

# **Social Responsibility and Design Education:**

**Public Design Service, a Case Study on  
Design for the Public Good**

# first things first

## A manifesto

We, the undersigned, are graphic designers, photographers and students who have been brought up in a world in which the techniques and apparatus of advertising have persistently been presented to us as the most lucrative, effective and desirable means of using our talents. We have been bombarded with publications devoted to this belief, applauding the work of those who have flogged their skill and imagination to sell such things as:

cat food, stomach powders, detergent, hair restorer, striped toothpaste, aftershave lotion, before shave lotion, slimming diets, fattening diets, deodorants, fizzy water, cigarettes, roll-ons, pull-ons and slip-ons.

By far the greatest time and effort of those working in the advertising industry are wasted on these trivial purposes, which contribute little or nothing to our national prosperity.

In common with an increasing number of the general public, we have reached a saturation point at which the high pitched scream of consumer selling is no more than sheer noise. We think that there are other things more worth using our skill and experience on. There are signs for streets and buildings, books and periodicals, catalogues, instructional manuals, industrial photography, educational aids, films, television features, scientific and industrial publications and all the other media through which we promote our trade, our education, our culture and our greater awareness of the world.

We do not advocate the abolition of high pressure consumer advertising: this is not feasible. Nor do we want to take any of the fun out of life. But we are proposing a reversal of priorities in favour of the more useful and more lasting forms of communication. We hope that our

society will tire of gimmick merchants, status salesmen and hidden persuaders, and that the prior call on our skills will be for worthwhile purposes. With this in mind, we propose to share our experience and opinions, and to make them available to colleagues, students and others who may be interested.

Edward Wright  
Geoffrey White  
William Slack  
Caroline Rawlence  
Ian McLaren  
Sam Lambert  
Ivor Kamlisch  
Gerald Jones  
Bernard Highton  
Brian Grimbley  
John Garner  
Ken Garland  
Anthony Froshaug  
Robin Flor  
Germano Facetti  
Ivan Dodd  
Harriet Crowder  
Anthony Clift  
Gerry Cinamon  
Robert Chapman  
Ray Carpenter  
Ken Briggs

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# A Case for Service-Learning in Design

- Service-learning means doing good work and serving, helping, giving assistance or benefiting others.
- Strong source of personal learning and development.
- Varied learning locations.
- Real life experience.
- Aids in a deeper understanding of course content.

# A Case for Service-Learning in Design

- Social design is a growing field in the design industry.
- Many designers want to participate in combating complex social problems.
- Allows not-for-profit organizations access to design services that they could not otherwise afford.

# A Case for Service-Learning in Design

- Service can be defined as a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students:
  - participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs;
  - reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of discipline, and an enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility. (Bringle & Hatcher, 2009)
- Service learning is different from volunteering in that it is an academic activity.
- Service-learning combines theory with practice.

# A Case for Service-Learning in Design

- Faculty have a pivotal role in this type of learning experience
  - Determining and assessing learning outcomes,
  - Collaborating with community partners ,
  - Structuring student experiences that realize academic goals.
- Integrated structured reflection activities are key
  - Adds new meaning to the experiences,
  - Enriches the course content,
  - Develops students ability to make informed decisions.
- Planning, delivery, and evaluation can be complex

# A Case for Service-Learning in Design

- From a Student's perspective
  - Motivation can range from self-improvement to a charity-driven impulse
  - Student intention and effort play an important role
  - Students need to be able to give up a certain amount of control over their work
  - Can help develop knowledge and skills in communication, teamwork, organization, management, time management, project management and interpersonal skills
  - Vehicle for character and citizenship development
  - Relevant to a diverse and immediately connected world
  - Professional and personal stepping stones

# A Case for Service-Learning in Design

- Increased pressure for post-secondary institutions to be more results based and “real world”
- Increased competition for public funding
- Focus on acquisition of knowledge and skills that are largely market driven
- Community outreach emphasized
- Need to show the value of post-secondary education to the wider community



# **The Public Design Service**

at the Alberta College of Art + Design

- Established in 1984
- Based on the idea that design can have a positive influence on people and the world in which we live
- Provides high-quality communication design solutions for not-for-profit organizations.
- Provides a practicum experience for students.
- Primary Goals:
  - to give senior design students practical, real-world experience in achieving effective solutions to creative communication and graphic design problems; and
  - to provide charitable arts, service, community, environmental, and similar not-for-profit organizations with the benefit of quality design solutions.

# **The Public Design Service**

at the Alberta College of Art + Design

- 40 of 44 organizations interviewed highlighted contributions made by the student designers
- Students solved the problems with “great creativity and energy”
- The Public Design Service provided a resource that the not-for-profit organizations needed but could not otherwise afford

# The Public Design Service

## at the Alberta College of Art + Design

Public Design Work Flow Table			
<b>Prior to Semester</b> Client Registration Application via Public Design Website or hard copy by mail Client Selection Faculty Planning including a review of the previous year's course			
Phase 1 – Weeks 1-4 - Research			
In Class	Outside of Class	Assignments	Faculty
Orient students to the course Panel Discussion – How not-for-profit organizations differ from other businesses Lecture – Client Relations Lecture – Dynamics of Design Teams Lecture – What is a Design Brief Lecture – Contracts (Guest Speaker) Lecture – Intellectual Property and Copyright (Guest Speaker) Lecture – Time Management (Guest Speaker)	Research Client Introductions	Letter of Agreement Contract Design Brief	Assess student strengths and inclinations Client meetings Assess client projects to determine whether they are solo or team projects
Phase 2 – Weeks 4-7 – Preliminary Design			
In Class	Outside of Class	Assignments	Faculty
Lecture – Design Thinking Lecture – Project Management (Guest Speaker) Lecture - Printing Process (Guest Speaker) Ideation and Concept Development	Research Ideation and Concept Development Client meetings	Preliminary Design Concepts for Approval by Faculty and then Clients	Framework for creative direction Guidance on client objectives and client relations Approve concepts with respect to the individual student project briefs
Phase 3 – Weeks 8-12 – Development and Refinement/Preliminary Production			
In Class	Outside of Class	Assignments	Faculty
Concept Development and Refinement Lecture – Liaising with Suppliers Lecture – Community Engagement Lecture – Nuances of Client Relations – including scope creep, rushed approvals, dealing with changes, keeping your eye on the ball etc	Presentations to Clients Securing sub-contractors (photographers, illustrators, printers, web developers etc) Community Engagement	Comprehensives, storyboards or wireframes	Troubleshooting regarding client relations, communications, sub-contractors
Phase 4 – Weeks 13-14 - Production			
In Class	Outside of Class	Assignments	Faculty
Production to media	Production to media	All files necessary for production in required media	Troubleshooting
Phase 5 – Week 15 - Evaluation			
In Class	Outside of Class	Assignments	Faculty
Student Presentations with process books and summarized client feedback	Client Service	Process book Deliverables to Client Project Summary Client Feedback Summary	Assessment of student learning outcomes Client Evaluations Student Evaluations Review of the semester

# **The Public Design Service**

at the Alberta College of Art + Design

- 100% of students reported understanding the benefits of pro bono work
- 95% of students reported that they would undertake pro bono work in the future
- 65% of students felt pro bono work made them feel they had made a positive contribution to the community
- 75% reported that their service-learning experience contributed to their understanding of the business of graphic design, advertising and/or marketing
- 75% reported that the service-learning project provided a “real life design experience”

Results derived from a survey of Public Design Service students 2010-2012.

**The Public Design Service**  
at the Alberta College of Art + Design

# **Communication Organization**

**Project Management**

**Time Management**

**Interpersonal Skills**

**Presentation Skills**

**Leadership**

**Business Skills**

**Self-Knowledge**

**Life Skills**

**The Public Design Service**  
at the Alberta College of Art + Design

**Responsibility**  
**Confidence**  
**Understanding**  
**Care**

# **The Public Design Service**

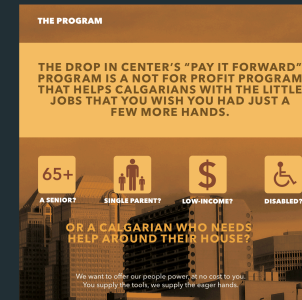
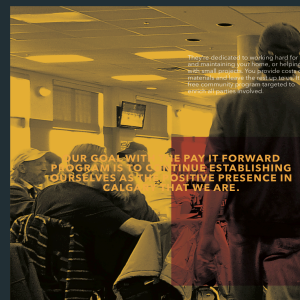
at the Alberta College of Art + Design

- Community partner requirements:
  - they are not-for-profit organizations;
  - the communications or design needs of the community partner meet with the academic goals of the course;
  - activities to be undertaken are agreed to be of value to both parties.
- 44 not-for-profits served
- 85% reported a positive or very positive impact

# The Public Design Service at the Alberta College of Art + Design

## Calgary Drop-In Centre Pay It Forward Program Brochure

Logo and Brochure Design  
Danielle Goudie  
Mateusz Sliwon





# Conclusions

- Challenges
  - Not a traditional learning experience
  - Communication is key
  - Requires open discussion
  - Need to understand the community partner
  - Clients need to understand the nature of the service-learning partnership
  - Students need to understand their role and responsibilities
  - Faculty must embrace a wider role in the learning process
  - Institutions need to understand the additional time and resources this type of learning experience requires

# Conclusions

## ■ Benefits:

- For Students it can increase confidence, fostering leadership and business skills as well as enhances skills in project and time management, as well as communication.
- Students have the opportunity to use their experiences of helping not-for-profits strengthen their understanding of design practice.
- Allows the student to apply academic knowledge to real-life problems and through their service-learning experience, students can develop a greater sense of civic and social responsibility.
- On the institutional level, this type of initiative promotes community outreach and may demonstrate credentials and value to the community at large.
- On a community level, service-learning can produce a greater sense of civic responsibility and utilizes students' creativity as a resource to provide a needed service for a not-for-profit community partner.

**Thank You.**