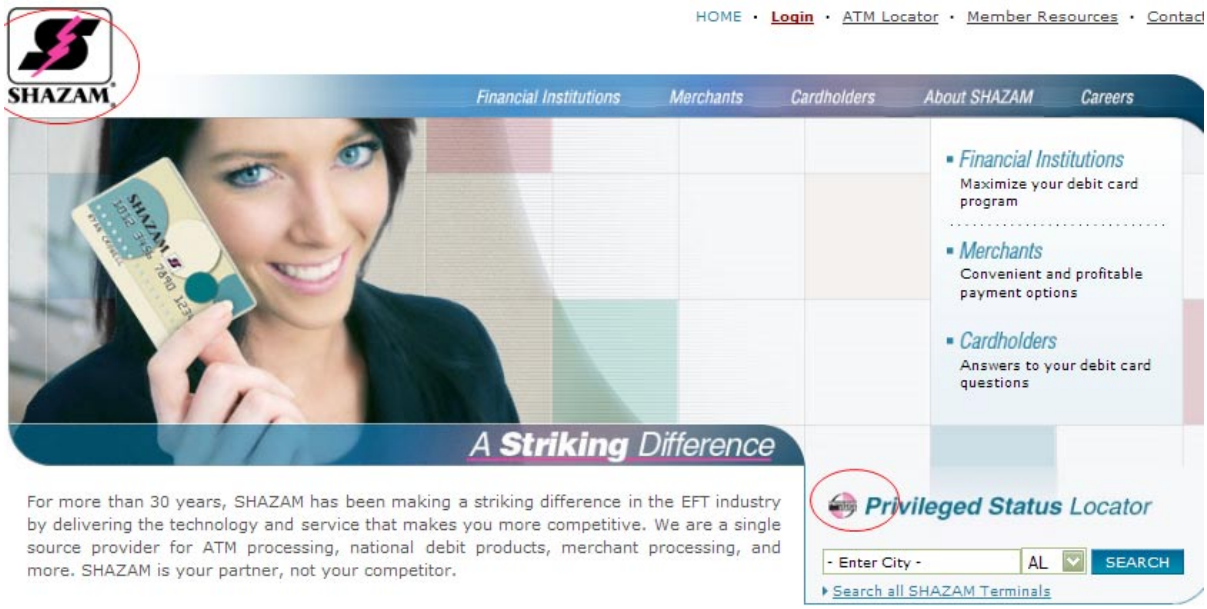

Figure 6 The SHAZAM Logo and Privileged Status logo are small; attention is not drawn to these, which diminishes credibility.

Two other companies have logos present on the Welcome page—and both logos are as large as or larger than the SHAZAM logos. The PCI Security Standards Council logo is located to the bottom left; this council is "an open global forum for the ongoing development, enhancement, storage, dissemination and implementation of security standards for account data protection" (PCI Security Standards Council). Including the logo of the certifying organization for the electronic payment industry helps build credibility and trustworthiness, by showing that SHAZAM is certified as meeting security standards. Trust is an essential component of ethos, especially for financial businesses in a time when fraud and identity theft are always concerns. Trustwave is a company that assists other organizations in ensuring compliance with PCI standards, and so the presence of their logo further enhances the element of trust in SHAZAM's ethos.

Symbols are utilized minimally on the Welcome page; at the bottom, the three news items are accompanied by human figures that are drawn in a modern and abstract style. While the style of the symbols adds to the professional ethos of the Welcome page, their meaning is unclear—it is difficult to interpret how the three symbols relate to the three news items. The indistinct meaning of the symbols is detrimental to building a positive ethos, as a symbol should be easily identified and understood. Viewers with a keen eye for design details might find this ambiguity frustrating or unprofessional—both of which detract from the goodwill and credibility of the Web site.

Supra-level design on SHAZAM's Welcome and About Pages

Supra-level design encompasses many aspects of documents and Web sites, but in this analysis I will focus on navigational bars and links, and the use of color and graphics to create a visual identity. On the SHAZAM Welcome page, there are 17 links to other pages, and two of those are to external sites (the PCI Security Standards Council Web site and Trustwave Web site). The SHAZAM site is made up of many pages, and the Welcome page is intended to be a portal to all of those pages. Visitors to the site are intended to choose

the most appropriate category that applies to them: Financial Institutions, Merchants, or Cardholders. The links on the right of the page as well as the top bar (which also includes About SHAZAM and Careers) encourage visitors to select one of these categories. Through this emphasis on the three types of visitors to the Web site—and the clear organization of the site around the needs of the visitors—a sense of goodwill toward visitors is made apparent, which in turn strengthens the ethos of the page. The top of the page remains static on nearly all pages of the site, so that visitors have a standard navigational tool for exploring the site.

Kostelnick and Roberts identify a source of online ethos in external links to credible sites, and the Welcome page does feature links to other Web sites. The external links are to Trustwave and PCI Security Standards Council, highly credible sites that, as discussed previously, engender trust in SHAZAM. Other areas of the SHAZAM site not included in this analysis also feature links to external, credible sites, but the Welcome page, as a main entry point for viewers, could use an increased number of links to other sites. On the About page, there are no external links to build ethos, but the link on the left, to the SHAZAM Endorsements page, does lead visitors to a list of links to credible external sites. Making these more prominent by placing them on the main About page might strengthen the ethos that such links could provide.

Most companies and organizations adopt a visual identity to provide consistency and character in publications; the way that this identity is presented is crucial to developing a professional, positive ethos. A visual identity can include colors and graphic repetition—two things that the SHAZAM Web site uses effectively. SHAZAM's logo features only three colors—black, white, and pink—which in the colorful world of online communication is a very limited palette. The SHAZAM Web site features many colors and graphic elements that combine well with the public logo—creating a more exciting visual design—which are incorporated in an expert manner throughout the entire site.

Color is used to promote a professional ethos on the Welcome page in the three rotating photos, the graphic squares, headings, symbols, and navigational bars. All of these use a palette of blue-green, dusty pink, and taupe, with blue being the most prominent color in the navigational bars. The photo of the young brunette woman incorporates the blues and greens of the palette in her striking eye color and in the debit card she is holding. The picture of the African American couple holding a blue debit card ties in the primary color of the site. In the photo of the couple handing a debit card to a cashier, the subjects are wearing taupe, dusty pink, and pale blue, which all fit the established palette. While some might assume that the selection of these photos was arbitrary, the seamless fit of the photos with the color palette of the site makes the selection more likely purposeful. The same is true for the graphic squares, a motif that debuts on the Welcome page and is repeated on the About page (as well as others). The purposeful choice of colors in these squares, as well as their repetition, demonstrates the cohesive and professional nature of the site. Headings and other text elements also incorporate the color palette on both the Welcome and About page. The news items' headings and symbols on the Welcome page even use three primary colors of the site to differentiate between the three articles. The rhetorical intent of all of this colorful enhancement is to establish credibility—the viewer sees that this is a visually interesting and seamless site that was created by a professional, something that the audience is meant to believe can only be done by a trustworthy company.

One aspect of SHAZAM's supra-level design ethos that could be improved is the technical skill level. Though the images and colors blend in a pleasing and professional way, there are no moving graphics. Animated Flash images on Web sites are very modern and show an advanced technical skill that establishes an even greater level of competence than the static (though appealing) images on the SHAZAM site. Competitors who have well-executed animations or other advanced technologies will have an upper hand in persuading online visitors.

Flyway's Online Visual Ethos

SHAZAM is a financial corporation, where professionalism must be displayed in all .aspects of design. *Flyway*, on the other hand, is a non-profit organization that has very different goals. Although professionalism is still crucial for non-profits, there are other factors that alter the ethos that an organization like *Flyway* would want to establish. *Flyway* is a journal of environmental literature, and so it requires an element of environment to be incorporated into its ethos. Like in SHAZAM's case with defining professionalism, the interpretation of environment is broad, especially in terms of visual display of environment. For the editors of the journal, environment is broadly defined as "the places where we make our lives, and the ways in which these spaces themselves change, [which] impact us irreversibly. All work is written from a some*place* which influences the way writers' words and ideas arrange themselves on the page" (*Flyway*). Environmental literature is a serious academic subject with many interpretations and implications; yet the word environment invites a less serious tone. At the time that the *Flyway* site was conceived, the printed journal was also undergoing a visual redesign to match the new identity, and certain graphic elements were chosen to reflect the concept of environment. The main representatives of environment in the journal and on the site are the brackets around the letter *F*, as well as other interpretations shown on the site. Through these and other design elements, the ethos of *Flyway*'s Welcome and About pages coincides with the classical definition of an ethos that establishes the rhetor's trustworthiness and goodwill, and which inspires a positive, persuasive emotional reaction through an understated tone and a sense of goodness on the orator's part.

Intra-level design on Flyway's Welcome and About Pages

As mentioned previously, two ways to establish ethos at the intra-level of design is through "matching the typeface with the subject, and creating a professional look" (Kostelnick and Roberts 149). On the *Flyway* Welcome and About pages, serif fonts are

used for the headings on the left that separate the three types of visitors and the links that correspond to their goals (See Fig. 7). Serif typefaces are frequently associated with academia and literature, or as Kostelnick and Roberts observe, are "less technical and more humane" (149). These headings help develop the academic ethos that the journal should strive to create—as a part of an academic community, having a credible academic character is crucial to success. In this way, typefaces help to match the subject—environmental literature, an academic topic—with the typefaces—serif typeface, an academic set of fonts.

On the other hand, sans serif typefaces, which are frequently easier to read on-screen, are used on all other text on the Welcome and About pages. The ease of reading the sans serif typefaces could contribute to the goodwill of the site, as the site designer has shown usability to be a priority. Keeping the readers' needs in mind creates a level of professionalism that builds credibility and trustworthiness. However, some graphic images on the Welcome page show combinations of serif and sans serif typefaces—this doesn't hurt the ethos of the page, but as will be shown later in the analysis, can cause some confusion.

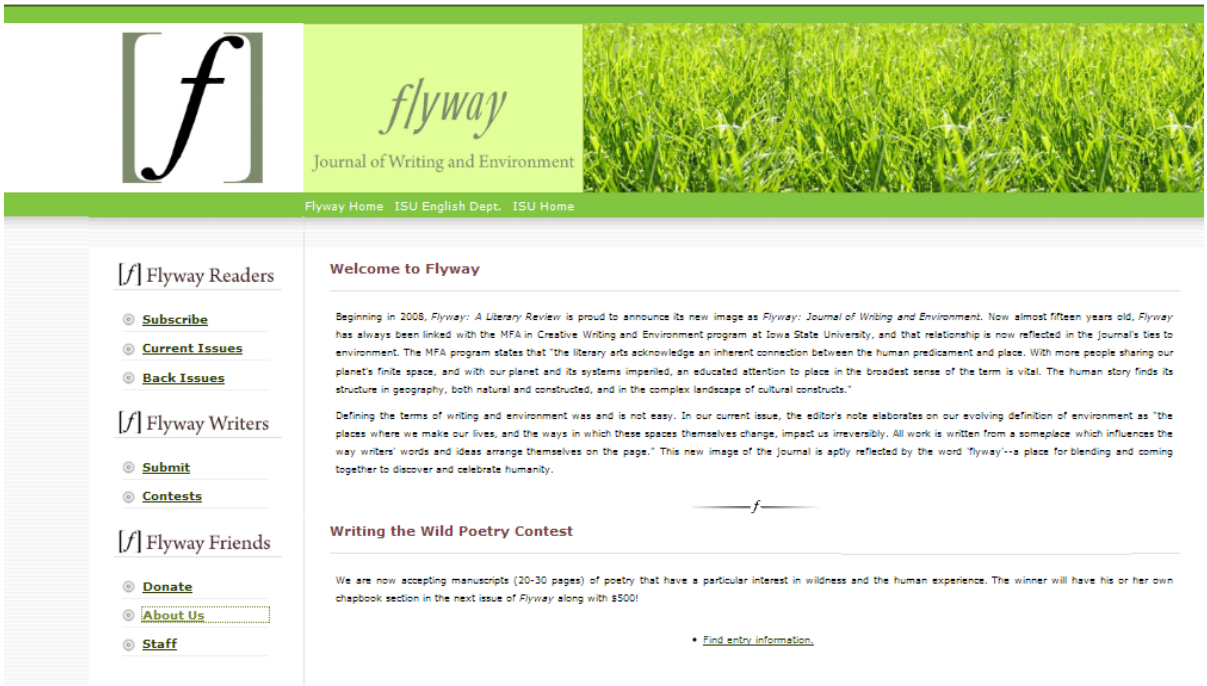

Figure 7 Flyway's Welcome Page uses serif typeface for the three headings on the left, which creates an academic, serious tone. Sans serif typefaces in the rest of the text establish a lighter, more modern feel.

Inter-level design on Flyway's Welcome and About Pages

SHAZAM's site featured navigational tools that divided visitors into three categories; the same three-category tool has been implemented on *Flyway*'s Welcome and About pages. There are three headings to the left of the page that correspond to the probable kinds of visitors: "Flyway Readers," "Flyway Writers," and "Flyway Friends." Below each heading is a list of links to pages on the site that provide information relevant to each visitor category. The rhetorical implications of dividing information by users' needs are enormous; ethos can be built or destroyed through the success (or failure) of usability functions like organizing information by user demands. Users who understand this organization pattern are likely to be pleased with the site and be further persuaded to explore it (and hopefully purchase a subscription). Users who are annoyed by the organization scheme, perhaps by not finding necessary information in what is deemed a logical place—maybe About Us information should be under Flyway Readers instead of Flyway Friends—may find the ethos to be unprofessional and will leave the site, discouraged from supporting the journal.

Headings are also used on both the Welcome and About pages to organize the body text. On the Welcome page, headings distinguish between the news items under the welcome message. While the intent in these headings was noble—to help viewers quickly read through the recent posted items—the formatting of the headings (combined with pictures and links at the extra and supra levels of design) is awkward. A visitor to the site must scroll down quite far to reach the final item, and the links and images have poor spacing. This creates an unprofessional ethos that is detrimental to the goals of the site (to increase readership and support for the journal). The About page has only one heading, for the topic of the page; the addition of more sections on this page would help to bolster the credibility of the site. The SHAZAM page actually provides some examples of information the *Flyway* site could include. More information about the journal's background, readership, well-known authors,

and new identity could be broken down into sections with prominent headings. Readers would benefit by being able to quickly scan the page for the information necessary.

Both the Welcome and About pages utilize bullets to organize information. As mentioned, the Welcome page has some awkward formatting (due largely to designer ineptitude with HTML coding), and the bulleted links in the body text are often lost among the wide spaces and jagged text (See Fig. 8). These bulleted links were meant to provide a conventional means (underlined hyperlinks) of getting to the pages that the news items reference, but the effect is lost in the poor editing. Bullets are used more appropriately in the left links to the various pages of the site. While links do not need bullets, the effect of the bulleted links is the creation of a visual marker that separates the links from the headings. Also, the decorative nature of the bullets, which are more ornate than simple circles, helps add aesthetic appeal (which in turn creates a professional ethos).

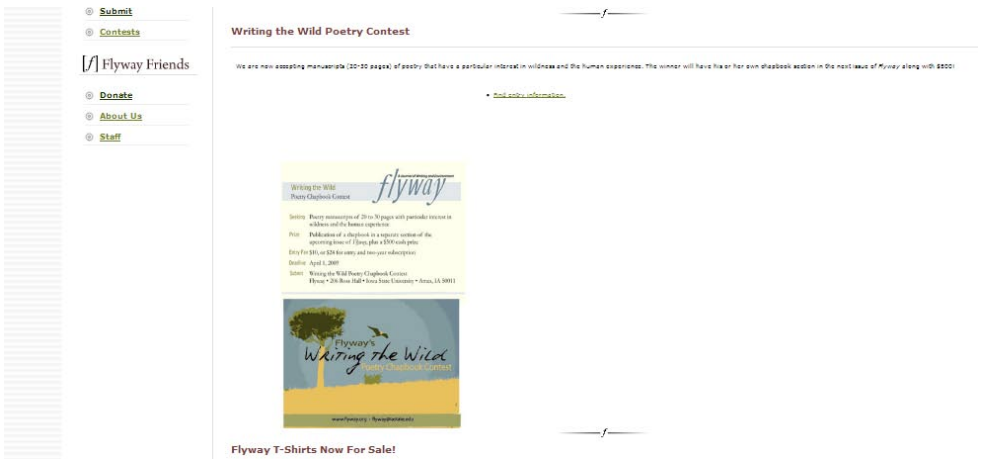

Figure 8 Awkward spacing on the Flyway Welcome page diminishes the credibility of the site.

Extra-level design on Flyway's Welcome and About Pages

Pictures are an important element of *Flyway*'s online ethos. The editors of the journal initially held a firm belief that anything too environmental—too related to pastoral, natural imagery—should be avoided, as it was exceedingly obvious to use nature as a representation of a journal of writing and environment. However, it was ultimately decided

that while nature images were obvious, they were also the most logical. A certain amount of dissonance would be created in the use of urban images for an environmental journal, and visitors might be disinclined to support something so unfamiliar or unreasonable. While it is certainly accurate that natural images are conventional, and that conventions are often the safest route to take, sometimes risks can be more beneficial than expected. The ethos created in the primary image on the Welcome and About pages—the sunlit field of green grass—is one of environmental harmony, and that is to be expected. There is nothing new or surprising or edgy about using a lovely green field to talk about the environment. Perhaps some visitors are more persuaded by the harmonious, tranquil, and altogether predictable use of blatant environmental images, but in a world caught up in the green movement, the grassy field is simply too conformist. The images place the journal within a certain genre of literature that the journal editors imagined would be only one facet to the versatile new identity of *Flyway*.

Other images are scarce on the site. The Welcome page features three graphics that represent the news items—recent posts of interest—which go beyond the traditional interpretation of the environmental theme of the journal. The image for the Writing the Wild contest combines conventional natural themes with an academic structure—in many ways, opposing forces. The graphic for the post on purchasing a t-shirt has little to do with traditional natural images; destroyed typefaces and the hint of an open box are meant to evoke elements of environment that are more metaphorical than overtly natural. The final graphic, representing the current issue, features natural elements (like trees, birds, and water) in contrast with an urban skyline (in the female figure's skirt). This image was chosen as the cover of the Spring/Fall 2008 issue for the visual contrast that corresponds with the contrasting definitions of environment that the journal promotes. In using these images, the range of content in the journal is represented visually—creating an ethos of credibility through the visual confirmation of the journal's goals (in other words, the journal is living up to its own standards).

The Welcome and About pages feature two important logos: the bracketed *F* and the *Flyway* font. The bracketed *F* (See Fig. 9) was chosen as the new abbreviated logo for use in the printed journal, and its use was extended onto the Web site for continuity. The logo is meant to represent the place in which the writers of *Flyway* are writing—a visual metaphor for environment, in any of the definitions of the word. It is not completely closed off, but the space is defined and limited, just as the world around us is in some ways simultaneously open and closed. The repetition of this logo establishes credibility in *Flyway*'s literary skills with metaphor and symbolism. It also creates an ethos of professionalism through the aesthetic appeal of the contrasting curvature of the *F* and rigidity of the brackets.

Figure 9 The abbreviated Flyway logo uses brackets to represent the boundaries of environments--simultaneously open and closed.

The *Flyway* font (See Fig. 10), featured at the top of both the Welcome and About pages, is the original design from over 15 years ago. The supervising editor, who established *Flyway*, was adamant that the design of the font remain the same during the redesign of the journal, despite protests from the design staff (who secretly modified some of the errors described below). The font was computer drawn by a graphic designer, and though the technical skill to achieve this would have to be high, there are many errors that detract from the credibility of the logo. The baseline of the first *y* was significantly lower than the other letters, a fault that was corrected. The *f, a*, and second *y* are serif, but the other letters are sans serif, a serious mistake that has no obvious explanation. On close examination, many of the letters are actually line segments that do not meet or even fill in completely. Though the untrained eye may miss these design flaws, many design professionals with whom the design

editors consulted during the redesign confirmed that the *Flyway* font logo is unattractive and unprofessional. This is the reason that the logo is displayed at a smaller scale on the Web site—to diminish the unprofessional ethos that the logo establishes.

Figure 10 The problematic Flyway logo has font inconsistencies and other flaws that diminish credibility.

Supra-level design on Flyway's Welcome and About Pages

The navigational bars and links are static on both the Welcome and About pages, providing visitors with a consistency that is comforting while exploring the site, as it is easy to go back to another page. The categorization of users into appropriate links helps to define the uses and users of the site, an aspect that adds to the credibility of the design. However, as Kostelnick and Roberts observe, links to credible external sites is an essential component of supra-level Web site design (421). There are only two links to external sites on the Welcome and About pages—to the Iowa State University English Department home page and the university's main page. These sites are very credible, but the relationship to the university is not made obvious; one must carefully read the body text to discover that it is Iowa State University (not Illinois or Idaho) and that the journal is a part of the school's Master of Arts in Creative Writing program. As a student produced journal at a well-known university, establishing this affiliation is crucial to creating credibility and trustworthiness. The association should be clearly stated, and attention should be drawn to that statement and to the links to the university pages.

Kostelnick and Roberts also mention the role of technical skill in the ethos of a Web site (421). While fancy tricks are not always necessary to appeal to Web site visitors, many modern Web designers rely on the visual excitement of animated images to draw audiences. Neither the Welcome page nor the About page of the *Flyway* site have any animation or advanced Web technology. Furthermore, the technical errors of the Welcome page graphics indicate a reduced competency in technology, which deteriorates the credibility of the site.

What the *Flyway* site lacks in credibility of technology and link relationships, is made up for in the consistent use of color and identity. Uniformity is established by keeping all navigational bars static, maintaining the same banner, and repeating the name and logo of the journal. Various shades of the color green, with accents of burgundy and taupe, are used throughout the pages to remind viewers of the environmental theme (in an admittedly conventional way). Consistency in the visual identity of the site helps create a professional, credible ethos by emphasizing the name and theme of the journal.

Chapter 4: Implications

The analysis of the classically derived ethos of the Welcome and About pages on the SHAZAM and *Flyway* Web sites is a limited representation of the presence of classical rhetoric in professional communication practices. A more exhaustive analysis of all the pages on each site that includes all of the design elements offered by Kostelnick and Roberts—or any other analytical framework using ethos—would yield a deeper knowledge than can be gained in what is basically a superficial study of two small Web sites. However, three interesting conclusions can be drawn regarding classical rhetoric, professional communication, and online ethos.

1. Classical definitions of ethos are present online—the analysis presented here offers countless instances of persuasive appeals based on elements of character in designs. From the subjects in the photographs on the SHAZAM Welcome page to the complications of *Flyway*'s visual identity as environmental, the credibility and trustworthiness of the organizations are made the central focus for persuading visitors. Without the visual designs, all that is left is words on a screen, and while these words may have powerful rhetorical appeals, the nature of the Web is to emphasize the power of the visual over the textual. The *Flyway* Web site explicitly states in the body text that it is a part of the Iowa State University MFA program, yet the design does not illustrate this clearly—and an opportunity for persuasion is lost.
2. Professional communication is practical rhetoric, persuasion in action—even for communicators who don't even know the meaning of the word *rhetoric*. I can personally attest to the fact that the SHAZAM Web site was designed by a graphic designer and a Web master, neither of whom have a background in rhetoric. Yet they employed principles of rhetoric that are basic and fundamental to persuasion—classical principles that derive from the work of Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, and others of antiquity—in the design of SHAZAM's site. Ethos is created on that Web

site whether the designers are aware of it or not, whether they can give it a name or not. Other classical principles are employed as well, and even ideas that come from more recent rhetorical theories, like semiotics, can be identified on both SHAZAM's and *Flyway*'s sites.

3. Online ethos is developed through various design methods—although ethos was once conceived of as a persuasive appeal in oratory, it now has a clear role online and in the visual realm. Visual ethos exists in print, but online visual ethos is a special brand of the rhetorical appeal that unites technological capabilities with user agency. Pages and links defy the boundaries of the page and are limited only by the screen and the willingness of the user to click on a new link. Colors and graphics can be blended and manipulated by design professionals in ways that oil and watercolor painters of the nineteenth century never dreamed could exist. These complex virtual/visual design elements all combine to speak for the organizations that employ them—they create ethos that fits the classical definitions determined by Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian.

At the outset of this thesis, I asserted that a return to the classical roots of professional communication to discuss the modern practices of visual and online communication could do a number of things: yield a unique perspective on the similarities between visual, oral and written texts; add to the analytical framework for producing effective online and visual texts; and finally, introduce into professional communication a more accessible and successful mode for instructing professional communicators in the art of creating persuasive Web sites. It is this final element—the utility of classical rhetoric in professional communication—that has significant implications for future research and implementation in the communication field.

Professional communication is a broad field; many who fall into the category of professional communicator do not know that such a definition exists or would not label themselves as such. Technical writing is only one narrow portion of the wide variety of

careers available in the field. Others might include Web designers, marketing communicators, or public relations representatives. One common feature of professional communicators is the importance of persuasion in the work that they do; rhetoric is the more academic and lesser known term for the same idea. They attempt to persuade audiences into acting/reacting in a favorable way for the organizations that they represent. Another common feature is that many professional communicators have no formal training in rhetoric. Some fall into communications jobs without having intended to enter the field. Some are engineers or technicians who also write and design documentation. Some are unidentified English junkies who need a steady paycheck (and their books aren't selling) and have a knack for writing and design. Whatever the story, professional communicators are a diverse group. But even without training in rhetoric, so much of what they do is rhetorical. My analysis provides evidence of this—ethos was present on SHAZAM's Web site, although that word was very likely not spoken in design meetings. The *Flyway* site was designed with ethos in mind, although for the sake of avoiding confusion at staff meetings, the rhetorical reasoning for certain design decisions was omitted.

Despite the presence of ethos on these two Web sites, it is apparent that the established ethos is not as ideal as it might be. Improvements could be made to increase relationships to credible sites, augment the position of logos, and further develop technological credibility, among other recommendations. Imagine the possibilities for professional communication if the basic language of classical rhetoric—principles like ethos—were made widely available to practitioners.

Because the field is so broad and the range of careers so varied, implementing a pedagogical plan to teach classical rhetorical visual design analysis is nearly impossible. One method that would require a massive group effort would be for professional organizations, associations, and societies to start educating members in classical rhetoric. Through online communications, annual conferences, and monthly meetings, such organizations might

spread the word to a reasonable percentage of the professional communication field. Practitioners would gain a valuable resource for creating online visual texts, allowing them to improve preexisting designs and avoid pitfalls in the future.

A better option, however, is to catch them while they're young. As I hinted earlier, one goal for this thesis is to show that classical rhetorical terminology is accessible to a variety of people not trained in rhetoric. Composition students have long served as test subjects for the degree to which rhetoric can be taught and used successfully by "non-rhetorical" students or workers. My experience has shown me that even first-semester freshmen can grasp the basic concepts of rhetoric—of terms like ethos, pathos, and logos—an apply them to written, oral, and visual texts. Students in my classes have used pathos to design persuasive advertisements, used logos to add convincing statistics to compositions, and used ethos to address classmates during presentations. Rhetoric was once a staple of higher education—along with arithmetic and reading, the study of persuasion was considered an essential element of instruction. If a greater effort were made to ensure that all college students, from the largest universities to the smallest community colleges, received instruction on the principles of rhetoric as they apply to written, oral, visual, and online communication, then perhaps the world would also witness a greater number of quality, persuasive texts (in any medium). I am hardly qualified to suggest a methodology for actually implementing such a far reaching plan of action. However, I can recommend that steps be taken to guarantee access to rhetoric, so that the general public will no longer think it is merely a political jab about lies masked as fancy language on the campaign trail. A reincarnation of classical rhetorical study at the college level that, when combined with education in professional organizations, could benefit professional communication and society as a whole.

The best place to start developing a pedagogical plan would be in conducting more extensive research into classical rhetoric and professional communication, particularly:

analyzing other classical terminology and Web sites; surveying student rhetorical knowledge; and observing professional practices that include rhetorical elements. Research that analyzes other classical rhetorical terms and theories might examine how Web sites handle current issues like the struggling U.S. economy or the energy crisis—timely and touchy subjects—in combination with ideas like kairos or decorum. A more extensive analysis of sites that are categorized by genre or business type might reveal what classical terms are most evident in different kinds of Web sites—asking if non-profit organizations are better at utilizing pathos or if corporations are better at establishing ethos. A survey of universities' composition programs across the United States and the degree to which rhetoric is included in the curriculum might reveal how widespread or limited the teaching of rhetoric is, and types of schools that are better at instructing students in the art of persuasion might be identified. Professional organizations might ask members to take surveys to determine rhetorical knowledge. Observations or longitudinal studies of professionals at work, designing, would illustrate the degree to which rhetoric is already being used, if unconsciously, by practitioners.

Toward the end of my last semester of teaching, I helped my students prepare for the next step in their composition education by reviewing Iowa State University's goals for composition program. One of the goals is essentially for students to gain a rhetorical understanding of how arguments can take many forms—written, oral, visual, electronic. My students are always initially intimidated by the word rhetoric, although I try to calm their fears by insisting that they've already been doing it. The students in this last class were no different, with confused expressions flashing across their faces at the mere mention of rhetorical analysis. I asked them to raise their hands if they had ever tried to persuade someone to do something; most of the hands went up. I asked my students if they had ever written an argument in a paper; all hands shot into the air (they had been assigned a persuasive writing exercise earlier in the semester). I asked them if they had ever seen an

advertisement that made them feel particularly emotional; once again, the majority of hands were raised. A look of realization began to appear on their faces, a comprehension of the term rhetoric. It isn't foreign or scary; it isn't necessarily dangerous or political. Rhetoric is something that we all encounter on a daily basis, and it is something that, like humans, dogs, and sea sponges, continually evolves as the world changes. Aristotle believed oratory to be the zenith of human persuasive talents, but written argumentation would prove him wrong. Visual rhetoric has quickly replaced written rhetoric in classrooms and living rooms. Digital rhetoric, which relies particularly on the visual for persuasive ability, has advanced as technology has developed, and it has changed the methods of persuasion forever.

Just as Aristotle knew that studying the available means of persuasion in oratory would create better orators, the study of visual digital rhetoric will create better designers. However, orators and designers are not the only ones who benefit from rhetorical study—those who are listening and those who are viewing also benefit by being able to interpret and defend against erroneous or dishonest persuasion. Although the means of persuasion have evolved from an orator at court to a Flash video online, the principles at the heart of it all are still the same. Ethos, pathos, and logos are the trifecta of rhetoric; they are perennial, persistent, and persuasive. While modern theories of rhetoric are also helpful in creating or analyzing persuasive communications online and in visual forms, those theories would not exist without the foundations in classical rhetoric provided by Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, or the many other rhetoricians of antiquity. Classical rhetoric is not dead. It is very much alive, kept vibrant by the continual use of its terms, principles, and theories, as useful today as it was over two thousand years ago when scholars meditating in the hills of Greece conceived of an art of persuasion. Otis M. Walter recognizes the enduring nature of classical rhetoric, agreeing that "rhetoric is no completed discipline to be merely passed over to students, but a changing discipline that should respond to human needs. If we can recapture the spirit of questioning, rhetoric can never be a dead hand" (422). It is our responsibility to pass on the

eternal quest for answers that is rhetoric to the students and communicators of the future, where human needs will require that all people have an understanding of the power—dangerous and beneficial, accessible and universal—of digital and visual persuasion.

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