

# Antioch Reunion – A Connected Event with a Pulse

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## 1 Introduction

A lot can happen at an Antioch reunion. Now, when it is more important than ever to keep Alumni engaged, it is important to keep them feeling connected. This can be difficult when not everyone can attend.

In addition to making the reunion a physical event, we can make reunion a crowd sourced, virtual event. We intend to create a website with an engaging user experience, captivating alumni who are not in Yellow Springs, so they too will feel connected to the events at reunion. A dividend of the project is that we will have an archive of media that can be used for future projects.

An event planning company I worked sold the notion of a “connected event” – and they specialized in getting people to interact. By drawing people at the event to create content, and posting it quickly (almost live) will contribute to the feel of the event. The event itself can become dynamic, creating a “Buzz” and have a “Pulse” both for those that are attending and those that are watching from afar.

If we do our job right, then we can get a large set of functionality with “out of the box” tools and simple configurations. As time and volunteer effort permits, we can augment this list with other features.

Nicholas Peterson is an Alumni, a digital content strategist, nonprofit marketer, and on-line community builder. I’ve asked Nick what is “easy” and possible. His initial vision is covered in the next section, which he calls *Lifestream*.

## 2 The Vision

### 2.1 What is a Lifestream?

Personal blogs and websites bring together not only the information posted on blog but photographs from Flickr, videos from YouTube and Vimeo, as well as recent updated on Facebook and Twitter. Pulling all the feeds together to one central web source allows a user to find out the most up-to-date information the individual has opted into share. The lifestream practice has been adopted

by companies as well in order to build a more personal relationship with their constituencies. It is particularly effective in covering events and conferences.

## 2.2 The Basic Platform - WordPress

A website is the basic platform bringing every different feed together. Typically, this is suggested to be a blog based content management system. The open-source content blog, content management system WordPress, is commonly used for this practice. As a publishing software it is used by media outlets like The New York Times, CNN, the Wesleyan Argus (undergraduate newspaper), MTV Newsroom, and ObeyGiant – a project by street artist Shepard Fairey. Individuals who use WordPress include House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Jay-Z, Wyclef Jean, and San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom. Educational institutions using WordPress include Boston University Admissions and International Programs, The University of Maine, The Neiman Journalism Lab at Harvard University, Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship, and Oregon State University Admissions.

In essence, a WordPress lifestream is a dynamically updated media site. Some examples include:

- Wesleyan Argus: <http://wesleyanargus.com/>
- St. Louis Today: <http://interact.stltoday.com/blogzone/>
- Obey Giant: <http://obeygiant.com/>

## 2.3 Supporting Web Resources

In order to have a website thriving with useful content, there are a number of services and other sites which we recommend be used. This includes the following:

- *Flickr*: A leading image-hosting service owned by Yahoo! Images can be organized in sets by location and event and tagged with the names of people in the picture or the photographer. In the caption of every picture a link back to the organizations website may be included. Media outlets often do Flickr image searches and they also rank highly in Google image searches driving more traffic to the home site (in this case Antioch College's site).
- *delicious*: A social bookmarking also owned by Yahoo! where people may save articles, webpages, and posts, categorize them and share them with friends and associates.
- *YouTube*: The worlds most popular online video community owned by Google, where users may upload video under 10 minutes or under a certain file size. Videos may be shared and embedded on websites.

- *Vimeo*: A privately held business located in New York City and Portland, Oregon of independent filmmakers and video creators. This provides higher quality and more advanced video features than YouTube.
- *Plancast*: A service by the company Worldly Developments allowing individuals and companies to share their events and plans with the world. Plan feeds are shareable and may also be subscribed to for easier view. This is a great way for people to know who will be attending, and have a list of events. It integrates with Facebook and Twitter.
- *Facebook*: One of the largest social networks allowing the sharing of content (text, links, video, photos). There are millions of users daily. Individuals share updates of things they find interesting that their friends can watch.
- *Twitter*: The worlds largest microsharing network where people share links to articles, photos, and other information in 140 characters or less.

## 3 Implementation

### 3.1 Challenges

The challenges we can see from the outset are:

- Management of the volunteer efforts – will require some logistical and technical work. Andrew Oswald (Ozz) can act as the contact point, and work on this.
- Content generation – There will need to be a push to get people involved, and get them to supply content. The good news is that this can be anyone with a camera or cell phone. But we will need to get the message out, and actively promote collecting media from attendees.
- Institutional Support – A certain amount of support, trust and flexibility will be required from the institution. In order to have a lively, dynamic, connected event, content will need to be collected and put up quickly. Unless there is grossly inappropriate content, then we should assume that everything submitted will be published.

### 3.2 Mechanics

To reduce risk, conserve development time and resources, we can run the tools independently from the current main antiochcollege.org site.

This reduces risk, in that it:

- Does not tax services of the current site.
- Maintain security by keeping reunion developers/contributors separate from the main site.

- Reduces integration risk into the main site (if something doesn't work, it won't affect functionality of the main site).
- Off loads current web contractors – they don't need to worry about coordination of additional developers.
- Any deployment issues will be confined to a separate site, and can be fixed in isolation.

Of course, later, as time permits, the content can be integrated into the main [antiochcollege.org](http://antiochcollege.org) site.

The easiest implementation is to create a domain (such as [antiochreunion2010.org](http://antiochreunion2010.org)) or a sub-domain such as [reunion2010.antiochcollege.org](http://reunion2010.antiochcollege.org)

## 4 Goals

If we do our job well, then we should be able to make volunteers be a part of this project. In addition, we should have a built platform that can be used for future reunion projects. The lessons learned can be applied to other volunteer projects.

Most importantly, all of this media and content on the web will drive traffic to the College's main site, and promote the New Antioch College.

## 5 Expected Resources

### 5.1 Support

The most important resource we will need is support. Support to allow people to publish their experiences, photos, and an approval process that does not limit or bog down the development process too much or too quickly. The work is being done by volunteers giving their time, so we need to be supportive of their efforts.

### 5.2 Costs

Costs are relatively low. Some subscriptions are required for various web services. For example:

- Flickr Pro \$25 per year
- Domain Registration \$12 per year
- Hosting \$60 per year
- Vimeo \$50 per year

There may be other costs, depending on scope, but I would expect totals to be in the hundreds of dollars.

### 5.3 Materials

Here is a partial list of materials that come to mind:

- Computer (probably MAC) on site at reunion that data can be "dumped" to.
- Graphics – Logos, etc. that can be used on the site to provide the Antioch "Brand"
- Labor – We may need one or more people on site at reunion to collect the data and answer questions.
- High speed internet connection(s) to upload content.

### 5.4 Collaboration

As part of the process, we will need to collaborate with a variety of volunteers and Amiee. The current plan is to set up some web tools to facilitate collaboration of the project, and track to-do lists, issues, goals, and tasks for the various people involved.

We also need collect a list of people who are willing/interested in helping.

## 6 Next Steps

The following are the next steps if we wish to proceed:

- Address concerns about this approach and get approval to move forward.
- Collect list of volunteers.
- Start setting up server and tools.
- Set up collaboration for volunteers.