

2006 Web Publishing Conference

Post-Conference Evaluation

Overview

Overall, the 2006 AAN Web Publishing Conference was a success.

Total Respondents: 52

Strongly Agree	87%
Agree	13%
Disagree	0%
Strongly Disagree	0%

Friday Seminars

A Blueprint for Transformation (Mary Glick)

Total Respondents: 50

Excellent	30%
Good	36%
Fair	24%
Poor	10%

Web-Publishing Revenue Models (Dave Morgan)

Total Respondents: 50

Excellent	72%
Good	28%
Fair	2%
Poor	0%

Online Advertising Operations Panel (Bowen Dwelle, moderator)

Total Respondents: 45

Excellent	13%
Good	36%
Fair	42%
Poor	9%

Increasing Traffic Through Search Engine Optimization (Jill Whalen)

Total Respondents: 48

Excellent	58%
Good	32%
Fair	10%
Poor	0%

Using Social-Networking Sites to Grow Your Audience (Michael Gold)

Total Respondents: 50

Excellent	52%
Good	44%
Fair	2%
Poor	2%

Web Analytics (Xavier Casanova)

Total Respondents: 45

Excellent	27%
Good	40%
Fair	27%
Poor	6%

Legal Issues in Web Publishing (Thomas Burke)

Total Respondents: 39

Excellent	67%
Good	28%
Fair	5%
Poor	0%

Saturday Seminars

Trends and Opportunities in the Connected Society (Andrew Nachison)

Total Respondents: 44

Excellent	34%
Good	41%
Fair	14%
Poor	11%

User-Generated Content (Todd Stauffer)

Total Respondents: 51

Excellent	88%
Good	12%
Fair	0%
Poor	0%

From Print to Multimedia (R. Scott Horner)

Total Respondents: 45

Excellent	33%
Good	51%
Fair	9%
Poor	7%

Writing and Editing for the Web (Susan West)

Total Respondents: 30

Excellent	43%
Good	43%
Fair	10%
Poor	4%

Wireless Web (Bruce Dobie and Tom Kenney)

Total Respondents: 32

Excellent	19%
Good	41%
Fair	34%
Poor	6%

Web Site Usability (Michael Gold and Susan West)

Total Respondents: 40

Excellent	40%
Good	35%
Fair	15%
Poor	10%

Exhibitors

Exhibitor Presentations During Lunch

Total Respondents: 44

Excellent	16%
Good	55%
Fair	23%
Poor	6%

Exhibits

Total Respondents: 41

Excellent	7%
Good	66%
Fair	22%
Poor	5%

General

Hotel Accommodations (Holiday Inn Golden Gateway)

Total Respondents: 45

Excellent	27%
Good	53%
Fair	16%
Poor	4%

Should AAN organize another Web Publishing Conference next Fall?

Total Respondents: 51

Yes	37%
Yes, but more Web programming should be added at the convention and AAN East/West as well.	51%
No. More Web publishing programming should be added at the convention and AAN East/West instead.	12%

Seminars

- I think Susan West needed to use more newspaper Web site examples; some of her sites seemed very irrelevant for what we do. Also, I got some good advice from her that I will use; however, she seemed to demonstrate a certain distance from what it is that we do so well. A good editorial Web panel would show a lot of love for the kind of writing that wins us awards, and still show us how to translate what's so great about our papers to the Web—not urge us to chuck our great ledes and such. Again, she tried to do this, I think, and I liked many of her ideas. I think the problem was mostly in the delivery, as far as convincing the editors went.
- Although most of the women (and some of the men) swooned over Xavier Casanova's swarthy good looks, it was evident from his presentation that he didn't have any "real world" experience from an online advertising perspective even though he has been successful in establishing Web analytics vendors. He gave completely wrong info that most online advertisers are not concerned with unique users, which is untrue.
- Todd Stauffer was great—real time advice from a paper that is one of the smallest. Made a big impact that it shouldn't necessarily be a money drain to have a smarter Web site.
- I have attended a number of seminars and this was the most informative AAN conference/convention I have ever attended. Well done. I would love to see this evolve into our annual conference programming. I would attend Portland if so.
- Didn't go to last two sessions
- This was (by far) the best conference AAN has done.
- I thought the whole thing was just great and feel fortunate to have been able to attend. Much of the directional information validated what I already "thought" was the way to go...but was second-guessing myself. The more technical and "how to" parts of the conference were invaluable to a non-techy person like me...and made me realize that I need to become a more serious student...it was just, just great. Thanks so much...this is just the beginning. I also think that the energy level in the room reminded me a bit of the old days...and I haven't seen that much positive energy in our industry in some time. Thanks again...Kat
- Overall the conference was spectacular. The stats session might have been a little "stat" heavy. Would be nice to have more of this sort of thing in Portland...
- The panel members weren't all representative of our businesses. We'd like to hear what AAN members are doing for ads, not Yahoo or CNet.

- Jackson Free Press could've done the whole conference!
- Great seminars! You had a good mix of overview that made me think as well as specific ideas for actions to take.
- I missed Saturday, but Friday was a great conference. Maybe best ever. The topics and speakers were new, the information was compelling and the event left me and my crew invigorated. Even the food and drink on Thursday were great. And I'm not normally a back-slapping happy-go-lucky type. Good work. Keep it up.
- Some of the best programming we've ever provided our members. I think the real value here was providing a wealth of programming on a single topic, albeit a huge, single topic. What I'm getting at is that it was easier to get into a flow and rhythm about the Web because of the concentration of programming vs. what happens at the National where we jump from subject to subject. I think going forward, we either continue to do a Web conference or do a one-day Web focus the day before the annual starts.
- Well-done, well-planned. Great variety of topics to be such a focused conference.
- Great conference. Thanks for putting it together. My only thoughts for future conferences would be to offer more roundtables. A lot of really practical ideas came out of the editors' roundtable. Thanks again!
- This was the best AAN conference by far. No parties, just solid lectures. You chose really good people, and it's already helped us to improve our site. Thank you very much.
- The second day afternoon roundtable was excellent.
- Thanks for an excellent conference. The only improvements I would suggest would be to have more time for roundtables—perhaps instead of vendors presenting at lunch, have tables labeled for various topics (like user-generated content, XML, InDesign, Web workflow, etc.) and people can then choose where to sit during lunch and share ideas. Also, by the end we were all fried, but an ending piece to pull it all together may have made things more seamless. I did really appreciate that most seminars were 45 minutes. Any longer than that, you lose people.
- Susan West did not seem to have many credentials or a good understanding of the weekly industry.
- The panel on ad ops was least successful for me—the panel format kept it superficial, and though having reps from a small-to-giant operations may have seemed like a good way to cover the gamut, the experience of people from megasites like Yahoo and CNET was completely useless to us. WestGold are great. But their usability presentation seemed truncated. Some presenters/topics need more than the standard time slot. I would pay some attention to this in future attempts.
- Todd Stauffer is my hero.
- While I understand the logic behind starting with an overview each day, in both cases, I thought these speakers were preaching to the choir and were stating the obvious. The more practical, the better, I thought. And next time, it would be great if some of the sessions could last longer than 45 minutes. I could have listened to the lawyer and Todd Stauffer for another hour each at least.

Roundtables

- I moderated, so I won't rank—however, I did think we discussed some good topics—but we needed more time. I think we're at the point where we need more of an editorial "track"—or at least two or three sessions or roundtables that dealt with specific issues around Web editorial.
- This session should have been longer. We had to move quickly, breezing through discussion, in order to cover the questions on the agenda, leaving no time for any other questions participants might have had.
- Wish it was longer, especially in the absence of lots of networking opportunities, like at the nat'l convention.
- Jackson Free Press was great to lead it; good comments from participants. Very helpful.
- I was the moderator and even so found it helpful. We probably had too many subjects to try to cover in 45 minutes, but it did force us to be efficient.
- This was really informative and spirited. One or two more of these on specific topics could be helpful. Perhaps over dinner?
- This was very helpful—got some great ideas.
- The conversation was dominated by discussion of various revenue models. I wanted ad ops, like advertised. Still, it was useful.
- As far as Web advertising we had a great talk and I learned a lot from everyone's input on the topic.

Exhibitors

- It was better the first day. Second day I couldn't hear and left early after two presentations as they were so dull. But I did like the first day, and was engaged.
- I didn't care for the scheduled lunch and presentations. I really count on a break during the day to de-compress before starting the afternoon. Rather have shorter lunch break (1.5hrs) and the shorter breaks between sessions (15mins). Although, we will probably use the music service presented on Sat.
- It was a great idea to invite exhibitors we hadn't seen before, and allowing them to present for 10 minutes at lunch was also a good idea. Ten minutes was enough time for them to present their concept, but not long enough for us to get bored.
- I was very impressed with the quality of exhibitors.
- Not sure that the presentation during lunch thing helped much. I had one vendor at my table pitching me while eating, then the presentations. A bit of an overload. They were well-placed in the flow of everyone. I would be curious to hear how they felt this presentation style helped them.
- Everyone felt a bit like a captive audience during these. Many in the room were on the editorial side and have no input on purchasing what they're selling.
- I personally didn't care for vendors speaking during lunch—I would have preferred the time to speak to my colleagues and share ideas.
- The lunch presentations were intrusive. I didn't even bother with the exhibition booths.
- Lunch presentations seemed a good way to give these guys their money's worth. Their presentations did not ruin lunch.
- Having exhibitors isn't a bad idea, but given all there was to do (at the conference and in the city), I didn't want to work too hard to find out what they were selling and how it applied to me. Their booths and presentations weren't terribly enlightening. Perhaps you could have given them each ten minutes during the day to speak to us and explain what they were about?

General

- I think we're in dire need of panels/discussions that give communication tools for editorial, tech and publishing to talk to each other. I heard repeatedly that (a) tech/publishing decided to do this, but didn't tell us (editorial) until it was time to do it, (b) we (editorial) are on board, but the publisher won't give us resources, (c) we (tech) are ready to move ahead but they (editorial and publishing) are afraid of the technology ... and so on.
 - Overall, the AAN did a great job in pulling together relevant content and speakers in covering the major areas of interest vis-a-vis Web publishing as it relates to the alternative newsweeklies. There was a lot of info to convey and process and, by and large, the sessions proved quite useful, providing much "food for thought."
 - How about a full day of Web stuff at the Portland conference? Or add a third day for those who missed or want to send more staff.
- I think the conference was really well done and had some great information. The one thing I would like to see in the future is printed material on each presentation. I know all of the slide shows are now on your Web site but it would have helped me to have print outs to take notes on at the presentation. Thanks.
- It would have been nice to have free wifi in the rooms where we met.
 - More sales stuff about the Web would be a nice addition. Maybe some sales professionals from companies that have successful packages and can talk about companies that spend money on the Web.
 - I would have liked to hear from others about how their "Web departments" are set up in terms of operations. Are services, right down to Web hosting, being outsourced or being done in house? Who manages those departments—tech guys or ad guys? Is "the Web dept" its own department or even its own company? There's a lot of talk about the big picture, what it could be, and even the details of analytics, but there doesn't seem to be a discussion about how to bring time and resources together to make it all happen for a small operation like an alt weekly. I realize there's no silver bullet, but there's very little discussion, if any, on how others are getting these ideas to work or not work. I would like to know what others in my shoes have done before, what did and didn't work and where they plan on heading with their master plan. While I enjoy the big picture discussions and even the ones about nuts and bolts, there needs to be some general discussion about how to bring all of that together to make it work.
 - Hotel wasn't the most accommodating. Low on service, space, wireless was a problem. Good location though.
 - Thank you! Now I just have to convince the rest of my staff...

- One of the strengths of this convention was having the publishers/advertising/editorial/IT staffs all in the same room at the same time. We all need to learn about this new medium and we need to share a common language. If we decide not to do a separate Web conference, we should look for a way to have the Web content run in more than one stream at the national conferences.

- Overall the conference was very good. Still, it is important to separate the conceptual from the practical implementation of Web work. In terms of conceptual thinking the conference was pretty strong. This made it ideal for the audience, which was pretty much dominated by publishers and editors. Publishers and editors really needed to be energized on the value and future of the Web, and the conference succeeded in doing that. However, there needs to be more thought given to offering hardcore technology streams with specific issues and solutions that will appeal to real IT geeks. While the session on Search Engine Optimization and the one on Analytics probably had some appeal for the IT folks, most of the other sessions offered little for the true Alpha geek. One of the guys doing the mobile presentation couldn't even explain how a WAP site (wireless access protocol) worked (although I was flattered that when asked if he could name one he said Artvoice had a very nice WAP site -our "menu guide"). I would suggest canvassing IT people for specific topics of interest, whether it be details on video compression, Web 2.0, firewalls, setting up your own web servers, WAP, the value differences between fiber optic, copper, T1 etc. And then program something for the IT people at alt papers. These people are becoming increasingly important and deserve a stream dedicated to them. It is not something that would appeal to your general membership and most people would probably think they were speaking a foreign language, but if you want to raise the whole boat the AAN needs to bring these folks deeper into the programming. I would love to bring a couple of IT people to an AAN annual conference... but there's nothing for them to do there, so far. Instead, for example, I am sending them to the computer hardware convention in Las Vegas in December. But that doesn't energize them about the newspaper, and it's just as likely they'll come back and tell me they were offered a job at Dell computer or something terrible like that. So the bottom line is: Great job, great conference, but let's keep going with it. jamie

- Excellent presentations and info. But why did it take so long to hold a Web Conference? Should have happened years ago, around Mark Foley's fifth e-diddled page (even he's on top of the Web's fabulous functions).

- I don't think our retail and classified sales force fully understand the importance of selling online. They're already busy. That said, they already have the built-in relationships. Our retail and classified reps need to understand how important the online component is to our business and their clients success. I find cultural shifts like these find better adoption if they come from outside the company. I would like to see some kind of online call-to-arms for sales reps at an AAN East/West convention. Fragmented user registration is a looming problem. I think we either need to do something collectively like sign-up for prefspress.com or we need to get behind something like <http://openid.net/> OpenID an open source user authentication initiative and leverage vendors to support it. Page Rank—this was mentioned on the EP list serve, but essentially if we got smarter about deep-linking into each others Web sites, we could collectively increase our page rank giving ourselves higher rankings within our individual markets. Outstanding conference. The kind of conference that gets the juices going. It's a very exciting time for alt-weeklies.

I just wish there had been free Internet in the conference area. That, and maybe power strips for attendees' computers, would have made the conference

- Hotel was most helpful with an early check-in. Plated lunch was not very pleasing. About the most bland food I have ever encountered. AAN office should very proud of this conference. To have been planned and such in a short time, well done folks. Great attendance.

- The location of the hotel and the facilities were poor. Room was not reserved upon arrival with reservations.

- Yes, and yes: and (not a but) yes and more... Web at all Conferences

- Having outside experts critique each paper's site would be really great. Ya'll do that for design right?

- Keeping the Web as a separate conference allows for more in-depth examination of the issues at hand. However, in order for more in-depth buy-in from the whole structure of the AAN papers, increasing awareness is key. Finding a balance between the two will be ultimately the best way for us all to go.

- Great job, the success illustrates the strong need for such a conference. Need more of the same.

- We still need some programming on staffing Web operations: Who to hire for Webmasters; How much to pay them; and dual or separate selling of Web advertising.

- Everybody said this was the best AAN conference ever. (Congratulations.) I guess it was because of (1) tight focus and (2) all professional presenters. Selection of topics seemed just right to me, though my guess is it was a little too specialized for some who are not so far into it. If different topics of equal relevance could be covered at about an equal level of detail, I would definitely come to another one.

- I really enjoyed myself, learned a lot, and it was very useful to get a sense that I'm in good company with all these brave new hurdles.