Web Site Metaphors and Evolutionary Development: An Analysis of the Web Presence of Southern New Jersey Nonprofit Theatres

Julie E. Kendall
Faculty Fellow
The Walter Rand Institute for Public Affairs
and the School of Business-Camden
Rutgers University

Address all correspondence to:
Julie E. Kendall
School of Business-Camden
Rutgers University
Camden, NJ 08102
(856) 225-6585
fax: (856) 424-6157
julie@thekendalls.org
www.thekendalls.org

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Abstract

A metaphor methodology was used to understand and interpret the Web presences of fifteen nonprofit theatres that comprise the regional theatre of Southern New Jersey present on the Web. In addition, we extended our findings from earlier studies of off-Broadway and regional theatre festivals, to our analysis of the Web presence of the theatres in Southern New Jersey. We identified their Web sites, analyzed their current Web presences using a metaphor approach and then made recommendations for theatre groups in order to expedite the learning process in Web development and integration of organizational strategy, as well as to help theatre administrators avoid time consuming and costly mistakes often experienced by nonprofits when approaching Web development.

The contribution of the work resides in its systematic and intense consideration of the strategic importance of the Web for nonprofit theatre arts groups in the Southern New Jersey region and in its use of the metaphor methodology in order to facilitate a fully developed picture of the Web and nonprofit organizations, which is intended to help administrators become aware of the need for incorporating IT policy into their strategic plans. A recommendation is made for the creation of a regional theatre Web presence for Southern New Jersey that enacts a more evolutionary metaphor, perhaps that of the organism. Theatres are encouraged to practice co-location on the Web by creating reciprocal links and thus working together as a region.
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Introduction

This research identified the nonprofit theatres in Southern New Jersey that maintain a Web presence. Nonprofit organizations have been defined as organizations that are “formed to provide services, usually for charitable, religious, educational, scientific, literary, humanitarian, or other non-business purposes (Hay, 1990, p. 3). The terms “nonprofits” and “not-for profits” are used interchangeably here. We analyzed theatres' Web presence by using a metaphor methodology that we previously developed to map information systems user metaphors with information systems success or failure. The paper also examines the visual aspects of the Websites and their functionalities to ask how they are functioning for each of the fifteen South Jersey theatres with Web presences that were identified. This research uses as its starting point the lessons that were learned in our earlier studies of strategic use of the Web by off-Broadway theatres. We go on to examine the problems and opportunities that the Southern New Jersey theatres are facing with their Web presence development and

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2 This research was conducted as part of a Fellow award made by the Walter Rand Institute of Public Affairs at Rutgers University, Camden. The authors are grateful for the generous support and encouragement of the Rand Institute faculty and staff during the course of the fellowship. It was a fruitful and productive relationship.
suggest recommendations for the theatres who are attempting to develop the strategic aspects of their Web presence.

Defining Web Presence

Web presence is the perception of influence and organizational identity which organizations attempt to create in their customers and Web site visitors. Used as a strategic positioning instrument, Web presence goes well beyond the basic graphics, text, and hyperlinks that are the building blocks of a Web site. The Web presence of the organization should have a positive effect on its operations, meaning that these operations should be made easier, faster, and more efficient and effective. An organization’s competitiveness is expected to be sharpened so that it will gain additional market share and expanded operations into new markets, as well as attracting additional customers due to its Web presence (Abuhamdieh, Kendall & Kendall, 2000; 2002).

Developing an organizational Web presence is expected to enhance the organization’s adaptation and growth, by enhancing its relationship with its customers. This will make the organization more alert to its customers’ needs and expectations. This is expected to have a positive effect on the organization’s growth prospects.

Until recently, most questions concerning Web presence have been posed chiefly in trade journals. Despite the lower costs of being present on the Web, the benefits to organizations are not clear cut, and they are difficult to quantify. Trade
journals seem content to raise but not answer the dilemma of Web presence (Lyons, 1995).

Some organizational developers are concerned with benefits the organization would accrue as a result of being on the Web, such as having a two-way communication between the organization and its customers (Friedman, 1995), and creating a better image and better customer relations, since the company would be part of the trend to create a presence on the Web. Being on the Web can be relatively inexpensive in comparison to print advertising, and there is a huge potential for local and international readership, along with the ability to integrate the multimedia attributes of audio and video into the Web site Dolgenos (1996).

There are disadvantages to developing a Web presence as well, including limitations of the bandwidth capabilities of the users who are downloading the information or the graphics from the site. While DSL capabilities and cable modems are assuaging this problem in some cases, many users still possess a slow connection. Other users will be frustrated if there is a high volume of people attempting to access servers and download information. If the Web site is not widely registered with a variety of search engines due to a lack of proper promotion, then it might be difficult for potential visitors to locate the proper URL and access it. In order to gain repeat visits after initially attracting a visitor to a Web site, it is important to make the site as current, informative, entertaining and as easy to use as possible. This requires constant updating and careful maintenance by the Webmaster or the IT team responsible for the site.
The Web can serve as a channel through which an organization represents itself to the outside environment: describing what it is doing, why it is doing it, and what it can do to help satisfy the needs of its constituency. It is a way for the outside world to view the organization, and it is a way for the organization to look back at the outside world. Hoffman, Novak, and Patralli (1995) presented a classification that categorized commercial Web sites into six distinct types: Online Storefronts, Internet Presence, Content, Mall, Incentive site, and Search Agent.

Kendall and Kerola (1994) classified different types of hypertext (prior to the advent of the Web) that is still useful when considering level of interaction on the Web. They conceptualized a hypertext pyramid consisting of three levels. The bottom level was informational, the second level was explorative, and the top level was participative. The functionality presented by Web presence can still be thought of in this way.

Kendall and Kendall (1999a and 1999b) demonstrated how both sides of the equation, users and organizations, are currently using the Web. They presented an original classification for Web pull and push technologies. Pull technologies are the different techniques used by Web users to pull information down from the Web. It can be conceptualized as beginning as surfing the Web and eventually growing into using an ever-evolving Web agent that learns about users’ needs and does the Web exploration and search independently. Push technologies are the different methods that deliver information to the Web users. They range from Webcasting to an advanced evolutionary filtering agent.
Knowing these classifications will help customers and organizations to determine what level of interaction they are in and how can they both maximize their level of effectiveness when using the Web to reach each other.

**Policy Implications of Strategic Web Presence**

Non-profit organizations traditionally lag behind commercial enterprises in their approach to implementing integrated information technology, particularly in the area of developing a strategic IT plan. This occurs for a number of reasons, but they include the lack of expertise and knowledge concerning the importance of information technology to an organization (specifically in the performing arts community); lack of a predictable source of funding for endeavors that are earmarked as exclusively for IT development; and reticence to include IT as a funding priority when grant requests are made. Additionally, many funding agencies specifically will not grant requests for standard items required to build IT infrastructure, such as computers, software and expertise to develop information systems and IT policy. Because of these concerns, oftentimes information technology enhancements are not even broached.

This study is intended to extend our in depth research results to area theatre groups concerning the increasingly prominent role that information technology, specifically the development of a Web presence can play for area non-profit theatre arts groups. Using the data from this study that identifies Southern New Jersey theatre arts Web sites, describes through use of a metaphor methodology how Web presences are functioning, and extends the
lessons learned in our earlier research to the theatre groups of the region, we hope to help administrators develop cogent Web strategies that can in turn help them fulfill their strategic missions within the regional community of Southern New Jersey.

Non-profit organizations have a different purpose and a different model for conducting their operations. This fact is reflected in their Web operations. (Abuhamdieh, Kendall & Kendall, 2002). They are much less aggressive in their pursuit of audience subscribers, although some attempt to raise donations (which typically form about 60% of their budget), through their Web site.

Part of the success of the Web push and pull technologies (Kendall and Kendall, 1999a) is visitor satisfaction. Whether the person was pulling data or information down from the Web, or receiving it through the Web, the satisfaction factor is very important in selecting the same sources again. Abuhamdieh, Kendall, and Kendall (2000) conclude that having a strategic organizational Web presence in the not-for-profit performing arts service sector organizations entails paying special attention to the Web presence visitor satisfaction factor, which may in part be assessed through the metaphors employed.

Methodology

We sought to extend our work on metaphors to Web presence in two ways. One was to read the language used on the Web pages in order to determine the presence or absence of predominant metaphors that we had
already identified in organizational users of other information systems and in systems development methodologies (Kendall & Kendall, 1994).

The second way we used our prior research was to assess the visual and multimedia elements of the Web page to understand the content, design and technical elements of the pages. We examined the theatre Web sites using eight dimensions provided as guidelines for Web designers (Kendall & Kendall, 2002). The eight dimensions include:

1. Overall appearance (layout and composition)
2. Use of graphics
3. Use of color
4. Use of sound or video
5. Use of new technology and products
6. Content
7. Navigability (Internal and external links)
8. Site management and communication

**Previous Research on Metaphors**

Metaphors shape the way we think. Metaphors have the capability of empowering a speaker or an organization. By using words that people understand and believe in to make linkages with the new and unfamiliar, a metaphor enables the person who hears it to envision a new reality. Invoking a metaphor means opening the door for a listener to use all previous associations in entering a subject in a different way.

Metaphors assert that one object actually is another (Weaver, 1967), so that if one declares that their organization is, “Intent on global domination” in trade talks with a foreign country that produces video games, then the company
is using a war metaphor to shape its exchange of information with competitors. This in turn will affect their notions of what is can be “won” or “lost” in the trade war, how the troops should be addressed, and who the key military personnel might be.

Many authors have argued the power of metaphors to shape our very reality and to structure the thoughts of the people who are caught up in a particular metaphor and its entailments (Duncan, 1968; Graber, 1976 and Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Although metaphors are everywhere, their importance remains undiminished.

Much of what is spoken comes through expressive figures of speech, including metaphors. Ott (1989, pp. 29-30) notes, “Metaphors help organization members put meaning into things they experience and realize apparent contradictions and paradoxes they encounter. Metaphors help organizations tie their parts together into meaningful wholes.”

The true effectiveness of metaphors is their almost paradoxical ability to point up dissimilarities and contrasts between two objects, while simultaneously demonstrating that there are considerable similarities between the objects being compared (Weaver, 1967). Specifically, there are four main functions for metaphors: supplying concreteness or actualization of an abstract idea; clarifying the unknown; expressing the subjective; and assisting thought (Weaver, 1967, pp. 252-257). Madsen (1989) notes a surprising aspect of metaphors is that while
they illuminate some unseen facets of an object; they also hide or obscure other portions of it.

Metaphors entail other metaphors in a web or network of associations, making them not standalone ideas, but figures of speech that resonate fully and in innumerable combinations when used (Koch & Deetz, 1980). Just as a scent can trigger powerful, complexly-interrelated memories, so too will one metaphor entail several others.

For example saying that, “Time is money” calls into play many interrelated ideas, including that time is a means of payment, that it perhaps can be spent like money, and that things like “time off” can be earned or banked. The user is informed of a diverse group of possible course of action because of the entailment aspect of the original metaphor. In the past fifteen years, organizational researchers have recognized the importance of metaphors. Morgan in his pioneering work asserts that:

Our theories of organizational life are based on metaphors that lead us to see and understand organizations in distinctive yet partial ways...By using different metaphors to understand the complex and paradoxical character of organizational life, we are able to manage and design organizations that we may have not thought possible before (1986, p.12 & 13 ).

Morgan states that metaphors provide “some different ways of thinking about organization.” His seminal work on metaphors in organizations opened the door for further study.
In an earlier publication (Kendall and Kendall, 1993) we began with the criticality of metaphors in organizational life, and then we examined nine main metaphors we have identified as being in use in organizations. To begin analysis of interview data, we used the seminal work of Clancy (1989) on business metaphors. Six of the metaphors we found confirmed those discovered by Clancy: the journey, game, war, machine, organism, and society. While three other metaphors were unique to the information systems users we interviewed: those were the jungle, zoo and the family. We then briefly discussed the attributes which best defined them. From there we examined the attributes of six major types of information systems. We proceeded to map the attributes of the nine metaphors to the six systems and then hypothesized the likelihood of success when developing the six different kinds of information systems in the presence of the nine main metaphors. In that study (Kendall & Kendall, 1993) we tried to determine whether the presence of particular metaphors in a user group might make developmental success of a particular kind of information system more likely.

In our earlier study, our intent was provide a classification of metaphors that helped organize our experience with metaphors in systems analysis and design which also could suggest possibilities for other researchers and practitioners in using metaphors for systems development. The upcoming descriptions use Clancy (1989) as a basis for a description of main metaphors, (which was supplemented by our interview data from user interviews). We have added three metaphors: the family, zoo, and jungle, which we also found in the
language of information systems users. However, these metaphors were not part of Clancy’s original analysis.

We recognize that metaphors are by their nature multifaceted (even paradoxical) and that because of that they are open to several credible interpretations. However, we built on Clancy’s work in order to comprehend common uses of metaphors by users of information systems. We believe that the risk of presenting overly simplistic synopses of the metaphors is outweighed by the value we can gain by systematic exploration of the data found in metaphors. The following descriptions are drawn from our earlier metaphor research (Kendall & Kendall, 1994).

**The Journey Metaphor**

The journey metaphor usually takes the form of a sea voyage led by a captain and shared by the crew. Journeys are typically unpredictable; meaning that they could be dangerous, risky, or may even hold promise of adventure. When considering the journey’s leader, we find in this metaphor one who is characterized as strong, and one who can get the crew to perform cooperatively to reach its goal amidst dangerous circumstances. Using this metaphor, organizational members may speak of an unsuccessful endeavor as sinking, or running aground. The destination can usually be reached by the crew pulling together.
**The Game Metaphor**

According to Clancy (1989) the game metaphor expresses the intricacy and elusiveness of modern day business life exceptionally well. In the game metaphor, teamwork is a key attribute. It also entails the ideas of reaching a goal, difficulty in reaching it, realization of risks during play, and leadership in the persona of the coach, (whose reputation rises and falls on the achievements of the team). Each organizational member who is also a member of a metaphorical team has a specific position to play. In the game, winning isn’t everything, it is the only thing. Usually, the company team pits itself against an external competitor.

**The War Metaphor**

War is always waged for a purpose. The goal is paramount in this metaphor. War is also risky, and unpredictable. The leader is a general who, (plotting strategically to master all enemies), is aloof from those sent into the actual battle. Enemies are external to the corporate soldiers. Intelligence about enemies is gathered and used by the general, who is the supreme commander. The rules of war, including how enemies can be engaged; how to retreat; and how to deal with prisoners are clearly defined and adhered to and communication is one way, from the top-down.

**The Machine Metaphor**

Rationality, and the predictability that comes with it are the major entailments of the machine metaphor. The machine itself is designed or created
by an individual to serve a specific function, or put another way, to reach a particular goal. The machine metaphor exalts uniformity over creativity, praises the standard and predictable rather than the unique. Thus humans involved with the machine metaphor are considered as replaceable parts, just cogs in the wheel. Individuals are unimportant in their individual contributions, and only are valued if they contribute to the whole. When using the machine metaphor, people talk of “breakdowns” in communication or unruly workers “throwing a wrench” into the works. The designer and the machine itself are usually not to blame for any problems.

The Organism Metaphor

Vivid contrast to the machine metaphor is presented in the organism metaphor which is animated into liveliness permitting the thought of an organization that is born, matures, grows, and perhaps even dies. The organism metaphor entails attributes balanced between orderliness and chaos. For example, although an organism grows and matures, its basic structure is set at birth, humans grow up to be humans, plants grow to be plants, and so on. However, precisely how the organism will adapt is unpredictable. The organism is balanced between seeking one goal (fulfilling its destiny) and being alternative oriented, wherein sometimes conflicting goals of its subsystems must be fulfilled. The organism meets its variety of goals and alternatives by looking externally. The leader of the organism must be an innovator or nurturer, who helps the organism survive and thrive via innovative adaptation.
**The Society Metaphor**

Organizations using the society metaphor focus on alternatives, rather than one goal. The society values exchanges among its members as they negotiate to attain their own objectives (alternatives). Useful distinctions between goal and alternative-oriented entities in systems development work were made by Iivari (1989). A goal-oriented entity has one objective it is seeking. An alternative-oriented entity pursues several different, alternative goals. In the society metaphor, society is internally oriented, with each individual pursuing their own goals. It is organized according to a set of rules, making its working predictable. Although there is a societal leader who helps set up the society, the leader is best conceptualized as someone who is a head of state, not directly involved with leading the participants.

**The Family Metaphor**

Organizational members enacting the family metaphor are oriented toward the internal workings of the family. Members compete with each other to achieve individual goals and many alternatives must be balanced. The head of the family is a person who makes those balancing decisions. The family life of the organization features unpredictability in that each family member makes their own way, and it is unclear how those needs will be met, or if they will be met at all. Additionally, the family metaphor provides comfort and fulfills affiliation needs for its members. The configuration of the family in the organization need not be
the stereotypical nuclear family, but may also include an extended family of organizational people who support each other.

**The Zoo Metaphor**

The organizational zoo is an odd assortment of people who are brought together for the purposes of the organization, and who do not logically belong together. They are together for the convenience of the organization, just as in real zoos, where African and Indian elephants are grouped together so visitors may see “elephants,” but on other levels the grouping makes no sense. The zoo metaphor portrays chaos and unpredictability. No common goal is sought by those caged in a zoo by an indifferent keeper. Although maintaining the animals in the zoo, the keeper is not a true leader. Not subject to the realities of the external world, those held in the zoo focus internally, seeking to better their own cages or negotiate with the keeper for preferential treatment, but they are not united by a single goal.

**The Jungle Metaphor**

When organizational members are stranded in the jungle, unpredictability reigns. Clearly the law of the jungle, every man for himself, and survival of self above every other goal is operating here. There can be no common purpose when people are reduced to their most basic survival instincts. The jungle is equivalent to chaos. Fearful of what new terror each step on the path might hold, corporate members in the jungle keep an ever watchful eye on their external
environment. Those lost in the jungle hope for a leader to guide them from their perils.

**How Metaphors Differ**

Table 1 summarizes three attributes of the nine metaphors that have been discussed, considering each metaphor within a simplified structure, depicting whether each metaphor entails a goal or alternative orientation; a chaotic or ordered environment; and whether it has an internal or external scope.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Scope</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journey</td>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>Chaos</td>
<td>Internal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game</td>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>Order</td>
<td>External</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War</td>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>Chaos</td>
<td>External</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machine</td>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>Order</td>
<td>Internal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organism</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Balanced</td>
<td>External</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society</td>
<td>Alternative</td>
<td>Order</td>
<td>Internal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Alternative</td>
<td>Order</td>
<td>Internal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoo</td>
<td>Alternative</td>
<td>Chaos</td>
<td>Internal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jungle</td>
<td>Alternative</td>
<td>Chaos</td>
<td>External</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Nine Metaphors and their Attributes
South Jersey

The Chamber of Commerce of Southern New Jersey (South Jersey) describes the region as consisting of seven Southern New Jersey counties: Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem. For practical and geographical reasons we have added an eighth county to this, Ocean County. (Sometimes, although not for this particular study, Northern Delaware and part of greater Philadelphia are considered as part of the Southern region as well.)

Another way of defining the region is to identify its major employers. There are 19 companies in Southern New Jersey that are employing 1,000 people or more. In addition to that, there are 50 companies employing at least 200 people in Southern New Jersey. Lockheed Martin which has facilities at Camden, Cherry Hill, Moorestown and Mount Laurel, is the region’s largest employer. Virtua Health System is the second largest employer in the Southern New Jersey region. Other prominent companies in the area are Campbell Soup Co., Oki Data Americas; JCI Processing; L-3 Communications Systems East; Sony Corporation, Cendant Mortgage; GE Capital Mortgage Services; Inductotherm Industries and Checkpoint Systems. Subaru of America has its US headquarters in the region, as does Commerce Bank (Busler, 2003). The Southern New Jersey area is also replete with many institutions of higher education including several county colleges; a few four year schools; and a campus of a major research institution, Rutgers University at Camden.
Current Economic Climate of Arts Funding in New Jersey

The State of New Jersey is undergoing a severe budget crisis as it enters the year 2003 and begins the budgeting process for Fiscal Year 2004. This is expected to have a severe financial impact on arts organizations who traditionally have received a good share of their funding from the state. In the proposed State Budget for FY 2004, according to Art pride (www.artpridenj.com): “For the first time in NJ history, the Governor has eliminated funding for arts and culture in his proposed budget. All grants funding through the NJ State Council on the Arts, NJ Cultural Trust and NJ Historical Commission is wiped out along with staff for these agencies beginning July 1.” While this could literally mean the difference between life and death for several small arts organizations it also serves to send a worrisome symbol to the citizens of the state regarding the expendable nature of arts organizations. Further, if enacted, the suspension of funding for the arts in New Jersey is bound to have a detrimental impact on the health of the state’s overall economy as well.

For the state, the New Jersey State Council on the Arts (NJSCA) (www.njartsCouncil.org) serves as the focal point for the disbursement of arts funding through a series of competitive grants to arts organizations and individual artists as well as through the granting of fellowships and apprenticeships. The NJSCA also administers over three quarters of a million dollars granted to arts organizations in the state by the National Endowment for the Arts and works with the privately funded Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation in applying for and
administering grants. For fiscal year 2003 they approved grants of over 16 million dollars to a wide variety of arts organizations throughout the state. More than a dozen Southern New Jersey entities including theatre groups, county arts agencies, multidisciplinary arts organizations, performing arts presenters, and members of the Southern New Jersey arts initiative are included in the list of FY 2003 Grant recipients.

A report published in 2000 that examined the economic impact of arts funding in New Jersey a decade ago, found that $18 million dollars in NJSCA funding resulted in one billion dollars of annual economic activity in New Jersey. Their findings showed that during that time there was over $546 million dollars in direct spending by arts groups and over $474 million in ancillary spending by visitors. This generated $27 million in tax revenue; over 17 million audience members including 4.5 million school children; over 11,000 jobs involving over 47,000 artists and over 700 arts groups. (cited from The Arts Mean Business: A Study of Economic Activity, 2000 – NJSCA/ArtPRIDE (2000).

The NJSCA has broadly addressed the need for improved information and adaptation in their report called, “Arts Plan New Jersey: Toward a Thriving New Jersey, a Statewide Plan for the Arts (available at www.njartscouncil.or/resource1.html). One of the interesting ideas they have is for readers of the plan to sign the plan and endorse it, returning the endorsement to them. They state that “information will be data-based and used to keep you informed on progress and opportunities to help, (p. 10). While the endorsement allows signers to choose one of eight strategic initiatives to help with, the last one
on the list is “Garden St. Technology Initiative,” and it is largely undefined except for the brief paragraph in the document that reads:

**Establish a Garden State Technology and Arts Project.** The aims of this objective are three-fold: 1) to amass and organize essential information and connect the arts community to it and to each other for their operational development, 2) to advance development of art forms, and 3) to enhance delivery of arts and cultural information to audiences/public as well as delivery of arts experiences themselves. Numerous projects are now underway. Still, a great deal more needs to be done to frame-out on a statewide basis the components and plans of this project. Access to hardware, software and training will remain issues. (p. 8).

As can be seen, there is no real acknowledgement of the power of the Internet, nor is there any explicit mention of the Web as the logical, pervasive, and possibly inexpensive channel or medium for coordinating, and communicating these multi-layered agencies and organizations. Unfortunately, this outlook is widespread, especially in the nonprofit sector.

Original research to identify nonprofit theatres located in Southern New Jersey was done using a host of different search engines including Copernic Agent Professional and Google. Copernic uses more than 1000 search engines, consults multiple search engines at once, combines their results, removes duplicates and keeps the best information gathered from the search engines it queries. We also used membership listings in alliance arts organizations including the New Jersey Theatre League (www.njtheatreleague.com), the South Jersey Cultural Alliance (www.scja.net), the New Jersey Theatre Alliance (www.njtheatrealliance.org), Artpride New Jersey (artpridenj.com) and Discover Jersey Arts Online (www.jerseyarts.com). Each of these alliances has their own
requirements for membership, some very stringent such as those for the New Jersey Theatre Alliance, some much less so. Each of these arts alliance organizations is nonprofit and many of these groups have similar missions to each other in that their overarching purpose is to foster participation in live theatre in New Jersey by a diverse group of artists, technical people, directors, individual and corporate audience members. Most are funded by a combination of sources, including the State of New Jersey, their member arts organizations, private and corporate donations.

We tried to be inclusive rather than exclusive in identifying theatres to study. The list of theatres that we considered in the final study includes: The Bridge Players Theatre Co. of Burlington; the Burlington County Footlighters of Cinnaminson; The Cumberland Players of Vineland; the East Lynne Theater Company of West Cape May; the Fine & Performing Arts Center at Cumberland County College, Vineland; the Foundation Theatre Company in residence at the Geraldine Clinton Little Theatre of the Burlington County College; the Fine Arts Department of Rutgers University in Camden; the Haddonfield Plays and Players of Haddonfield; Holly City Repertory Theater of Millville; the Mainstage Center for the Arts in Blackwood; Puttin’ on the Ritz in Oaklyn; the Road Company of Williamstown; Sketch Club Players of Woodbury; the Surflight Theatre of Beach Haven, New Jersey; and Triple Threat Foundation for the Arts of Cherry Hill.

The foregoing group includes theatres in six of the eight counties that define the region: Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, and Ocean Counties. Three groups are from Burlington County; five reside in
Camden County; one is from Cape May County; three are from Cumberland County; two from Gloucester County and one from Ocean County.

There were no accessible Web presences developed for nonprofit theatre groups in either Atlantic or Salem Counties. Several other theatre groups exist in the Southern New Jersey region but for a variety of reasons they have not as yet developed Web presences. The lack of a Web presence and the reasons for failing to create a Web site for a theatre company that is beyond infancy are considered in a later section. Figure 1 shows the geographic dispersion of the fifteen theatres throughout South Jersey.

**Overview of the Web Sites of Southern New Jersey Nonprofit Theatres**

Of the fifteen Web presences evaluated, three were classified as portraying a jungle metaphor; three evidenced a family metaphor, three called forth a journey metaphor; one evoked a machine metaphor; two used the game metaphor; and one represented an organism metaphor. No Web presences were classified as exhibiting a war or zoo metaphor.
Figure 1. Fifteen theatres from Southern New Jersey were located in 14 different cities and towns. They are Beach Haven, Blackwood, Burlington, Camden, Cherry Hill, Cinnaminson, Haddonfield, Millville, Oaklyn, Pemberton, Vineland (2), West Cape May, Williamstown, and Woodbury.

They were as follows: the three jungle metaphors were evoked by the Foundation Theatre at Burlington County College; the Rutgers Camden Fine Arts Department; and the East Lynne Theatre Company of Cape May. The three family metaphors were found in the Bridge Players of Burlington, Mainstage Center for the Arts of Blackwood, and the Sketch Club of Woodbury. The three
journey metaphors were represented by the Cumberland Players of Vineland, the Road Company of Williamstown; and the Surflight Theatre of Beach Haven. The lone machine metaphor was evinced by the Haddonfield Plays and Players Web presence. The two society metaphors were evoked by the Burlington County Footlighters and the Cumberland Fines Arts Center of Cumberland County College. The two game metaphors were evinced by the Puttin’ on the Ritz Theatre Web site of Oaklyn, and the Triple Threat Foundation for the Arts of Cherry Hill Web site. The single organism metaphor was noted in the Web presence of the Holly City Repertory Company of Millville.

**Southern New Jersey Theatre Web Sites and the Jungle Metaphor**

The jungle metaphor is one that information systems users have been shown to use when there is an alternative rather than goal orientation; when the environment is chaotic rather than orderly; and where the scope is external. Typically a guide is the leader needed to help secure a path out of the jungle. The three Web sites classified together here were those of the East Lynne Theatre Company of West Cape May; the Foundation Theatre Company in residence at the Geraldine Clinton Little Theatre at Burlington County College in Pemberton; and the Fine Arts Department Web site at Rutgers University-Camden, in Camden. All three of the sites could be characterized by the sentiment, “Once we get through this season, maybe we’ll have time to construct a real Web site.”
The Foundation Theatre Company

The Foundation Theatre Company in residence at the Geraldine Clinton Little Theatre of the Burlington County College (www.bcc.edu/html/foundationtheatre.html) has a Web site framed in various hues of red, gray and black, leading to a site that is hosted by the College. There are six fonts present on the page. The motto of the school “We Can Get You There,” is displayed in the upper right hand corner of the page. Unfortunately, that slogan stands in ironic contrast to the search function provided, which does not help the visitor locate theatre productions. There is a hyperlink on the page to the “Calendar of Events,” which brings up a page of 12 radio buttons, that the user can click on to designate they are looking for performing arts, or student government events. There is also a calendar that permits the user to specify the start and end date that they are targeting for attending an event. When this is done, the events are brought up on a separate page listing them. Clicking on the date of the event displayed brings up details of the event, such as time, place, venue and artists. This is an aggregated search function, not specific to the theatre. It is painstaking and chaotic.

The self-description of the theatre is “Southern New Jersey’s oldest non-profit professional theatre company in residence at Burlington County College…” It goes on to state in the text that “The Foundation Theatre Company believes that a vital part of its mission is to provide an artistic home for regional arts.” On the theatre page is a color photo, however the players in the photo are not identified nor is the production. The page goes onto describe a “core company”
that has worked on many projects together since 1983, however, they are not named.

Figure 2. Foundation Theatre of Burlington County College Web site
The page features a phone number for the box office to get further information, but there is no way to book online or even to request information online. Neither is there any way for the organization to capture visitors’ information when they visit the site.

**East Lynne Theater Company**

Another theatre in the category of jungle metaphor is the East Lynne Theater Company in Cape May (community.nj.com/cc/eastlynnecompany). The Web site is situated inside a shell of the sponsor New Jersey.com, which is an electronic consortium of New Jersey newspapers, that display paid advertising. They offer free Web hosting and Web page set up for community groups. As a result the pages appears in a generic frame, with links to the main site and a chance to build one’s own site, so there is no specific design that conveys the mission or feeling of the theatre’s Web presence. It is very difficult to locate this URL. And the “free” frame provided by NJ.com is chaotic and confusing. The theatre states that it is the only professional Equity company dedicated to America’s theatrical heritage. There is a center column of text and the use of times roman font makes it look as if it were text from a newspaper column. There is a small picture, and a brief history of the theatre company, as well as a listing of the season’s productions with play dates. These are not hyperlinked and the Web site gives the feeling that it is a product for another medium, such as a newspaper, rather than the Internet. On the left hand side are a series of links including “News,” “Photos,” “Who’s Who,” “Get Involved,” “Maps,” “Links” and “Send this Page.”
Clicking on the “News” link takes one to a newspaper account of some productions dated 1999. Clicking on the photo gallery brings up a series of thumbnail color photos with production titles and dates that can be expanded,
some also include a story about the actor or production. These are wonderful photos, many professionally taken, that give a glimpse of the idea behind the theatre.

The link to “Who’s Who” lists members of the Board, their theatre experiences and their full time professions. Again, it is arrayed as a black and white column of text with no hyperlinks supplied.

The “Get Involved” link describes the most recent fundraiser of the group and then provides contact information for those who would like to serve on the Board. An email address is also given. There are no hyperlinks supplied. Clicking on the map link brings up two options for maps, (both venues that the group uses for plays) and when you follow the link they go to a display by Map Quest, rather than directions that have been specifically prepared by the theatre.

Going to the “Links” page does finally bring up a series of eleven hyperlinks that refer to a grab bag of local tourism sites, professional and amateur theatre Web sites and so on. One link is broken, another, when clicked on, says it is “Being reconfigured.” There is no clear organization, the page serves as more of a friendly list of theatres and other interesting Cape May tourist sites that someone has hastily put together. The hyperlinks do not appear to be diligently maintained or shaped in any particular way. The are overgrown with possibly irrelevant links.

The Web site is provided as a community service by the New Jersey.com Online organization. Unfortunately, many nonprofits believe that this is the only
way they can get on the Web, and the sponsors have made it easy for community groups by supplying a template so that content can be updated. However, the Web site is difficult to find, it does not take full advantage of the medium of the Web, and it is almost impossible to understand the theatre company unless you also explore the commercial site long enough to grasp that they are sponsoring the pages.

**Fine Arts Department of Rutgers-Camden**

The third Web site in the jungle metaphor category can be seen at the Fine Arts Department of Rutgers-Camden (finearts.camden.rutgers.edu/), in Camden. The Web site is set up with a white background on a main page with a center Gif image that beautifully illustrates all of the fine arts in a colorful, surreal depiction showing sky, a sculpted Degas dancer, a series of computer monitors and so on. The identifier of Rutgers University, Camden campus appears at the top, and seven links to the disciplines within the Fine Arts Department are shown on the left hand side. The links include “Faculty Openings” “Art/Art History.” “Music,” “Theater Arts,” “Events,” “International Studies,” and “Rutgers Info.” At the bottom of the page is a hit counter numbering in the 39,000s.

Clicking on the “Theater Arts” brings up a mostly text page, in a completely different design, with completely different fonts. It is mostly text oriented, although some of the email links to the faculty are enabled. The page is entitled “Welcome to the Theater Arts Department” and “Theater Arts Division.” Later in the page are some links to color photos from past productions. These are entitled “Opera/Musical Theater at Rutgers Camden.” Clicking on other links
brings up screens with text audition notices for what are called "Music Theater Productions."

Figure 4. Fine Arts Department of Rutgers-Camden Web site

The maze of links is disorderly and confusing. Although there is a link on the page to the Rutgers Camden Center for the Arts, there are no reciprocal links
to the theater division of the Fine Arts Department. In fact, clicking on a link to Rutgers lands the visitor in a central Rutgers University site, not the Rutgers-Camden site. The visitor to the Fine Arts pages is unaware that the theatre productions are performed in the Gordon Theater on the Camden Campus, that is mentioned on the linked RCCA page. RCCA also presents a professional performing arts series. The University’s productions are not evident here. Many synergies are being missed.

It is interesting to note that two of the three Web sites evidencing the jungle metaphor are schools (one a university, the other a community college). It is possible that these Web sites will always evince an alternative oriented metaphor, even when they are developed more completely, simply due to the nature of their missions as schools that serve a diverse constituency. They have so many goals to fulfill that it is likely they will always develop a site that it is alternative, rather than goal oriented.

If that is the case, then a more advanced type of metaphor for their Web presence would be something such as family or society, which are both alternative oriented but possess an orderly, rather than chaotic environment; or the organism metaphor which strikes a balance between order and chaos; and alternative and goal orientation.

One recommendation is for those stuck in the jungle metaphor to invest in a better URL or procure a domain name (for those that are not at a school), which easily takes the interested visitor to the site. It is difficult to find the East
Lynne Theater pages because they are buried in the hosting Web pages. It is true that it is “free” but that free good can easily deceive the organization into believing they have a Web presence when it is really not functioning satisfactorily for them.

Rutgers-Camden Theater division (or opera/musical theater, or music theater, or theater arts, whichever identity it settles on) needs to link its productions to the series shown at the Rutgers Camden Center for the Arts page, which is a group of fine arts performances as well as a Web site for the co-located Stedman Art Gallery. Visitors should be very clear that the performances of the theater arts department at Rutgers-Camden take place in the Gordon Theater, which is home to an engaging and international professional performance series and a first rate art gallery.

**Southern New Jersey Theatre Web Sites and the Family Metaphor**

We turn now to the three Web sites that evoked a family metaphor. The three were the Bridge Players Theatre Company of Burlington; the Mainstage Center for the Arts of Blackwood; and the Sketch Club Players, Inc of Woodbury. The family metaphor also entails an alternative, rather than a goal oriented outlook. Its environment however is orderly; and it has an internal scope. The Web sites all communicate their family approach with the message of, “We are a community; you are welcome to our house.”
Bridge Players Theater Company

The Web site of the Bridge Players Theater Company (http://www.bridgeplayerstheatre.com/) is done using theatre curtains as the frame. There is an original icon which is a drawing of the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge with the two masks of drama, comedy and tragedy superimposed over the bridge. Two animated US flags are shown flying at either side of the bridge icon. The flags are patriotic but also refer to the roots of the group which originated in the bicentennial year when a patriotic show was written and the players “had so much fun” that they stayed together to form the theatre. The concept of staying together forms the root idea for this family-themed Web site.

The center of the home page is flanked on either side by two columns of hypertext links. There is a script font used for the name of the company that is breezy and informal looking. The sentiment of the group is captured in the slogan at the top which states “A community theater group proudly celebrating 27 years of commitment to cultural development in the community.”

A variety of fonts, at least seven unique ones are shown in a variety of sizes on the home page, giving it a rather amateurish feel. The current show *Steel Magnolias* is featured prominently on the page with the offer to “Click here for more information.” Right next to that display is an audition notice, colored in red to highlight its significance.

The Web site information was updated the day we examined it. There was also a friendly message indicating a snow policy and a way for readers to get
updated show closing information by contacting a voice message phone system.
So even if the Web site could not be updated hourly, the voice messaging system could be.

Figure 5. Bridge Players Theater Company Web site
The players work without compensation, and believe that everyone should participate. The shows are done in a variety of venues in Burlington County. There is very much a feeling of community involvement. There are partnerships displayed, for instance with Barnes and Noble Booksellers and with a local restaurant offering a show and meal dinner package.

The theatre is experimenting with an online ticket form. Patrons can currently email it after filling it out on the Web or they can print it out and mail it. The Web site is eventually intending to have online ticketing and although the form is there, it is not designed to be executed in that manner yet.

The form is designed in bright pink and yellow colors and includes icons of the artwork from each show to indicate which play the patron is ordering. It is not consistent with the home page in any other way and because of its bright design it is jarring. However, the emailed version is functioning and it does have the bare minimum required such as a “Submit” and “Clear” buttons for online ticketing.

The “Directions” link makes use of the framing of the blue theatre curtains and takes users to text directions to the theater from New Jersey and Pennsylvania; clicking on a road map is an option. When the user does so, they are put into another page without explanation that has a drop down box saying simply “Go.” This box has things like overnight accommodations, historic Burlington County and the Ockanickon Room, with a large arrow for going back. Clicking on one of these choices puts you into a commercial site for a local conference center. The look and feel of the pages is extremely different from that
of the theatre and there are few instructions or labels to guide the user. The omnipresent oversize arrow does thankfully permit the user to return to the theater eventually. The patchwork of forms, pages and links leaves the visitor feeling as if anyone who ever volunteered to help with the Web site was encouraged to contribute.

Another link provides information about joining the mailing list either via phone or email, or being removed from the mailing list as well. The “Contact Us,” link provides a mailing address, phone and email. The “Guestbook” link permits users to provide their name, a comment, a URL and an email that are all hyperlinked. There is also a message board powered by amazon.com that is clearly not monitored and some of the links supplied lead to commercial sites and other e-junk situations.

The “Sponsorship” link shows two businesses that support the theatre and asks if the user would like to become a sponsor, and provides the way to do so. The “Advertising” link details how businesses can buy ads for programs, and also gives the cost of those ads.

The “Join Us” link says that information for next season will be posted soon.

The link for the “Producer’s page,” states, rather naively that, “This area is intended for the producers and directors of our shows. Please do not use information listed below without permission.” The sign is about as effective as the one kids would post on a tree house warning the opposite sex to “Keep Out!”
page itself is a series of logos designed for advertisements with various elements omitted or included; an audition form that the producer will print out and use during the auditioning process and so on. Most theater Web sites wishing to have this type of information for producers and other workers would be designed to provide passwords or private URLs for the users so the files could appear on the Web in a more secure fashion.

The gallery link shows two full-color photos one each from the two immediate past productions. It identifies the play but not individual cast members. The “Archives” link is a collection of items that are not organized in any particular way that have appeared on the Web site at one time or another. They should perhaps be organized in a more systematic way, and hidden so that access is possible only through doing a search.

The Web site is enthusiastic but amateurish. It is clear that no voluntary help with the Web is turned away; therefore the results are somewhat uneven. Some of the Web pages are consistent in design, others are not. Some things are almost touchingly naïve (such as the request for people not to use files that are posted openly) and not pass word protected; or the use of a generic message board or the use of the visitor guest book that permits linking to other people’s URL’s without “screening” the links for appropriateness to the overall Web presence. The security problems and the patched together feel of the Web site certainly make it seem “home spun.” It is a friendly site and everyone is invited to participate.
The Mainstage Center for the Arts

The Mainstage Center for the Arts of Blackwood also clusters into the family metaphor. The Web site is lively and friendly, shows children’s handprints on the main page which includes links for “Theater,” “Kids,” “Harmony”, “Music,” “Dance,” in a different font are given “Home,” “Contact,” “Mission History,” and ”Audition,” as well as “Upcoming Events.” Their slogan reads “Quality family entertainment at affordable prices!” There are nine different fonts used on the white home page. The main buttons are lozenge-shaped in navy blue with orange writing and look as if they had been hand lettered in block printing. At the bottom of the site there is the ubiquitous hit counter showing over 10,000 visitors. There is also an icon showing an award from the Courier-Post newspaper as one of the “2000 Best of South Jersey” along with a sentence that reads “Ranked One of the Best Arts and Entertainment Centers of South Jersey Five Years in a Row!” and a link to the Courier-Post Online; links to the arts alliance groups, the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and the Discover New Jersey Arts Web sites. In addition this is the only Web site we examined that partners with greatergood.com, which in turn partners with many ecommerce merchants, donating 15% of is the purchases from the participating ecommerce merchants to the Mainstage Center for the Arts.

Clicking on the “Theater” link brings up more links underlined and centered on the page for “Summer Stage,” “Musicals,” “Drama/Comedy,” “Children’s Music Theatre,” and “Acting Classes.” Following the link to “Summer Stage,” one sees the statement, “Parents feel comfortable sending their children
because they trust the staff to look out for their child as well as give them a good grounding in theatrical arts.” The idea of the family and the theatrical training go hand in hand throughout the Web site. The initial links from the home page are retained below those that have changed.

Figure 6. Mainstage Center for the Arts Web site
The mission stresses the positive benefits of engaging youth with theatre arts as a way to address increasing violence in the society.

**Sketch Club Players**

The third Web site that displays a family metaphor is the Sketch Club Players, Inc of Woodbury (www.geocities.com/sketchclub/). This Web site features a small logo of the company, dramatic masks of tragedy and comedy intertwined, with the name of the company surrounding the masks in a circle. The page has six different fonts on it. It has seven links written in italics on the left hand side of the page. When the mouse is rolled over them, they enlarge the font size as if under a magnifying glass. The initials SCP are also on top of a column of text describing the company.

On the right hand side are five clip art images from popular clip art packages which give the Web site a familiar and homespun look. These are not hyperlinked, however. Everyone, regardless of their particular talent is encouraged to participate. This particular family is very proud of their dwelling stating, “We are proud to own our building, and we work hard to keep improving it.”

The site is hosted at geocities.com, which is a commercial site that offers free Web hosting, or Web hosting for a nominal fee. Unfortunately, the design result is still somewhat amateurish, although the upside is that the theatre has a functional Web site that is easily located and the tools, templates and so on are
supplied so that they do not have to be Web site designers to create a functional Web site. If the theatre wanted to improve their Web presence, they could go with a Web hosting firm that does not have low level and free (with pop up advertising) web hosting, and get their own domain. That way they could be proud of “owning” their own cyberspace too.

Figure 7. Sketch Club Players Web site
The link leading to the “History” of SCP ends with the comment that “SCP hopes to keep supporting the performing arts in Gloucester County for many more years!” Their community involvement and their commitment to welcoming everyone is a very clear family message.

**Three Theatres with the Journey Metaphor**

The three theater Web sites with the journey metaphor are the Cumberland Players of Vineland; the Road Company of Williamstown and the Surflight Theatre of Beach Haven.

The journey metaphor features a goal orientation, an internal scope and a chaotic environment. The sentiment expressed overall by a theatre expressing this metaphor is, “We try new things, some succeed, some don’t; we continually discover what our patrons want; we will eventually get there.”

**Cumberland Players of Vineland**

The Cumberland Players performing at the Little Theatre (www.cumberlandplayers.com/) in Vineland, Cumberland County are clearly on a voyage of discovery. The Web site is professional looking and has some superior design and other functionalities that those in the family metaphor would be hard pressed to achieve. Rendered in black with red lettering, there is an animated horizontal scroll that updates the visitor on whatever is new and exciting with the theater company. There are five different fonts on the page. There is a minimum of colors displayed on the black background. The company logo is displayed in a rectangle with comedy/drama masks of players shown in Mardi Gras colors.
There is white, yellow, red and orange lettering. The focal point is the name of the theatre as well as a color photograph of a performance. The links are arranged around the photo, like numbers on a clock. The links include “Our 57th Season,” “Auditions,” “Children’s Theatre,” “Our Story,” “Links,” “Now Playing,” (centered at the noon position on the photo) “Box Office,” “Directors,” “Back Stage,” “Join Us” and “Directions.” The ubiquitous hit counter is at the bottom of the home page showing visitors in the 9,000s.

Clicking on the “Our Story” link brings up a chronicle of all of the new experiences the theatre has undertaken. For example in the 1980s they added summer theatre to great acclaim and they continue to add new ways for people to participate. Clicking on the “Directors” brings up a beautifully designed screen entitled “Director’s Wanted.” The company is exploring their member’s potential talent as well as exploring what the audience would like. The logo for the company appears on the left hand side column of links and the title of the screen appears in a ruled box on red with white lettering in the center of the page.

The journey metaphor is also emphasized by one of the reviews chosen for the Web site from the Atlantic City Press which reads in part, “Instead of performing the same old overdone musicals and Neil Simon plays, the Cumberland Players are challenging area theatergoers with quality work.” Navigational links also appear on the bottom of each page. Although the box office is not online, the form page has been made more functional. This is the only site in the group to include a navigational bar at the bottom of the printable ticket order form. They are making full use of the navigational qualities of the Web in that way, and that
plays nicely into their use of the journey metaphor as well. The site is well maintained and frequently updated and is eager to take visitors to new places. During the current arts funding crisis, their Web site has enabled two emails, one to the New Jersey legislators, and one to Governor McGreevy which permits people to request that the Governor not suspend funding for the arts.

Figure 8. Cumberland Players Web site
The Cumberland Players “Links” page features the “Discover NJ Arts” alliance page as the first link and has a series of links that do indeed permit the user to discover different arts alliances groups. The links encourages exploration, and descriptions of each link, as well as the icon to click on are presented. This page is informative and leads visitors to check each link because of its vivid descriptions of what each link contains, much as a travel brochure might.

The Road Company of Williamstown

The Road Company of Williamstown in Gloucester County (www.roadcompany.com/grand.htm) is another theatre group whose Web site evokes the Journey metaphor. Even their name is evocative of their journey. The Web site has its own domain so it is easier to find than many others. The Web site is a mixture of clip art, animation, and features several links and a good deal of thought about where the company has been and where it is going. Clicking on the link “Theater Information” link brings up the statement, “We’re called The Road Company for a reason: we don’t own a theater; we rent wherever we perform. For many years, that rented home was The Grand Theater in Williamstown. We performed over 30 shows in our years there. But with the current owners’ decision to no longer use it for rentals; we once again have hit the road.” When we wrote to them on another matter regarding an inappropriate link that was listed on the Web site (the owner of the domain had changed to a dorm Web cam, pay site) they were incredibly responsive and remedied the problem immediately.
The Road Company is one of the few theatre Web sites that permits the viewer to travel to another ecommerce site, that of amazon.com, to do a search for books, CDs, videos or DVDs, or the visitor can do a purchase with amazon for theatre-related items without “leaving the theatre’s site.”

Figure 9. The Road Company Web site
Surflight Theatre

The third theatre using the journey metaphor is that of the Surflight Theatre (www.surflight.org/) of Beach Haven. They have their own domain so they are easy to locate. The main page has a scrolling banner to update visitors about any schedule changes or any cancellations due to weather and so on. The page is framed in gray with an ink sketch of the theatre at the top center of the page and stylized logo. On the left hand side is a gray navigational bar with links such as “Home,” “What’s Playing,” “Tickets,” “About Surflight,” “Our Programs,” “Support Surflight,” “Volunteer,” “Jobs at Surflight.” The “Mailing List” link is displayed but the link but not enabled, “Seating Chart,” is enabled as is “Contact Us,” However the “Site Map” is not a link. The home page shows two color photographs of two upcoming performances. Also included is a link to respond to the proposed arts funding budget cuts for New Jersey, and a number of icons for a variety of theatre alliances are shown. When a link is clicked on, the gray navigational bar from the left hand side remains in place, so the visitor can move among pages easily. The ubiquitous hit counter is at the bottom of the page showing over 2,000 visitors.

Clicking on the link “About Surflight” brings up a lovingly told chronicle of the journey of the theatre company thus far. Each attempt at something new is described, most, such as the “Summer Children’s Breakfast”, or “Going not-for profit” are described as great successes. There is a feeling of real discovery and exploration conveyed on this page.
Figure 10. Surflight Theatre Web site
The Machine Metaphor and One South Jersey Theatre

The machine metaphor entails a strong goal orientation, an orderly environment and internal scope. For the theatre enacting this type of metaphor, we can characterize the sentiment as “We designed a series that should apply to all; three musicals, and three classic plays each year.”

Haddonfield Plays and Players

The Web presence of the Haddonfield Plays and Players of Haddonfield (www.haddonfieldplayers.com/) is the only one of the fifteen theatre Web sites examined to evince a machine metaphor. The main page has stylized wall paper featuring the logo of the group, which consists of stylized comedy drama masks in black and white contained in a rectangle. The wall paper, which is endlessly replicated as the background of each page is rendered in gray and white behind the entire page, except for a column of links that appear on a black background on the left hand side.

At the top of the page, is a note enjoining the visitor to call the box office to reserve tickets. It explicitly requests that the visitor not use email to request tickets or ticket information. A phone number, days of the week and hours are provided.

In the center of the page is a jpeg photo of the current production “Lost in Yonkers” and it appears to be a photo of the video box with the artwork for the video on it. Beneath that image are a couple of sentences noting the playwright and providing a synopsis of the play.
Several lines beneath that is another box that says “Upcoming Auditions” and the dates, along with the name of the play “Meet Me in St. Louis” with a larger font in blue. This is hyperlinked and clicking on the link brings up an “Audition Information” page for all of the production and includes specific updates.
on which shows have been cast, how the actors are to prepare for auditions and includes two linked email addresses that provide contacts to get further information. There is also a phone number provided. The convention is not followed on the page, so some underlined information is not a hyperlink, and some of it moves the visitor further down the page. However, it is clear that the auditions do run like a well-oiled machine. Everything needed by the auditioning actors is carefully specified, as are times, places, parts and so on.

Further down the page is a line “Special Feature” with a hyperlink to “How a Set is Built” when the visitor clicks on this they bring up color photos detailing the process of set construction that consists of a series of six pages that show the process up to the final product. This type of feature detailing the technical craft is very unusual, and someone worked to document the process of set building in a very loving way. However, there is no information about what the production was, the exact time frame or the man hours, so it is not as instructive as it could be. At the bottom of the home page is an icon for NJ Theatre Leagues which is one of the alliances discussed later in the paper.

The left hand column is a list of eleven links headed by the ubiquitous hit counter numbering in the 16,000s, which is the number of visitors coming to the site since 1/12/02, the “2003 Season,” “Home links,” “About HP&P,” “Directions,” “Get involved,” “Auditions,” “Theater Education,” “Calendar and Awards,” and “Email Us.” These are displayed on a black background with white print.
The “2003 Season” link brings up a text document with the company’s tragedy/comedy logo as wall paper in the background. There are listed the seven plays slated for the season. Each one is hyperlinked to another place on the same page that shows an icon, poster or piece of art work for the play as well as a description of the play and the play dates. Four of the seven listed are musicals. There is also a “Family Production” Series of three plays listed. Following that there is a link on the page to “Subscription Information.” This moves the visitor further down the page, showing the price for a variety of packages (for instance there are 8 series listed, the least expensive is 7 plays for $69 dollars, the most expensive is 7 plays for $89.00. There is another link to a Subscription form rendered in Adobe Acrobat that permits the user to download a subscription form and mail it in (a check or credit card may be used, and the wait time is 3-4 weeks) or the patron may call the box office with credit card information. The left-hand side remains usable in links as the form comes up framed with the HP&P border.

The “Get Involved” link is surprisingly sparse in content with just one short paragraph of text across the HP&P wall paper that tells visitors how to volunteer, and that they are always need for ushering, running lights building sets and so on. Surprisingly, there is no link to the auditions page on this page, although links on the left hand side remain usable. The next link, “Auditions,” takes the visitor to the auditions page described previously.

Clicking on the “Theater Education Link” takes the visitor to a page that describes a series of acting workshops for children of a various ages. They run
for sessions of six consecutive Saturdays each and cost $27.50 per one and a half hour session. Included is a link to download an enrollment form in Adobe Acrobat, as well as an Adobe Acrobat link. The enrollment form must be mailed into the theater and cannot be submitted online or via email. The next link “Calendar” brings up the current month with the performance dates marked. However, these are not linked to the other pages detailing the shows that were mentioned earlier. The calendar is rudimentary, does permit the visitor to go to another month and year if desired.

The link called “Database” brings ups a new page that fills the screen. It has the HP&P wall paper and tells us that it’s an historical data base that included 469 shows and 207 full casts from each of them people from past productions. There is a simple search function where the visitor can enter either a name or the name of a show, and bring up a separate screen where the information requested is displayed. If a cast member appears more than once, a list is displayed and then hyperlinks to each production are listed. By clicking on their name, you can go to the relevant production. The database is put together in an efficient, but impersonal way.

All of the database and other functions seem to work properly, but the traditionally warm, welcoming feeling of the theatres employing the family metaphor is absent; nor is there the explorative spirit shown in the theatres with Web presences that we’ve characterized as having a journey metaphor. The machine metaphor as enacted here holds predictability and order, with several subscription series designed to apply to all.
The society metaphor can be characterized as alternative, rather than goal oriented, possessing an orderly environment, with an internal scope. The importance of rules for the maintenance of the society is a strong feature of this metaphor. Theatres with this type of presence embody the sentiment that, “We do not allow exchanges or refunds payment for next year’s series must be received no later than…” and so on.

Two of the Web presences examined can be classified as embodying the society metaphor, the Burlington County Footlighters of Cinnaminson, and the Cumberland Fine & Performing Arts Center of Cumberland County College, in Vineland.

Burlington County Footlighters


The home page is designed in a creamy yellow background with the links to the left of the page displayed on a column of red draped theatre curtain. The top of the page is a color photograph of the theatre building. There is a quick-paced horizontal scroll one-quarter down the page which shows the upcoming audition for their musical, “Singin’ in the Rain!” and also provides updates or cancellations. The Footlighters bill themselves as a “non-profit community
theatre” begun in 1938. The center home page includes a description of their upcoming production, a photo and a link to the summer children’s theatre workshops, and a sketch of the theatre which proclaims that they “bought the building,” and additional links are there so that patrons can click on them and help reduce the mortgage or find out the history of the building.

There are three fonts in varying sizes and six colors used on the home page. Most of the type is sans serif Arial type face, which gives an open and modern look. The page, though well organized, appears and functional appears to be designed by a nonprofessional.

The links on the left hand side begin with the current season (listed as 2002 on the link, even though it is a 2002/2003 season). When one clicks on the link they see that that the season consists of 2 plays, 1 musical and a family show. It also indicates which shows are completed for the season and shows a calendar of the performance dates indicating in red which dates and times are “Sold Out” For past shows; this is quite impressive, since large blocks of performances are designated as “sell outs.”

When clicking on the “Order Tickets” link the users is brought to a page titled “Easy Internet Ticket Order Form” which leads the visitor o believe that this transaction can be completed online. However, upon further reading, it is clear that you need to print out the form and mail it back to the theatre. No email or ecommerce transactions are permitted. Further, the theatre takes only checks; it
does not have the ability to process credit cards. These rules are explicitly stated throughout.

Figure 12. Burlington County Footlighters Web site
The Footlighters have email functionality so that an interested party can click on the link specified as “Join Our Mailing List” and they are put into a screen that allows them to join the mailing list, interestingly, the page mentions “why wait for the mail” and to use the online ticket page, but it is clearly not functional yet. The page also lists two options option 1 to participate backstage and option 2 which is to receive audition notices. At the bottom of this page is a brief Web survey asking for feedback about the Web site.

The “Join Us” link is a message from an older-looking Past President, with his picture on the left hand side column, asking people of all ages and ethnic backgrounds to get involved, but particularly expressing interest in getting participation from “post-college” age people. They are interested in building a society that includes a diverse group. From this page users can get to the mailing list, the events list, the calendar, maps and directions, or return back to the home page. (The page could be redesigned to attract a younger crowd just through some animation, sound, or photos of young people engaged in the productions of the group. The group may be trying to move to another, better metaphor.)

Clicking on the “Monthly Meeting” link brings up a black and white page with oversize calendar pages listing key events in the life of the theater, from November 2002 through July 2003. It is rather jarring, since all of the other pages have sported the same color background, and this one has black and white text. There are no other links and the items on the calendar are not hyperlinked.

Clicking on the “Newsletter” link brings up a creamy, yellow page that permits you to install Adobe Acrobat, then lists the newsletters, earliest to latest.
When clicking on a date, the newsletter comes up in a pdf format in black and white just as it would appear as if it had been mailed to your home. There are no hyperlinks in the newsletter, as it is reproduced just as if your were looking at the printed document.

Clicking on the “Message Board” enables visitors to read a message posted, they are listed by topic and by date and hyperlinked to the message for instance a cast list for a production, posted by the casting director. Then there is a form where the reader can respond via email without entering their email in return. It mentions that the message board is “moderated” and thanks visitors for “behaving,” in accordance with its rules. Some of the postings are very chatty and less than professional, but there are no “ads” or commercial entries. Free speech and participation is part of this society’s plan.

The link for the audition call has an animated arrow pointing to it that says “New” on it and the audition page gives the name of the script, the cast of characters, a synopsis of the show dates of the audition and all sorts of useful information for actors including a hyperlink to the “agreement” that the actors will follow the rules of the house regarding behavior before, during and after the show. Included in the rules is the paying of dues. This preoccupation with the rules is highly consistent with the society metaphor, but this is the only Web site of the fifteen that went to this extent to ensure compliance.

There is a link for the new production that has been cast, so the audition page becomes the cast list with the addition of the actors’ names. The link for the
“Children’s Acting Workshops” is very different in style and tone (literally) from the rest of the Web site. It is like being transported to a completely different theatre. It has a black starry background with synthesized rock music that comes up as soon as you click on the link. It features the same photo of kids as the link on the center home page, and it is designed in neon colors, where nothing matches. It is like visiting a completely different theatre. In the desire to attract younger participants, the essence of the theatre company may have been lost or at minimum diluted. So while the society metaphor predominates, Burlington County Footlighters may be struggling with whether the metaphor should evolve and change to reflect a different society.

Rules feature prominently on the Web site. The visitor gets the idea that the Footlighters have been in business a long time (since 1938), and one of the reasons for their longevity is that they spell out all of the rules, and they make them known. For instance, on the ticket order form, subscribers are instructed to “Please Print Information clearly” with the added wry comment that “We are not handwriting experts”.

The “Rent a Room” link brings up a “Tour Page” of the theatre and color photos of the rooms that can be rented for a variety of functions; there are a few other page links at the bottom about the history of the building, and the ability to help with a donation toward the mortgage cost. One of the donation opportunities is a page with a photo of a patio and small garden (presumably located at the theatre) where you can become part of their patio of stars by sending a check and sending in a form where you have printed in an inscription for a brick.
The contact page gives a full list of administrators, board members, technical people and so on. It has a few links at the bottom to events and the mailing list. One of the links is for “60 years of Entertainment” which gives a complete listing of all of the productions over the entire history of the theatre. This is not hyperlinked in any manner and is just the text on a page.

“Archival Images” is a link to photos from several past productions arranged in a photo album of thumbnail they can be expanded upon clicking. A new link shown off with animation “New” arrow is the “Talent Showcase” in this case it featured poems and a photo of the poet,. It stipulates in the rules that no copyrighted or objectionable material be submitted and there are a number of poems typed in text. The background is white brick wall paper that is inconsistent with any other pages on the site. It is a way to do something new with the talents of the Footlighters but it does not seem to be thought out in terms of incorporating it into a permanent feature of their Web site or their overarching metaphor for Web presence.

**Fine & Performing Arts Center at Cumberland County College**

The second South Jersey theatre that embodies the society metaphor is the Fine & Performing Arts Center at Cumberland County College in Vineland (www.cccnj.edu/cc/pages/finearts/index.html).

This Web site is part of the Cumberland County College Web site and as such it retains the colors, layout and design of the College throughout. The Web site has an open feel to it, rendered with a white background and a yellow
column on the left serving as background for the links. Six different fonts are used on the page and the icon of the College, a line drawing of pine trees in teal blue is in the upper left hand corner of each page, along with the College’s key words describing their mission “Pride,” “Service,” and “Excellence,” all shown in lavender script.

Figure 13. Fine & Performing Arts Center at Cumberland County College Web site
The links listed for the Fine & Performing Arts Center are “Box Office,” “Contact Info,” “Directions,” “Events,” “Gallery,” “Info Request,” “Links,” “Rental Info,” “Seating Chart,” “Stage Specs” and “Student Matinee Series.” The remainder of the links are in black type rather than blue, and they are unexpanded lists that include “About CCC,” “Academics,” and so on. There is a thick, darker blue navigational bar at the bottom of the page featuring the “Employee/Department Directory,” “Maps & Directions,” a “Site Map” and “Jobs at CCC.”

Clicking on the “Box Office” gives several ways for people to purchase tickets via mail or in person and the box office. There is no email or Internet option, and the page keeps referring back to the” form in the season brochure,” instead of just making the form available as a hyperlink. There is an enabled email for the box office manager who will answer questions that way, and a link to the seating chart. When returning back to the “Fines Arts” page, the photo of the featured performing artist changes to alternate with another artist who will also be appearing. The director, and three other technical or administrative staff are listed on the Contact page, and their emails are linked. There is no back button on the page, users can just use their back arrow on their browser.

The “Directions” link goes to a plain text page without other links that has directions to the center from Pennsylvania and Delaware as well other points in New Jersey. The colors of the links do not change when they are read so the visitor does not know whether they have visited the link or not. The Events link brings a back, white and red listing of the season’s offerings with dates, and a
brief description of the artists and event. The font is an Arial font in different sizes so it looks modern and up to date. At the time we visited the “Gallery” link it was blank with no other links to direct the visitor to another place on the site.

The “Info Request” link is an electronic form that can be filled out and submitted online. It asks for the user’s email address and other mailing information and then gives a choice of getting the FPAC Theatre brochure, a Student Matinee series brochure, or Audition Information. It also lets the user indicate if they are “Interested in becoming a Guaracini Center Volunteer” and then hit the “send” button. There are no other hyperlinks on the page, as it appears in the frame of the Cumberland County College pages with the yellow column on the left and the same heading and footer on the page.

The “Links” page features six links, all of them are working. Two of them are to performing arts or theatre alliance type sites, one is to another theatre group discussed in an upcoming section, and one is to a nearby symphony group. The links all pertain to performing arts in New Jersey/Philadelphia in some way, so they maintain a tight focus within the purpose of the Web site. However, they are not listed in any particular order, nor is there any added editorial material that describes the sites or tell us why the sites are worth visiting. The sites do not appear to have reciprocal links with the FPAC, although they are listed on the FPAC Web site, so while the relationships may have been built informally, but the electronic relationships are not present.
Rules are greatly in evidence on several of the links. These include the “Rental Info” link which gives a text version of the policies and procedures renters must follow in order to rent the Fine & Performing Arts Center, still within the frame of the County College, which does give the Web site an orderly look, and permits the visitor to orient easily to the information on the page and to navigate easily around the site. The seating chart is a standard schematic of the seating in the center, and is the same one linked to the “Box Office link.”

More rules are given on the “Stage Specs” link which provides technical information necessary to set up a show within the Performing Arts Center. It is a plain text document, with no hyperlinks, although here is an email link to the primary contact person. This information should be linked to the rental information, and probably should be hidden away from the casual browser who is looking at the site as an audience member or performer. Often this is handled on a technical part of the site, or even in a pass worded part of the site for security purposes.

The “Student Matinee Series” links give a series of four productions for younger students. It gives a brief synopsis of each show along with the performance dates. At the bottom of the page is information about obtaining tickets, including the prices and other policies, and an enabled email link to contact the person in charge is included. There is nothing in particular that would indicate that this is a series for younger students (rather than county college students, for instance). The use of the text document on the standard Web page, absent any music, color, photos or video means that the page is not set apart or
made distinctive in any way. One can imagine that many college students would click on the link, only to be disappointed with the content, which is specific for grades K-7 or Grades 8-12. The site makes use of color photos, but does not convey a sense of the theatre itself or the mission of it via the Web site. The Fine and Performing Arts Center makes use of the society metaphor by displaying many alternatives, rather than following a single goal, as well as by mentioning a variety of audiences that might participate. In addition, several of the links feature rule-based and highly technical information for the running of the arts center itself. Earlier, we gave our observation that it is very difficult for college theatre Web sites to move to a goal-oriented Web metaphor, given the many constituencies that they must address. We saw that one of the alternative based metaphors, the jungle, was evoked by two of the college theatre Web presences. We suggest that college Web sites with theatre programs will do well to try to move to other alternative based metaphors such as family or society; or to the organism metaphor which maintains a balance between the goal and alternative orientation.

**Two South Jersey Theatres that Embody the Game Metaphor in their Web Presence**

The game metaphor is a goal-oriented metaphor with an orderly environment and an external scope. Often the leader is described as a coach, and the game is one of a competitive sport. The sentiment expressed by theatres possessing the game metaphor can be summed up as “We strive to be better than the competition; we will continue to improve and win the hearts of theater-
goers. We will win all of the awards.” Two South Jersey theatres evoke this metaphor, Puttin’ on the Ritz of Oaklyn, and Triple Threat of Cherry Hill.

**Puttin’ on the Ritz**

Puttin’ on the Ritz in Oaklyn (www.puttinontheritz.org) is intending to win the big game, and all of the competitions leading up to it as well. The site is rendered in shades of blue and maroon and it is professionally designed and maintained. The icon for the theatre company is set in an animated box of theatre lights in blue and maroon and the Ritz theatre marquee, which is the icon (and a recognizable architectural feature to anyone in the area), is present on each page. At the bottom of the page is the icon for the New Jersey State Council of the Arts, from which they have received funding. And at last, the level of professionalism is such that there is no hit counter displayed on the page. There are black and white photos from the productions. (They are given a blue tint to subtly pick up the colors of the Web site). The left hand side has a series of a half a dozen links. The links on the left hand side include the “2003 Season,” “Children’s Shows”, “Ticket Information,” “Group Information,” and “Board of Directors.”

Their slogan appears at the top of the page, “Quality theatre, simply done,” and on each associated page there is a further definition of quality shown in maroon lettering at the top of the page. Tickets must be reserved via phone with a credit card or a subscription can be mailed on a form from the Web site with check or credit card payment. The box office is not online. Puttin’ on the Ritz
runs a children’s theatre as well as the main theatre. The main theatre produces six shows a year, five of which are musicals from the past.

Figure 14. Puttin’ on the Ritz Web site
The site states in the “About Us” link:

“Puttin on the Ritz, Inc., guided by the creative partnership between artists and audience provides a wide spectrum of quality, accessible theatre programs; we encourage, educate and showcase regional artists, address community needs, challenge and cultivate our audiences and ourselves through an environment of creative collaboration. The Ritz is a professional non-equity training theatre which operates on a year-round basis as an arts center/artists' colony and distinguishes itself with the uniqueness and high quality of its theatrical enterprise in a Southern New Jersey locale that might not otherwise have access to professional theatre. Through a blend of main stage productions and an array of outreach/educational programs, The Ritz provides quality theatre and related activities that are accessible both geographically and financially to a diverse population base. The Ritz presently serves more than 73,300 people annually in a multi-county area, almost triple the number reached at its inception in 1986. One of the priorities is to support this growth and increased demand for programs with sound management practices and prudent fiscal controls.”

The site participates in a South Jersey banner exchange, which means that it is moving closer to the realm of commercialism. A different merchant’s ad is displayed on the Web site and can be reached by clicking on the ad. The Puttin’ on the Ritz Web site has been professionally redesigned and upgraded within the last year, although it is very telling that it retains its same metaphor of the game, competing on the basis of quality and professionalism that may not be available in any of the other “teams.”.

**Triple Threat Foundation for the Arts**

The second South Jersey theatre that evinces the game metaphor is the Triple Threat Foundation for the Arts (www.triplethreat.net) of Cherry Hill. They are in the game to win all of the competitions, the awards and the audiences. They have a competitive advantage in that they used online ticketing for about a
year for most of their shows. The Web site looks much alike a corporate Web site and the .net extension also supports that impression of competition. The home page is composed simply, with a minimalist look. It is very clear what the goal of the organization is. At the top of the home page is a top of a photograph in blue, white, black and gray that is the top of the theatre building. The Web site itself conveys an open, airy feeling that is modern and abstract. The fonts are mostly Arial and sans serif. In the center of the page are the posters for the current productions (not newly-designed ones, but the poster art from Broadway and off-Broadway that accompanied the original productions). The term “triple threat” in the theatre world refers to an actor that poses a triple threat who possesses the three talents of singing, dancing and acting.

The links on the left hand side are very revealing of the game orientation of the Triple Threat group. They begin by “News> TTFA takes ‘Civil War’ to competition for the NJ Theatre League Competition.” This is the only theatre Web site to mention the competition, though several of them will compete in it. It is right at the top of their links. Other links, written in text with an organizing comment (such as “News”) and then a short headline after it, include “Auditions,” two separate links for “Info,” half a dozen for photos of recent productions. The last “Photo” link states that it goes to the “2002 Perry Awards Ceremony,” and indeed clicking on it brings up the principals in evening dress shown during the gala event. This is the only theatre Web site to feature its participation in an awards ceremony as a separate link. They are there to win all of the prizes. [Note that Community Theater Inc. under the auspices of R.E.C.T. (Recognition of
Excellence in Community Theater) (www.njtheater.com/RECT/default.asp), a nonprofit corporation dedicated to recognizing achievements by artists of all disciplines involved in the performance and production of Community Theater in NJ gives the Perry Awards for each year to deserving individuals and theatre companies in New Jersey.

Figure 15. Triple Threat Foundation for the Arts Web site
Another link brings up the news that three actors who performed at Triple Threat are now going to appear in the national touring Company of “The Music Man.” The group is clearly proud of them, and considers them team members as well as winners. The Triple Threat definitely has a goal to be professional in everything they do. In their children’s performing arts pages, they end of the page advertising classes by stating, “Triple Threat Students Succeed” which heads a box of alumni who have gone on to professional jobs. This is a very different arena to compete in, and except for the Puttin’ on the Ritz Web presence, the other theatres do not retain this goal of professionalism, quality and success in a bigger arena.

One South Jersey Theatre with a Web Presence that Enacts the Organism Metaphor

The organism metaphor typically entails a balance between alternative and a goal orientation. The environment is a balance between order and chaos, and the scope is external or outward looking. In the realm of community theatre the sentiment of the organism metaphor can be articulated as “We are a growing theater; we are helping develop new plays and new talent.”

Holly City Repertory Theatre

The Holly City Repertory Theatre, (www.hcrt.org/) is the only Southern New Jersey theatre to evoke an organism metaphor. The home page displays the theatre company’s logo in the center of the page, the initials HCRT entwined with a graphic of holly. This is the only theatre company to have an organic icon, or one that is traditionally conceived of as growing. There are six hyperlinks on
the top third of the page to get the visitor to the pages that talk about upcoming productions. On the left hand side is a links bar rendered in a dark shade of green. It is not delineated as a separate column, as are many of the other navigational link bars described previously. The background to the main page is white, with text appearing in black and green. There are six fonts of varying sizes used throughout the page. Chiefly they are very modern looking in an Arial font. Some of the printing is in green italics. The color green is also often associated with growth and emergent life.

Hyperlinks on the main page are highlighted and underlined in blue, they change to maroon when they have been visited. Clicking on the hyperlink for Shakespeare’s “The Winter's Tale News” brings up a page within the hyperlink bar, with another six links describing the synopsis, and giving a script. Most interesting is getting into a thumbnails page that permits the viewer to bring up a graphic of the scenic breakdown, with each of the parts of the major characters color coded. In this way the viewer can see precisely what part of the scene and act an actor will appear and to what extent they appear in contrast to other players. This is a great support to actors, as are the other features on this link. Clicking on other productions listed on the main page brings up a series of about half a dozen hyperlinks, to cast bios, rehearsal photos, listings of cast and crew and so on. One of the links has color candid photos take during rehearsal, one of the pages brings up black and white photos of the cast for the children’s production, as well as their biographies.
Other links to current productions bring up the art for the production, and there is a special Valentine’s Day presentation under the auspices of V-Day “Until the Violence stops,” of the Vagina Monologues to benefit the Cumberland County Women’s Center (for help in domestic violence cases) as well as the Cumberland County Sexual Assault Program and V-Days Indian County Project which
extends services to survivors of domestic and sexual violence to Native Americans. All the beneficiaries are non-profits. There is a ticket price and a price for a special reception for the benefit. This is an unusual partnering with other nonprofits and it is the first of this kind listed on any of the South Jersey theatre Web sites.

The links on the link bar displayed on the left include “Home,” “Auditions,” “Current Show,” “Archive,” “Mission,” “Support the HCRT,” which gives 8 categories of donating, stating “We can’t do it without you!” and telling the visitor they can buy and ad, support an entire show, or a character in a shown and so on. The key to this aspect of the organic metaphor is the tag line used “Help keep the arts alive!”

The “Contact Us” link brings up the names and positions of four administrative personnel, whose emails are enabled. There is also a mailing address and the physical location for the theatre company. The last link in the link bar is for “Third Fridays which is an event that is held in conjunction with downtown Millville merchants, where the Theatre provides refreshments and encourages people to come into the theatre. They have two of their productions listed for Third Fridays. Patrons are asked to call them or email them in order to get tickets. There s no online box office, nor or is there any email form or downloadable form to mail in for tickets.

Clicking on the “About Us” link brings up a list of six staff members, four advisory board members and six class instructors with their names and positions.
Clicking on “Mainstage” brings up the scheduled productions and their dates, along with a “New Director’s Series” and a list of past productions dating back to 2001.

The Holly City Repertory includes among their priorities on the “Mission” link that of producing and developing original works that have not been previously produced; and also “produced outside of an educational institution.” They also offer workshops and classes “to improve our company” and “to offer another creative outlet for local artists.” Their mission statement concludes with the expression that states: “collaborating with any and all area artistic groups to create a nurturing, culturally rich atmosphere which will foster economic growth through tourism.” Their Web presence, including the graphics, layout, design and content is highly evocative of the organism metaphor. Their choice of plays, the events they sponsor, and their calls to participate in the key facets of nurturing, keeping alive and growing through producing original works are all different ways to express the idea of the organism.

Clicking on the “Tiny Voices” links brings up a Tiny Voices page complete with an original ink drawing logo for the section and information about their children’s theatre endeavor. There are color photos of their first production and information about their current production.

Clicking on the “Links” brings up seven links. It is difficult to divine what the relationship between the first three and the theatre company might be, they include a private liberal arts college in Ohio and two theatre companies, one in
Arkansas, one in Texas. They do not appear to be arranged in any particular order, but they are accompanied by a thumbnail photo or artwork, as well as a hyperlink. The more relevant ones are to another county theatre group “Cumberland County Players,” which was discussed earlier, but which does not appear to host a reciprocal link to Holly City Repertory Company. It also includes a link to the Riverfront Renaissance Center for the arts which has an elaborate Web site featuring the cultural and community life of Millville New Jersey, as well as many links to the same. It also has a link to the Glasstown Arts District, which has a reciprocal link to the Holly City Web site as well as to Cumberland County Players. There is a link to a commercial establishment, Brennar’s Brew in Bridgeton, a nearby town. Judging from the Web presence of the café, they seem to support local, original performing artists and poets. It is not clear whether this is a courtesy posting or it is paid advertising, but it certainly seems in the spirit of this theatre company that is evolving and growing artistically.

In summary, we have examined the Web sites of fifteen not-for-profit theatres in eight counties of Southern New Jersey in order to understand their strategic use of Web presence. We used a metaphor methodology, which we developed in earlier research, and which we used with success to classify the predominant metaphors of information systems users into nine metaphors. Those with an alternative orientation and a chaotic environment only describe the jungle and zoo metaphors. Alternative oriented metaphors with an orderly environment include the family and the society. Metaphors that are both goal oriented with a chaotic environment are the journey, and war. The game has a goal orientation
and orderly environment. The war metaphor has a goal orientation with a chaotic environment. The game and the machine metaphors possess a goal orientation with an orderly environment; the organism is balanced between a goal and alternative position, and they can each be viewed as better metaphors for the creation of certain types of information systems. We also sought to extend our previous work with the strategic Web presence of off-Broadway theatres.

We have found that there were three theatre Web presences that evoked a jungle metaphor; the Foundation Theatre of the Burlington County College; the Rutgers-Camden Fine Arts Department and the East Lynne Theater Co. of West Cape May. There were three Web presences among the theatres that evinced a family metaphor: the Bridge Players of Burlington, the Mainstage Center for the Arts in Blackwood, and the Sketch Club Players, Inc of Woodbury.

There were three theatres that expressed the journey metaphor: the Cumberland Players of Vineland; the Road Company of Williamstown; the Surflight Theatre of Beach Haven. One theatre company that was notable for its longevity exhibited the machine metaphor, the Haddonfield Plays and Players. Two of the theatres evoked a society metaphor in their rule-based and alternative approach; those were the Burlington County Footlighters of Cinnaminson and the Cumberland Fine Arts and Performing Center.

Moving to the game metaphor which is goal oriented with an orderly environment and an external scope, we found Puttin’ on the Ritz of Oaklyn and the Triple Threat organization of Cherry Hill. Lastly we identified one theatre Web
presence that evoked an organism metaphor, that was the Holly City Repertory of Millville.

**Why Theatres May Not Establish A Web Presence**

There are many reasons any particular theatre in Southern New Jersey has not developed a Web presence. Overall, it must be observed that since the theatres are involved in the work of creating live theatre, they do not feel the compelling need to develop their organizational entity in another medium, that of the Web. However, if a theatre has been in existence for more than two years and has not developed even a rudimentary Web presence, then one must address this lack more critically.

The reasons for this neglect seem to revolve around lack of funding, lack of IT expertise within the founding group; and most unfortunately, a lack of recognition of the importance of a Web presence in helping a nonprofit organization to realize its objectives. Unfortunately, very few arts funding organizations have grants specifically targeted toward the procurement of software and hardware; the hiring of Web programmers; the development of a Web presence; or the support of an independent firm to develop and maintain a Web site. In fact, the theatre and arts alliance sites will agree to adding a link from a member organization, but if no link is forthcoming from the theatre in question, and hence no Web site has been created, there is no follow up with the organization to stress why it is important for them to establish a Web presence, or to proffer help in this regard.
Funding agencies, arts alliances, and corporate contributors can be instrumental in advocating that theatre groups establish a Web presence. While they may not be able to stipulate the creation of a Web site as a condition of funding, they can strongly encourage this behavior, set aside resources earmarked for Web development and maintenance, and make the relationship between a strong Web presence and the perceived ability to effectively use funding dollars abundantly clear to grantees.

**Recommendations**

Examining the fifteen Web presences systematically through the use of metaphors has brought many observations to the fore and many insights have been realized. The following section provides explicit recommendations to each of the theatres based on the metaphor currently evoked by their Web presence. It focuses on how the metaphor is hindering or enabling the theatre, and expressly recommends changes in Web presence metaphor that we believe will produce positive outcomes for the theatre in question.

A summary of the metaphors and the Southern New Jersey theatre Web sites that correspond to each of the metaphors can be found in Table 2. Notice that only seven of the nine original metaphors were confirmed in the theatres Web sites. The zoo and war metaphors were not discovered in any of the Web presences studied.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Web Presence Metaphor</strong></th>
<th><strong>Southern New Jersey Theatres</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Jungle**               | Foundation Theatre of Burlington County College  
|                          | East Lynne Theater Company  
|                          | Fine Arts Department of Rutgers-Camden  
| **Family**               | Bridge Players Theater Company  
|                          | Mainstage Center for the Arts  
|                          | Sketch Club Players  
| **Journey**              | Cumberland Players  
|                          | The Road Company  
|                          | Surflight Theatre  
| **Machine**              | Haddonfield Plays and Players  
|                          | Burlington County Footlighters  
| **Society**              | Fine & Performing Arts Center at Cumberland County College  
| **Game**                 | Puttin’on the Ritz  
|                          | Triple Threat Foundation for the Arts  
| **Organism**             | Holly City Repertory Theatre |

*Table 2. Web Presence Metaphors and the Clustering of Theatre Web Sites*
**Recommendations for Theatres Evoking the Jungle Metaphor**

The evocation of the jungle metaphor by the three theatres can be interpreted to mean that the development of a Web presence is not a high priority or even a priority at all. If the theatres wish to succeed in the future and go forward it is imperative that they give thought, careful attention and monetary resources to developing a Web presence that fulfills their mission. This can no longer be responsibly neglected or mischaracterized as an afterthought or an add-on. Ideally as the organizations are experiencing strategic planning they will also give thought as to what their Web sites should contain, who should design, them and maybe even more critically, who will maintain and update them. If they are educational institutions trying to create a Web presence, they will always need to retain a broad constituency and thereby will always need to maintain a Web presence with an alternative rather than a goal orientation. Other possibilities might be developing a Web presence with a family or even a society metaphor.

**Recommendations for Theatres Evoking the Family Metaphor**

The three theatres that can be seen employing a family metaphor with their Web presences need to ask their Board and members if they desire to progress beyond this metaphor in what they are trying to accomplish strategically. Our earlier research showed that the family metaphor is conducive to the development of certain types of information systems, such as a traditional management information system and a decision support system. However, if the
theatres evincing this metaphor desire to become more goal rather than alternative oriented or to desire to move to a competitive position rather than a community one, then they will need to systematically evaluate their IT plans and possibly change the family metaphor that there are portraying via their Web presence.

**Recommendations for Theatres Evoking the Journey Metaphor**

There are three theatres in Southern New Jersey that evoke the journey metaphor with their Web presence. In our earlier research we found that the journey metaphor indicates that cooperative systems are more likely to develop with the presence of that metaphor, and that decision support systems and executive information systems are least likely. While the journey metaphor does not deter in competitive situations, the journey metaphor does not promote competition either. The theatres must as a matter of course review whether the chaos of the journey remains appealing to their staff, patrons and Board members. The strong goal orientation of the journey metaphor, along with its internal scope makes it a good choice for Web presence for these South Jersey theatres. Their well-conceived Web sites are easily navigable and depict well the spirit of exploration. If the theatres decide that they want to cater to narrow audiences with targeted type of activities, or decide to go the other way and compete in a more professional way, then it will be important to review their use of the journey metaphor.
Recommendations for the Theatre Evoking the Machine Metaphor

There was only one theatre in our population of Web presences in the Southern New Jersey region with a Web presence that evoked a well-oiled machine. In our earlier research we found that the machine metaphor increased the likelihood of developing traditional information systems as well as increasing the success of developing an expert system. We did not find that the machine metaphor was a detriment to the building of any particular system. This theatre seems secure in what it is doing, however if the machine breaks down, its Web presence will become a problem. The theatre has set a clear goal and exists in an orderly environment. The availability of a searchable database on the Web site in order to locate performers and productions is another dimension of the machine metaphor that is working well for them. It also makes them unique in the population studied. The improvement and upgrading of the database is certainly within the grasp of the theatre and it may be a way to better serve their constituencies. It is also something that will be supported by their predominant metaphor of the machine. It is possible that the theatre will begin losing adherents because of its machine-like predictability in their subscription series offerings and in the way their Web presence is developed. A machine metaphor does not permit creativity, it is essentially boring. Without creativity, the group employing a machine metaphor is in danger of becoming a club rather than a community theatre. In general, the machine metaphor is not a positive one for
regional theatres to pursue in their Web presence. A reevaluation of the machine metaphor is appropriate.

**Recommendations for Theatres Evoking the Society Metaphor**

There were two organizations evoking the society metaphor in the group of the Southern New Jersey theatres. In our earlier research we found that the society metaphor was least likely to support the creation of either cooperative or competitive information systems. The society metaphor supports the development of traditional MIS as well as decision support systems. Both of the organizations evoking the society metaphor are well established, and highly rule-based. The society metaphor is not useful for facing changes that require the group to adopt a more competitive position. The metaphor evoked in their Web site must be reevaluated for how it can be altered to move them to a new position. The same advice holds true if the organizations aspire to become more cooperative because of a changing theatre environment. We believe this is a distinct possibility and we recommend that eventually those evincing the society metaphor in their Web presences will need to re-think and redesign them to include a cooperative, regional metaphor.

**Recommendations for Theatres Evoking the Game Metaphor**

There were two theatres with Web presences that evinced the game metaphor. In our research on metaphors and systems we found that the game metaphor was likely to support the success of many different kinds of information systems including both cooperative and competitive systems; expert systems
and artificial intelligence; and executive information systems. This metaphor is
goal oriented with an orderly environment and an external scope. The game
metaphor as Web presence can function in a number of successful ways for the
theatre groups. In the cases of the two theatre groups here, the metaphor was
supportive in fostering a competitive stance. The two groups are quite different,
one is old the other rather newly established. One has grown up with the Web;
the older one is just now recognizing the importance of Web presence to a
competitive position and is funding professional help for the Web site’s
development and maintenance.

Both organizations display Web sites that are visually and textually
furthering their metaphor of the game. The team-building aspect of the game
metaphor is a positive aspect of this Web presence. Also, the actors involved in
this metaphor seem happy and they want to succeed. The metaphor is working
well for both organizations. If in the future, either decides to move to a regionally
cooperative, rather than competitive stance, or to increasing support of a niche
audience, the game metaphor is flexible enough for them to embrace these
strategic changes.

**Recommendations for the Theatre Evoking the Organism Metaphor**

There was only one theatre that displayed the organism metaphor in the
fifteen Southern New Jersey theatre Web presences that we studied. This
metaphor depicts a balance between alternative and goal orientation; it also
features a balance between an orderly and chaotic environment, and has an
external scope. In our previous research we found that the organism metaphor afforded the most likelihood of success for the most types of information systems. It was particularly supportive of the growth of five of the six types of information systems studied which included cooperative systems, competitive systems, expert systems/AI, decision support systems and executive information systems. The only type of system where the organism metaphor did not seem to play a positive or negative role was that of a traditional management information system.

Developing a Web presence with an organism metaphor affords a theatre company a great deal of flexibility. It permits growth, change and experimentation that other metaphors do not. At the same time, there is orderliness to this metaphor and the visual and design elements of a Web site benefit from the imposition of logical connections, (even though the hypertext format permits users to make some illogical leaps of content on their own). The organism is a very positive metaphor for regional theatre Web presence. It allows the expression of creativity balanced by the requisite discipline to adapt and grow. It accommodates many different types of participants, many new ideas and it can serve as a liberating metaphor for an organization. Once a theatre group recognizes that by using an organism metaphor it need no longer be held hostage to its own history, its past participants, or play choices, the potential effect on their ability to attract and retain participants will be exhilarating.

Based on our assessment of the fifteen Southern New Jersey theatre Web sites, we recommend that the theatre groups that are already goal oriented,
(using the machine or journey metaphor) try using the organism metaphor as another way to begin thinking about the strategic position of their theatre group in the region. We believe that the organism metaphor presents a positive, balanced approach between alternative and goal orientation for a Web presence that can help extend and improve the strategic thinking of theatre groups (and their potential audience members) that are already goal oriented but would like to improve their Web presence in a meaningful way.

**Conclusion**

Currently there is a cognitive map of Southern New Jersey that is obviously employed by those who are creating the Web presences for the theatres in the area. Most of the Web sites post directions to their theatres from all over the states of New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware. So there is recognition on this basic level that potential audience members might be drawn from anywhere in a very large, highly populated geographical region. However, considered as a whole, the theatre groups do not make use of this regional identity or knowledge in any meaningful way on the Web.

We know from other businesses that locating similar businesses together in clusters often helps the businesses perform better than those that are in dispersed locations. Demonstrative examples of this are co-located art dealers, antique dealers, restaurants, and ethnic neighborhoods. This also applies to the performing arts, where “Broadway” in New York City and “The West End” in London are prime examples. This example extends to smaller, off-Broadway
theatres as well. In New York, 42nd Street between 8th and 9th Avenues is known as “Theatre Row” and in Philadelphia, a portion of Broad Street is known as “The Avenue of the Arts.”

However, the theatres of Southern New Jersey are unable to take advantage of a central theatre district or “theatre row.” As we have seen, theatres are scattered across eight counties and some are located off major highways or sheltered on college campuses. Getting potential audiences to even realize that the theatres exist is a problem that needs to be overcome. This is where ecommerce can play a role.

Theatres need to adequately describe a current production, a series subscription, venue, the participants, and the audience, thus encouraging theatre patrons to come and participate. Theatres have primarily relied on newspaper ads, while depending enormously on series subscribers and repeat visitors. Word of mouth may work well for long-run Broadway productions like Les Miz or The Producers, but is of limited value when smaller theatres have very short runs, sometimes only over a single weekend. Radio and TV spots are far too expensive for the most part.

Highly identifiable Web presence with ecommerce features such as online ticketing and meaningful, organized links are an ideal place to promote current productions. Since patrons of theatres are educated and have sufficient disposable income to attend cultural events, they tend to have the means and desire to search for information on the Web.
The relationship is asymmetrical, however. Although patrons have the means to seek information, we have seen in the foregoing discussion of the fifteen theatres in the area that small theatre companies often do not have the personnel, expertise, or funding or time it takes to develop a credible Web presence. When a theatre decides to pursue a Web presence, we have seen from the sites investigated here that the theatre tends to begin from scratch, act independently, and use a volunteer to create a Web site that may or may not match their organizational mission.

It is said that while railroads conquered distance, ecommerce eliminated distance. That may be true in some ways, but not in all. For example, a customer may be able to obtain information about a product and even see a 3-D photograph as well and thereby save a trip to the store.

According to Kendall (2000) one of the main elements of ecommerce is attracting customers to a Website. An undiscovered website is infinitely distant and one that is 5 clicks away may rule out 90 percent of the public. Developers of ecommerce sites often use a two-click rule. They design sites that allow customers to access anything on the site by clicking the mouse a maximum of two times. Internal site navigation is a measure of distance.

Locating and getting to the Website is another form of distance. If a patron uses a search engine, that patron still needs to read, evaluate, and select a link to follow. If a theatre patron is on one theatre Website and wants to travel to another, the patron has no clue in how to do this (unless of course it is saved in
their ‘favorites’ file). As location theory researchers have pointed out, there are advantages to locating like-businesses near each other. Minimizing distance is a virtue. In the ecommerce world, we will call this distance (both internal navigation and external navigation) e-distance.

**Southern New Jersey Theatres and E-distance**

The e-distance between South Jersey theatres is greater than the actual distance between the theatres. Some organizations have attempted to provide links to all of the relevant theatre Websites. Examples of this are the New Jersey Theatre League, the New Jersey Theatre Alliance, NJ Theatre.com, Discover NJ Arts Online, and the South Jersey Cultural Alliance. Some of these levy a fee to the individual theatres to link, but do little besides providing a link to an alphabetized list of theatres. The New Jersey Theatre Alliance is experimenting with online purchasing of ticket packages, but they do not offer individual seats for a particular performance.

In order to browse an upcoming theatre schedule or find out more details about a current production, a patron has to either know all the URLs of the theatres of interest, or keep returning to one of the central alliance websites. The theatres in South Jersey are not directly linked, so browsing becomes cumbersome.

The theatres however, do not typically have reciprocal links to the alliance Websites. This increases the e-distance to the community and South Jersey theatres need to belong to a community of theatres to survive. Absent are links to
other friendly theatres. Although actors taking on roles in a variety of community productions may participate with more than one theatre, the theatres are not yet able to see themselves as a cooperative community.

On Broadway, theatres are linked in two ways. First, large groups of theatres are owned by organizations such as the Shubert Organization (17 Broadway theatres) or the Nederlander Producing Company of America (8 Broadway theatres, a total of 35 venues throughout the US). Furthermore, tickets are available online through a common ticket agency like Telecharge (owned by the Shubert Organization) or Ticketmaster, the world’s largest ticket retailer. Both of these sites describe the play and allow easy navigation among current productions. They also facilitate ticket purchases, albeit for a small fee. Other Websites like Broadway.com and Playbill.com add reviews, show biz gossip and curtain call photos. These Websites minimize e-distance and instill a sense of family.

Even some New York based off-Broadway theatres share a common box office called Ticket Central, where patrons can purchase tickets online for a dozen productions. On this site, you can find a navigation bar with a feature called “In the Neighborhood.” By clicking on this tab, you are directed to a page with neighborhood restaurants (including links to the restaurant Websites) and detailed parking information. Often restaurants and parking ramps will give discounts to theatre patrons who show their current ticket stubs. The sense of community is very strong and cooperation among theatres, restaurants, and parking establishments is stressed.
Only one of the 15 South Jersey theatres, Triple Threat, allows ticket purchases online. Some, like Holly City Repertory of Millville, link to local restaurants. Although theatre alliances create links to the theatres, the theatres of South Jersey do not always provide reverse links. Some that do display the links in a disorganized way, so patrons cannot distinguish among the links without actually clicking on them.

The theatres in South Jersey need to join together. They can do this by cooperating and coming together by linking to one another on the Web. These strategic alliances will not result in disloyal patrons. Rather, they will increase the level of interest among patrons. The southern New Jersey nonprofit theatres can greatly benefit from creating a regional identity on the Web. Rather than seeing themselves only as members of a city or county arts community, the theatres can move rhetorically and visually, through the use of their Web presences, to fashion a regional identity that can enable them to build audiences, garner new sources of funding and discover new well springs of talent. Only then will they be able to conquer e-distance.

There are only one or two instances where the theatres are providing reciprocal links with other theatre companies, and some artistic directors even jealously guard the resumes of the actors who work with the company from season to season, explicitly discouraging the actor from working at another area theatre. The loyalty to a particular theatre company becomes paramount then, not the perfection of the actor’s craft, nor the pooling of area talent, nor the improvement of the overall level of the Southern New Jersey theatre experience.
Those considerations aside for a moment, we recommend that the theatres follow through on their impulses toward creating a regional identity, so that they are truly drawing audiences, talent, ideas, and funding from the region. This can be manifested metaphorically in the Web presence by rewriting the content to widen the language to include more of the community, or adding more language reflective of the growing organism.

Specifically, the Web sites can be changed to ensure the inclusion of reciprocal links, especially for nearby theatres that have seasons that are clearly different (for example a theatre season without musicals, which presents several original dramas; or an experimental theatre linking with another that does outstanding community outreach). Theatre Web sites can also be linked to other alliance Web sites. Theatre companies may also consider contributing to the creation of an exclusively regional Web site for Southern New Jersey Theatres that uses a different metaphor (perhaps the organism metaphor) that is able to reconceptualize individual theatre offerings as a lively and growing regional resource.

For many years in government, and other types of service and supply situations (for example the composition of fire and rescue teams; and the distribution of human blood), there has been an acknowledgement of our existence in a region or district. The Southern New Jersey regional nonprofit theatres can greatly benefit from this type of regional identify as well. Rather than only seeing themselves as members of a city or county arts community, the theatres can move rhetorically and visually, through the use of their Web sites to
a fashion a regional identity which can help them in building audiences, garnering new sources of funding and finding new well springs of talent. While many of the theatres are aware of the importance of the region, few understand the strategic importance of invoking that regional identity through their Web presence.

This study was useful in helping us to extend our research findings on metaphors and Web presence to nonprofit theatre arts groups in Southern New Jersey, thereby helping them to improve their strategic use of the Web to fulfill their missions in serving, educating and entertaining the public as well as providing exposure to new ideas of emerging playwrights, directors, and actors. This study was unique in that our research brought together the fields of business, ecommerce, and nonprofit theatre arts groups and it was intended to facilitate the integration of Web development and organizational and IT policy research findings to help theatre arts groups realize their true potential in the region.
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Julie E. Kendall, Ph. D., is an associate professor of ecommerce and information technology in the School of Business-Camden, Rutgers University and is currently a Fellow of the Walter Rand Institute for Public Affairs. She is now serving as Treasurer of the Decision Sciences Institute, and has served as a Vice President for DSI. Professor Kendall has published in *MIS Quarterly*, *Decision Sciences, Information & Management, Organization Studies* and many other journals. Additionally, Dr. Kendall has recently co-authored *Systems Analysis and Design*, fifth edition, and *Project Planning and Requirements Analysis for IT Systems Development*. She co-edited the volume *Human, Organizational, and Social Dimensions of Information Systems Development*. Professor Kendall is a Senior Editor for *JITTA* and is also the Chair of IFIP Working Group 8.2. She and her co-author (and spouse) Ken are currently examining the strategic uses of Web presence and ecommerce for off-Broadway theatres and other nonprofit organizations in the service sector. Her home page can be accessed at www.thekendalls.org.