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The Stand

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The Stand

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

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and Renée Crown University Honors

May 2009

Honors Capstone Project in: _____ Graphic Arts _____

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Sherri Taylor

Honors Director: _____
Samuel Gorovitz

Date: _____

Abstract

Concept Statement

The Stand is based on the concept of creating a new alternative source of information and news specifically for the South Side community of Syracuse, New York. The new publication will improve upon the existing small-format local newspapers, creating a vibrant new media source. It will focus exclusively on the people of this community and serve as a visual connection for the members of the South Side. Its monthly production will create an awareness of recent events and happenings of the community that currently often go unheard and unseen. This will in return help community members become a more connected and knowledgeable group of people.

Context of the Work

The Stand is a small tabloid style newspaper (10 inches by 11 inches), similar to the inserts found in many daily newspapers across the country. A staff and director will maintain the publication once the ready-to-use templates are finalized and finances are set in order. It will be printed in full color, ranging from twelve to twenty pages on a monthly basis. The publication is free to the public and will be available in and around the South Side community.

Medium and Process Used in the Creation

The templates for *The Stand* were created through conversations with community member and Syracuse University faculty. The files are digital and created in Adobe's InDesign software. This program is specifically designed for the production of print materials, especially those that need pre-created styles and designs for easy access and use. It is compatible with word processing programs and Photoshop to provide easy placement of the content for the newspaper. The process involved multiple hand sketches of layouts, computer based layouts, and discussions with advisors who provided constructive criticism to improve upon the various versions. More than ten layouts of styles, colors, and content went through revisions to end at the final template files. A Style Guide and Library of graphic elements were also part of the design process and included in the set of template files.

Conclusion

After two semesters of working on various drafts of *The Stand* templates, a final set of template files have been created and are ready for use in the monthly production of this new publication. Because I was given an extended length of time to stand back and reflect on the work being created, more complete and established templates were the result. These templates are easy to use by both professional and non-expert designers. They make use of color, photography, type treatments, and white space, creating a visually pleasing and enjoyable publication to hold and read.

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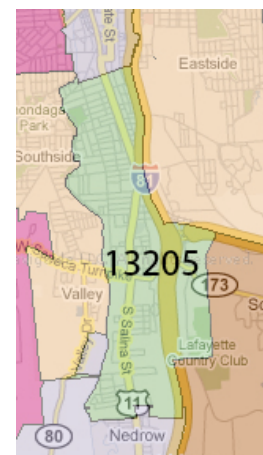
Reflective Essay

When I walked into Professor Davis' office for one of our weekly meetings, I was curious to see what he thought of the newest template designs I had emailed to him earlier in the week. Seeing them laid out on his desk, I was impressed with the progress I had made over the past couple months. The first words out of Davis' mouth were, "Now we're getting somewhere!" I was relieved and felt accomplished. "The Stand" was finally coming together and looking like a solid newspaper ready for production. So much progress had been made from the initial black-and-white pages full of placeholder or "dummy" text, to now being filled with colorful photographs, graphic elements and short, reader-friendly "breakouts." My thesis was near completion and we were ready to present this great new publication to those who could make it a reality.

Concepts & Initiation

My advisor, Sherri Taylor, approached me at the end of the 2008 summer break with the proposition to work on a project in collaboration with Steve Davis, chair of the Newspaper and Online Journalism Department, and with The South Side Community Coalition of Syracuse. The project: Help with a new community newspaper specifically for the South Side neighborhood of Syracuse. I would be creative director, tasked with constructing a set of the initial templates for the monthly production of the paper. I immediately jumped at the opportunity to take on such a publication to build my portfolio and skills, as well as contribute to the community of Syracuse where I have lived for the past three years.

The South Side is the southern wedge of the Syracuse city area, running down South Salina Street; it roughly corresponds with the 13205 ZIP code. The South Side directly abuts the university, on the west side of Interstate 81 and not far from the Brewster, Boland and Brockway dorms. The community has specifically been working with Syracuse University since 2005, when the university started up the South Side Initiative. The initiative linking community and university is intended to create a better understanding among diverse groups of people. (*map source: maps.huge.info/zip.htm*)



The South Side Newspaper Project was inspired by a special issue of *The Student Voice*, a weekly newspaper published at Syracuse University. Beginning in 2003, Steve Davis has been in charge of a collaborative project among five to six Newhouse classes that come together to create the semester's last issue for *The Voice*. These final issues of *The Voice* have focused on many different topics, specifically the South Side in 2005. Davis noted that the choice of the South Side for the special issue that year was intriguing "because it (the South Side) was so close to us, but known to few of us." Davis continued, "When we published our work, it was so well-received by residents that we decided we'd try to work with them to produce a free monthly paper and Web site." The idea was to create a small-format newspaper, tabloid style, that would focus on the neighborhood and the people who lived there. The name of the newspaper was already established:

The Stand (chosen in a community contest). What was needed was a designer to bring it to life visually and physically.

With the new chancellor, Nancy Cantor, arriving at the university, new initiatives were put in place to help bring together the school and the people of the city. One of these initiatives was named the Enitiative project. The Enitiative focused on three areas: technology, arts and neighborhoods. The Enitiative gets students and faculty involved in programs out in the community, working to create better living and working environments and opportunities for both groups. Grants are given to those projects that meet the desired requirements, with 58 projects currently in progress.

Steve Davis serves as the “Enitiative eProfessor” for the South Side Newspaper Project. The newspaper has received \$20,000 in grants to “train and employ community members and student journalists, side-by-side, as the chief writers, photographers, and graphic artists” of *The Stand*. The newspaper is part of the larger South Side Initiative, which is centered around the South Side Innovation Center on South Salina Street. The Innovation Center serves as a place where community members can learn about business and get more involved in entrepreneurial ventures; the office for The Stand is located there.

The South Side typically comes across fairly negatively in the local media. Many of the stories are about killings, violence, child abuse, business failure, and the poor physical appearance of the neighborhood.

A local newspaper like *The Stand* would help to create more positive media about the community, while not ignoring the problems. With the majority

of stories coming directly from the people of the neighborhood in collaboration with student reporters and writers at the university, a more communal and local perspective true to the daily lives of the people would be presented. There is a large need for a newspaper like this to better represent the people and what really goes on every day. While crime and violence are a part of the lives of the people of the South Side, the positive aspects often out-number them and deserve to be brought to attention more so than now. Stories that focus on the accomplishments of the community members – such as achievements in business, local awards won, and other accomplishments – are important in representing the people accurately. Stories about youth, entertainment, and other social events are also important in portraying the life and culture of the neighborhood.

It is important to understand the demographics of this community. It is mainly comprised of low-income, minority citizens. Often, these identities are typically portrayed in a more negative light in mainstream media. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the majority of citizens (50.4%) in the area identify as African-American, whereas the overall number in the U.S. population is only 12%. Females comprise the majority of community members (55.8%), with the median age of 35. Only 70% of the people have a high school degree, compared to 80% of the U.S. population. Only 14% have a bachelor's or higher, with the U.S. average being 24%. About 23% of families on the South Side live below the poverty level, whereas overall in the U.S. it is only about 9%. The number of individuals living below the poverty level is also high, around 26%, as compared to 12% overall in the U.S. Approximately 14% of the families have an average

income of \$10,000 or less and 20.7% make only \$15,000-\$24,999. The majority of families are struggling to get by on subsistence salaries.

Learning

This project involved getting to know the community better and understanding the wants and needs of the people for a publication specifically about them. As a graphic designer, specifically in communications, the goal is to take conceptual problems and solve them visually. For this project, I took a broad concept of the newspaper and created templates that could be easily used and understood by a staff of non-journalists producing a paper on a monthly basis. The templates I created for this project are files created in design software that can be easily updated and modified for each issue. They allow for easy placement of new stories and photos, without the need to create pages on the computer from scratch. Templates also create a consistent look, which is desirable for readers in becoming familiar and comfortable with a newspaper.

When I met with Professor Davis for the first time, he gave me a brief overview of the project and what it entailed. He explained what the project's goal was: To create a set of ready-to-use templates for non-expert designers to produce the South Side Newspaper on a monthly basis, or possibly more frequently. The newspaper's ultimate goal is to create a stronger sense of community and better representation of the South Side. In "The Local News Handbook," author Ellen Shearer makes note of community ties and newspapers. Shearer says, "Americans more and more yearn for a sense of identity with their community, a feeling that

they belong. Those whose identity is linked to their community are likely to be newspaper readers.” Specifically tying this to the South Side, community members want to see themselves represented in more ways than negative ones

I also met with Lydia Chatmon at the South Side Innovation Center to tour the neighborhood. Lydia drove me around the South Side and detailed aspects of the community and the people who lived there. As we drove around in her new silver Toyota Corolla, our position in the neighborhood already felt more privileged compared to what we saw during our quick trip. Her knowledge of the area was great and there was a strong sense of connectedness to the people. She was able to say “hello” and quickly chat with people we saw on the streets. She made note of the importance of local businesses and how the need for more establishments was vital to change the face of the neighborhood. She pointed out places like The Jerk Hut, a Jamaican restaurant, and a successful wig shop that was expanding to the Carousel Center. One aspect she mentioned was the need for grocery stores and food establishments that offered more than the small corner convenience stores and fast-food restaurants. Larger chain stores had put many of the smaller grocers out of business in the area, but the larger stores are not located close enough to be convenient for the people of the South Side.

I also saw many of the homes in the area that had been boarded up and condemned by the city. The 2000 U.S. Census showed that in the South Side area, 53% of homes are rented and about 15% are vacant. A program by the city to purchase these homes for low cost and fix them up is in the initial stages. Some homes are well-kept and cared for, creating a difference in appearance from block

to block. Chatmon noted that some families don't spent their money wisely. One example: putting too much money into cars and transportation and not enough into the upkeep of the house.

Chatmon also showed me examples of existing publications, which we were trying to improve upon with the creation of *The Stand*. She provided me with multiple news pieces, such as *The New Times*, *Syracuse City Eagle*, *Urban CNY*, and the weekly small-format papers published by *The Post-Standard*. The goal was to take these publications and learn from them, producing a new publication that had better design and content.

Another publication from the university that provided inspiration for *The Stand* had been created by the Military Photojournalism Program (MPJ). The MPJ program created a photo book about the South Side in May 2007. Each year this program creates a book, which takes a photographic look at one of the towns or communities in the Syracuse area. The program is for military personnel specifically involved in photography in one of the armed forces. The magazines showcase their talents as photographers and give back to the community at the same time. The look and feel of this specific book was based on the use of beautiful photographs. The idea of heavily incorporating photos into *The Stand* was something Chatmon and Davis wanted as a main feature. The existing newspapers of the area contained some imagery, but were filled with enormous amounts of small text that made looking through them challenging and at times boring and frustrating.

From a designer's perspective, publications that have heavy amounts of text all crammed into small spaces often cause readers to give up on trying to get through the paper or even single articles. One way of addressing this is to use white space. By creating white space, or places where there is not text or imagery, the publication is opened up and easier for the reader to navigate. White space makes larger pages of newspapers less daunting and more enjoyable to read. However, too much white space can cause a lack of order and flow and leave the reader questioning where to look and read. There needs to be a balance between all elements – text, photos, and graphics – in order for a publication to successfully work.

A notable designer, Ron Reason – who has worked as director of Visual Journalism at The Poytner Institute for Media Studies as well as a designer at the St. Petersburg Times and as a professor at the University of South Florida and the Ringling College of Art and Design – recently blogged about small newspaper design. In his blog, “Ron Reason News Design,” he talked to David Hamilton, a student at the University of Tennessee and editor of *The Daily Citizen-News* in Chattanooga about designing small-format newspapers. They discussed the challenges for small newspapers, especially ones where there are no expert designers, just writers and editors. Hamilton noted, “It is a strain for most small newspaper editors to juggle all these tasks and still produce creative, inviting pages.” This is where my role as the initial designer for *The Stand* comes into play. With the production of complete and accessible templates, the struggle to keep a creative look the newspaper should not be an issue.

Hamilton also talked to Reason about what attracts readers to newspapers, saying, “Readers are attracted visually to photographs, illustrations and graphics.” He also notes that an advantage of small newspapers, and also a goal of The Stand, is that “the staff is smaller, and theoretically, everyone should be working together more intimately and on a more friendly basis one would expect at a larger staff. This should go far in producing better collaborations.”

While newspapers are dying nationally and turning to the Internet for publication, the demographics of the South Side community still make economic sense for the creation of a small-format newspaper. Many of the community members do not have broadband access, making an online publication useless. Having a physical publication to pick up on a street corner or at a convenience store will make sense for this community. Chatmon emphasized the importance of showing the people of the community and having recognizable faces in the newspaper.

Chatmon provided me with an outline for the content of the newspaper. The newspaper was to be designed to look much more like a magazine than a traditional newspaper. She wanted stories that were quick reads and packaged on single pages without annoying jumps. She wanted the look to be consistent from month to month so that the readers knew what to expect and where to find things in the publication. Diversity was also an extremely important feature, being able to look traditional in some places and alternative in others, which would attract the variety of readers in the neighborhood.

Divisions were important in the paper to create easy access for readers to specifically locate what stories they are interested in without the need to search through the entire paper. Chatmon divided up what she felt was important to the community into twelve sections. These sections included: a cover story (a longer feature-length traditional to newspapers), secondary story (a single page semi-traditional story), main profile on a community member, question-and-answer with a community member, a calendar, religion, high school, business, entertainment, opinion, editorial for guest columns, and letters to the editor. These types of sections would serve as the focus of the layout for the newspaper.

After seeing the community and having conversations with Chatmon, I was ready to begin my initial mock-ups of ideas for The Stand.

Outside Inspirations

Besides looking at the local existing small-format newspapers and the MPJ publication, I was able to use my personal experience with publications at the university and outside the university, as well as the many blogs, design books, and magazines I read daily.

At Syracuse, I have worked at *The Daily Orange*, *The Student Voice*, and *Zipped Magazine*. I was part of the production of a prototype newsletter for the Advertising Department. *The Daily Orange* and *The Student Voice* directly related to this project. Both of these publications are newspaper formats, so I understand the style and how templates and style guides are created. However, these are both

more traditional black-and-white newspapers and are not as unconventional as *The Stand*.

Zipped Magazine was at the other end of this spectrum in publication style and format. As the art director of this new publication (the only fashion magazine on campus), I was able to take the color and creativity in this piece and reflect it back upon traditional newspaper style. *Zipped* is much more free and open in color, space and imagery. It is a fun piece that is light-hearted and serious at the same time. It is an alternative small-format magazine on glossy paper, which is far from newspaper design, but contains some of the elements that Chatmon and Davis desired in *The Stand*.

I also worked at another local weekly newspaper, which showed me the many flaws of not creating solid templates and styles. This newspaper focused on professional car racing, a light-hearted topic that is fun and directed toward a specific group of people. This newspaper lacked a solid foundation in its templates, specifically type styles, layout guides, and the overall use of the page space. Since I understood the way typography is intended to function, choosing the style of typefaces and fonts was important to me in creating *The Stand*. I did not want to distort them or take away from their design, as the small newspaper I worked at had done. Grids and guides were also something very flawed in this publication and needed extreme consideration when producing successful templates for *The Stand*. A style that was open and had space for the reader's eyes to flow was lacking in this other small paper and was greatly needed. With experience working on a publication that did not meet the visual needs of its

readers, I knew that this was a vital element to the project and needed to be paid attention to.

I was also part of the initial production phase of a newsletter for the Advertising Department. With this newsletter, I saw how a publication could fail even with all of the content produced and ready for publication. The newsletter was far into production and the design was near complete, but because of the lack of commitment from student writers and funds to produce the newsletter, it failed very quickly. Without drive and purpose, any new publication can fail and be left as computer files waiting to be printed. This was not something I wanted to see happen with *The Stand*. I wanted see it to go through the whole process and become a “living and breathing” newspaper for the community to enjoy and expect on a monthly basis.

I also regularly look at blogs and design web sites as inspiration. Blogs such as magculture, How Magazine, and COLOURlovers were inspirations in style and layouts. I also looked through many of my design books for type suggestions and layout ideas. *The New Yorker* was one publication I paid attention to for cover ideas. I also looked at other small-format newspapers such as the insert sections in my hometown paper, and at *The Patriot News*' Go section that is produced on a weekly basis for weekend events in the Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, area. Sherri Taylor also gave me small newspapers from the *Houston Chronicle*, which provided other ideas of how to organize information. Taking pieces from both magazine design and newspaper design were important in producing the

templates. *The Stand* would fall somewhere in-between these two genres of publications, taking the better halves of both of the styles.

Draft One

Starting in the fall of 2008, my initial drafts were extremely rough and needed direction. I started with sketches and research into the existing publications that were given to me by Chatmon. All of these publications contained good and bad characteristics that I could take from and also use as guides for what to do and what not to do.

The use of photography was extremely important, so finding a way to incorporate images in an interesting manner was one part of the process. The MPJ publication was something that Chatmon and Davis both looked to as real inspiration for the newspaper. The beautiful color images depicted the lives of the people in a clean and easily accessible manner. It contained minimal text and told stories and news primarily through imagery. For *The Stand*, this meant creating templates that revolved around photography.

Typography was also something I wanted to carefully consider. Many of the publications given to me as good and bad examples had flaws in the type choices and setting. It was important to choose an easy-to-read font. Type is important in design, especially for newspapers, because it takes up the most space visually and is the main information that readers look at to take in the content. Hamilton noted in his interview with Ron Reason, “We often forget that type is a powerful visual element. The well-placed at-a-glance or summary box will help

the reader quickly key in on important aspects of the story.” A bad choice in type can make stories unreadable and lose a reader’s attention. Good type design makes reading more enjoyable and accessible. I went through hundreds of fonts to choose the ones that I felt were easy to read and had enough energy yet sincerity to convey news and personal stories. Creating body copy that was easy to follow and not crowded or too small to read, which is the problem with many of the current newspapers, was my first task. I then focused on creating headlines that were light and attractive. I also had to think about type treatments for graphic-based elements that readers can easily glance at to gather information. These graphic elements would be things like “by the numbers” sections, which highlight percentages or specific facts that sum up what a story may be trying to convey through lengthier text.

Type-setting may seem silly or not important to a non-designer, but creating a template of type styles for the newspaper was one of the hardest and most important parts of the publication. If the type did not reflect the open and clean look and feel that *The Stand* was aiming to present, then it would fall apart from the beginning. Hamilton gave Reason one major recommendation in his interview, which I also feel is something I took into great consideration when making the templates. Hamilton said, “A trend I like to think is good is to simplify dramatically the number of fonts, styles, and colors used in the small newspaper and to increase the size of headlines and photos.” Limiting the number of design elements in a newspaper, and using the ones you do have effectively, forms a better and more cohesive design.

Color was my next step in laying out templates. *The Post-Standard* is funding this entire project and providing us with full access to its color printers. This means we can have color photography and graphic elements all throughout the publication and are not limited to certain pages or no pages at all. Color was one of the highlights of the MPJ publication and often one of the downfalls of the other publications in the area. Lack of color made the other newspapers look like solid blocks of heavy black copy, whereas others with color pages had too much color, which was random and not cohesive. My goal was to create a color palette that flowed and created unity between sections, creating order and flow for readers.

The first drafts contained color photography and a limited color palette for the graphic elements. I did not want to be excessive with color and make it look chaotic, so I limited it to two or three colors that I felt went well together and reflected the feel of the community. My concern was that if I used too much color it would lose a cohesive look and become a jumble of the rainbow.

Conflicts

One of the biggest problems for the first drafts was content. At this point I had little to no content to work with. Creating templates for a publication can only go so far without having the content, such as stories, photos, headlines, etc., to place in the paper. Initially I used the special issue of *The Student Voice* that was created a few years back for the South Side. However, this specific publication was much more traditional in newspaper style, being solely in black and white

and containing multiple feature-length stories of 1,000 words or more. While there is nothing wrong with this, a traditional newspaper was not what we were looking to create for *The Stand*.

I was able to cut apart this issue and place pieces of the stories into the templates as placeholder or “dummy” text. This also applied to using some of the photography from *The Student Voice*, but since it was in black and white only, it did not convey what *The Stand* was really about visually.

The fall semester went by extremely quickly and many of the deadlines were not met. We faced issues again when Chatmon quit and we were left without a community tie. Also, the spring semester was supposed to offer a course for newspaper students to produce the content for the publication, but lack of interest left us without writers who would have helped to produce an initial version of the paper.

The paper seemed to be hitting many roadblocks and was not looking up. To create successful templates, I needed many stories and photographs to fill in as placeholders. We also had goals of presenting a mock-up to community members and getting feedback. The feedback then would have been used to revise the paper and create a final set of templates to launch an initial copy with the content written mostly by Syracuse University students, with a few writers from the community as well.

Spring Semester

The spring semester started up quickly. Having done much work over winter break, I was getting the templates to take shape. At the beginning of the semester, Professor Davis and I set up regular weekly meetings. Time was going to fly by and the templates needed to be ready not only for a mock-up to be presented to the community and the financial donors, but for my thesis as well.

Professor Davis and I found relevant stories from publications online and the main local newspaper, *The Post Standard*. With both of us working to find photography and content from these resources, I was able to fill space and start up again on the design.

The outline of content Chatmon provided back in the fall served as the foundation for the construction of the templates. I focused more on filling the different sections of the newspaper and creating a look and feel for each section that could be carried throughout and interchanged to create diversity in the look of the publication on a monthly basis. I created section heads and names that reflected Chatmon's list.

Spring break was spent modifying and solidifying the templates. I added color and content that Davis and I had been collecting for the first half of the semester. The pages began to fill up and take shape. The organization of the content became cohesive and the newspaper came to life.

Final Stage

Currently we are in the final stages of *The Stand's* initial production. The templates are created and saved. We have mock-ups printed to present to the

donors and founders of the newspaper to hopefully continue forward in the actual production of the first issue. A new director has also been hired as the liaison between the community and Syracuse University. With this person as our resource and director, a staff can be hired to begin producing content.

As part of the templates, I created a “Style Guide,” which will serve as a reference book for the editors and designers of The Stand to use for the monthly production when I am no longer at the university. This guide outlines the goal of the publication, the desired look and feel, the sections and their designated colors, color usage, type usage, photography, and the grids and guides to the structure of the newspaper.

I also created a “Library” in the InDesign file for the templates, which provides the designers with key elements to simply drag onto the templates and be ready to use with little to no modification. The type styles are also set and saved in these files so that body copy, headlines, and other type treatments can easily be changed and set in the desired look.

With all of the files created and saved, they are ready to be taken out of my hands and given to a staff to start producing this great new publication as part of the South Side community of Syracuse.

Many Thanks

With the initial work out of the way and the final phase coming to a close, we hope to move forward in showing the final mock-up to those who supply grant money for these kinds of project.

I would like to say thank you to Sherri Taylor for specifically recommending me to Steve Davis to be part of this project. It certainly had its bumps along the way, but has produced a great piece for me to include as part of my portfolio.

Along with Sherri, I want to thank Steve Davis for being my advisor and giving me the opportunity to do this project as my Honors Capstone Project. He may have benefited from my skills as a designer, but he has taken on the role as my professor and instructor, reviewing my papers and reflections for honors, as well as devoting many hours to meetings and discussions.

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Written Summary

Description of the project

The Stand is a new monthly newspaper specifically created for the community members of the South Side of Syracuse. The newspaper is intended to provide an outlet and resource for community members; they can write stories, take pictures, or react to community-related issues and events. It is to be an alternative to the existing small local tabloid papers such as *The New Times*, *Syracuse City Eagle*, *Urban CNY*, and the supplemental small-format papers from *The Post Standard*. The look and feel is more open and friendly, much easier to navigate and read, and full of graphic elements versus the text- and advertisement-heavy style of the other small-format local papers.

The creation of the paper is in collaboration with the Newspaper and Online Journalism Department at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, specifically Chair Steve Davis, the South Side Initiative and the chancellor's office. The templates created through this project will be reviewed and critiqued by community members to get feedback and help to finalize a design that the community enjoys and approves of. *The Post-Standard* is playing a major role in this community project by completely paying for the costs of printing and distribution. They have allotted full color for every issue, which adds to the dynamic and appeal of the newspaper itself.

My role in this project is to be the creative director and designer of the overall design and templates for the newspaper. These templates are created with the idea that non-graphic design experts can use them to produce the paper with

ease on a monthly basis. The templates have styles assigned for type treatments, graphic elements, and basic grids and guides. There is a style guide, which outlines the purpose of the newspaper, the concept of the content, and specific details about design styles and methods. I have created a design library as part of the template file, which enables new designers to drag and drop graphic elements into the template with ease and accuracy. With the creation of these files, the staff that takes on this project should be able to produce the publication on a monthly basis with ease and little difficulty.

The end result will be a twelve to sixteen page publication in full color. It is a small tabloid-size paper, ten inches by eleven inches, which will be available for free in public spaces around the South Side community. The paper is designed to be accessible to people of all ages, races, genders, sex, religions, and other identities of the community. Having an appeal to everyone regardless of identity is one of the most important features of the paper.

Methods used

Beginning the project required research into the other available local tabloid newspapers and finding out what worked and did not work for them. I collected multiple issues and identified problems such as readability; the majority have too much small text and not enough visuals, an over-abundance of advertisements cluttering pages, and a lack of graphic elements and photography to enhance the visual experience of reading a local paper and identifying on a very real and personal level with the content.

One of the next steps, which was very important to creating a genuine paper that reflected the community, was to tour the community itself and get a feel for the people, places, and culture of the neighborhood. The former director of the paper, Lydia Chatmon, who has since moved on and is unfortunately no longer with *The Stand*, took me on a tour of the South Side community. She pointed out different businesses, homes, churches, community centers, and people of the area. Being able to see first-hand and hear about the community from an inside member helped me to understand the needs of the people, and their wants and needs in a local newspaper.

From there on, I reviewed the local papers I was given and began constructing templates. This began back in the Fall 2008 semester and went through multiple rounds of weekly meetings with Steve Davis to get feedback and suggestions on what was working and what was not working. Professor Davis initially had a concept in mind for the project, and after multiple discussions and guidance, I took his ideas and began creating templates.

The process involved basic grids and guides for the document, followed by type treatments, graphic displays, color swatches, content ideas, and photography. For the initial templates and issues, I used content from *The Post-Standard* as mock-ups, as well as some of their photography. Using their content allowed for the creation of a more solid and realistic template that was feasible and realistic for people to critique and view, versus one that could be created from filler “dummy” text and boxes for images.

The mock-up templates now can be utilized as a complete template for the first and following issues, as well as a resource to show community members and those funding the project the idea and concept in a tangible form.

Significance of the project

The significance of this project goes beyond completely an Honors Capstone Thesis for myself, but to the creation of the new piece of media for the Syracuse community. The template will help in the creation and continuation of a monthly, or possibly a bi-weekly or even more regularly published product. It will serve as a resource of valuable news for community members, speaking directly to them on a personal and everyday level. While the area has a standing newspaper, *The Post-Standard*, that supplies a valid and great source of news, as well as other small local papers, this specific publication, *The Stand*, will be filled with content specifically in relation to the people who are reading it.

Community members will be able to see friends, family, and local business associates in a professional print piece. The topics will help to tie together a community that is growing in size and dynamics. The content will also be produced and maintained by these same people that live in the community making it more local and centralized.

Being able to give back and contribute to the community that I have been living in and around for the past four years is rewarding and a valuable experience. Getting to know a part of the city that I may have otherwise been ignorant of has made my college experience in this specific city, Syracuse, greater

and more complete. My hope is that this template is accessible and easy to use, helping in the creation of a fun and enjoyable publication that the South Side community will look forward to seeing around its homes and businesses.