

An Examination of the Impact of Paratextual Variables on Response and ROI In Direct Mail Fund-Raising Campaigns:



If Your Envelope Doesn't Get Opened, Then It Really Doesn't Matter What You Put Inside!

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Executive Summary

In speech, two classes of factors are considered *paralinguistic* (from the Greek *para* “alongside” + the Latin *lingual* “of the tongue”). These factors come alongside and add impact beyond that which can be derived from word meanings alone. One class of paralinguistic factors includes *physical* characteristics like gestures and facial expressions. Other paralinguistic factors are *prosodic*, a word rooted in the Greek tradition epitomized in the Homeric odes that put stories of the Trojan wars to music (Lord, 1960; Parry, 1971). The Greek roots of *prosody* (*pros* “to” + *oide* “song”) refer to the rhythms, stress points, pitch, and tone of the speech. Physical and prosodic factors create most of the impact of spoken discourse.

In writing, certain factors are considered to be *paratextual* (*alongside* the written text). Like paralinguistic devices, these factors add impact beyond the printed words that comprise a text. Common paratextual factors include the use of underlining, **bold**, and *italicized* type.

The Latin legal phrase, *conditio sine qua non*, translates into English as *a condition without which not*. It aptly positions the all-important first task of getting a direct mail envelope opened. Stated in unvarnished English, ***if your envelope doesn't get opened, then it really doesn't matter what you put inside!***

To identify correlations between response and paratextual factors, I review published literature describing the results nonprofits have achieved as a result of adjusting non-lingual (physical) aspects of direct mail to get more envelopes opened. In addition, I describe outcomes achieved by organizations participating in my own tests of paratextual variation. Sherry Minton and Renee Warner with the American Heart Association (AHA) and Ray Morrissey with Franciscan Friars of the Atonement (FFA) provided valuable data for my dissertation. My thanks for their generous permission to report their organizations' results.

One campaign produced by AHA compared variation between two segments of a mailing sent to 50,000 households. One 25,000-piece segment (the control group) received a note card package that had been hand addressed and featured a salutation and P.S. note personalized in real human handwriting. A parallel segment (the test group) received the same package with the only difference being the handwriting method used. The test segment had been addressed and personalized with a computer-simulated handwriting style, called Computer HandScript™, that had been created from samples of my own penmanship. ***The test segment using my Computer HandScript™ out-performed the control segment that used real handwriting on four indices: response, average gift, gross income, and net income.***

Another campaign produced by AHA compared variation in response attributable to differing postage treatments. In one test, a control segment used full-rate first class postage stamps that had been cancelled as usual by the USPS. The test segment used presort first class stamps that had been cancelled by the mail shop in order to disguise the fact that they were not full-rate stamps. Presort first class stamps are not usually cancelled. But if special permission is obtained from the Post Office, such stamps may be postmarked. This special accommodation is necessary, given that the DMM [Domestic Mail Manual] actually prohibits canceling first class presort, standard, and nonprofit stamps. Thus, a special exemption from this prohibition is necessary if such discount-rate stamps are to be to legally postmarked.

The variation in response between the full-rate first class and presort first class segments was statistically *insignificant*. This suggests that canceling discount-rate stamps with a postmark, makes such mail look like it was sent at the full first class rate, causes it to look more personal, gets more envelopes opened, and can ultimately achieve a better ROI.

A second test by FFA measured variation in response attributable to the presence or absence of a postmark on nonprofit stamps. Two equal segments of a 20,000-piece note card mailing like that produced for AHA were compared. Stamps in the control segment of 10,000 pieces had been mailed naked (with no cancellation postmark). Stamps in the test segment of 10,000 pieces had been canceled with a mailer's postmark called PostCode™. The only difference between segments was the presence or the absence of a postmark. Response to the canceled stamp segment was 27.27 percent greater than response to the naked-stamp segment. ***What a difference a mark makes!***

This second test, comparing naked and cancelled nonprofit stamps, has important implications for future research because it ***suggests a way nonprofits might achieve savings up to 70 percent on mailings they normally send at the full first class rate.*** For example, in the presort first class/full-rate first class test described above for AHA, most of the 1,077,067 pieces had been sent at the full first class rate. Assuming that the entire mailing had been sent, instead, using nonprofit postage (with stamps canceled in order to make them look like first class mail), a total of \$301,578.76 would have been saved in postage costs alone. This assumes that the response rate to the nonprofit mail would have been the same as that of the first class presort and full-rate first class segments. Further testing is needed.

Though the evidence is anecdotal, my own company, High Touch Direct Mail, often receives address corrections to letters we mail at the standard rate. Moreover, clients for whom we produce campaigns using cancelled nonprofit stamps often get address corrections as well. This occurs despite the fact that DMM regulations state that undeliverable standard and nonprofit letters are to be discarded rather than returned to the sender. ***Postal workers are obviously mistaking such pieces for ordinary full-rate first class mail.*** As a result, occasionally (though not always) clients' mail receives address correction service instead of being thrown away.

With first class postage rates constantly rising, for mid- and major-donor mailings (those that often use first class postage), future tests of PostCoded™ mail are certainly warranted. In fact, had AHA's 1,077,067-piece mailing used cancelled nonprofit stamps instead of first class stamps, ***the postage savings alone would have been \$301,578.76—an amount equal to 36 percent of the \$828,726.87 net income the AHA campaign raised!***

In summary, ***variation of paratextual features does affect response and ROI.*** While the cost of computer-simulated handwriting did increase the unit price of AHA's mailing (which test, by the way, was not produced by High Touch Direct Mail but by an independent third party), the higher cost over conventional mail was more than justified by the increase in net income. And AHA's use of PostCode™-cancelled first class presort stamps significantly mitigated costs. But the FFA results suggest that using cancelled nonprofit stamps could achieve even greater savings—as high as 70 percent on mail normally sent at the first class rate. Assuming a nonprofit rate of 13¢, the 31¢ savings over a 44¢ stamp is 70.4 percent!

AHA conducted additional tests comparing Computer HandScripted™ mail packages to conventional formats. Though not summarized here, my article fully documents these results too.

In the year of our Lord 1432, there arose a grievous quarrel among the brethren over the number of teeth in the mouth of a horse. For 13 days the disputation raged without ceasing. All the ancient books and chronicles were fetched out, and wonderful and ponderous erudition, such as was never before heard of in this region, was made manifest.

At the beginning of the 14th day, a youthful friar of goodly bearing asked his learned superiors for permission to add a word, and straightaway, to the wonderment of the disputants, whose deep wisdom, he sore vexed, he beseeched them to unbend in a manner coarse and unheard-of, and to look in the open mouth of a horse and find the answer to their questioning.

At this their dignity being grievously hurt, they waxed exceedingly wroth; and, joining in a mighty uproar, they flew upon him and smote him hip and thigh, and cast him out forthwith. For, said they, surely Satan hath tempted this bold neophyte to declare unholy and unheard-of ways of finding truth contrary to the teachings of the fathers.

After many days of grievous strife, the dove of peace sat on the assembly, and they as one man, declaring the problem to be an everlasting mystery because of a grievous dearth of historical and theological evidence thereof, so ordered the same writ down.

Francis Bacon, (quoted in Milton, 1972, pp. 18,19)

Francis Bacon's parable of the youthful friar, who vexed his elders by suggesting they look in the open mouth of a horse to *count its teeth*, can be extended to linguistics. Computer technology now enables language scholars to peer into the mouth *their* horse—the written text. The dissertation of which this excerpt is one part, discusses three aspects of language 1.) the written *discourse* of fund-raising, 2.) the *people* who write or cause that discourse to be written, and 3.) the ability of *paratextual variables* to enhance reader involvement and improve response to fund-raising discourse. Three separate investigations, use three different research methodologies:

- *Linguistic Patterns Revealed by MD Analysis of the Dickerson IRS 880 Corpus*—the unit of analysis is a *fund-raising text*. Among America's largest nonprofit organizations, fund-raising discourse is examined using Douglas Biber's (1988) research methods.
- *Profiles of Those who Write Fund-Raising Discourse Drawn from the Voice of Philanthropy Survey*—the unit of analysis is a *nonprofit leader*. Among America's largest nonprofit organizations, leaders who write or cause the discourse of fund raising to be written are profiled using a survey.
- *Measures of Change Attributable to Paratextual Variation in Package among Six Direct Mail Campaigns*—the unit of analyses is a *paratextual variable*. In six A/B split panel tests, variation in response between control and test packages, each of which feature a paratextual variable, is measured

using five indices: number of gifts raised, percent response, total dollar income, average gift, and income received. The following addresses the third, *paratextual* aspect of the study, and is basically a reprint of the chapter without extensive editing.

This article essentially is a reprint of my dissertation chapter summarizing the third area of my research—the effect on response of *paratextual* features of *package design*—physical, non-lingual features that work *para* (alongside) texts to shape and affect results in direct mail campaigns. I specifically examine the effects of addressing envelopes and writing notes on mail in simulated handwriting, varying the postage stamps affixed, and varying the application or absence of cancellation marks on stamps. I hypothesize that these factors affect interpersonal involvement and response. This hypothesis is tested by examining the results of paratextual variation in mailing campaigns totaling 1,247,053 pieces of mail—an important examination since nothing else really matters if the envelope an appeal is sent in doesn't get opened.

While primarily descriptive in nature, it is hoped that this research will inform the practice of those who write the voice of philanthropy for the people and causes their organizations serve. To this end, I begin with a case—an example of fund-raising discourse from the past that is relevant to those who work in the present. The following description by one of America's founding fathers introduces a man considered to be America's greatest colonial-era fund raiser.

Long before the terms *corpus linguistics* or *discourse analysis* had been coined, Benjamin Franklin notes that “in 1739 arrived among us from Ireland the Reverend Mr. Whitefield, who had made himself remarkable there as an itinerant preacher.” Franklin welcomed evangelist George Whitefield as a guest in his home after the preacher's usual host had moved to Germantown. Franklin seemed to admire his houseguest, perhaps because like himself he was not only influential but also controversial: “He was at first permitted to preach in some of our churches, but the clergy, taking a dislike to him, soon refus'd him their pulpits, and he was oblig'd to preach in the fields” (1777-1788/1909, p. 100). No doubt Franklin appreciated the parallel with Jesus, whose famous sermon on the mount was likewise delivered in an outdoor venue because he was unwelcome in the synagogues. Franklin documents the reach of Whitefield's social activism and his fund-raising discourse:

Mr. Whitefield, in leaving us, went preaching all the way thro' the colonies to Georgia. The settlement of that province had lately been begun, but, instead of being made with hardy, industrious husbandmen, accustomed to labor, the only people fit for a such an enterprise, it was with families of broken shop-keepers and other insolvent debtors, many of indolent and idle habits, taken out of the jails, who being set down in the woods, unqualified for clearing land, and unable to endure the hardships of a new settlement, perished in numbers, leaving many helpless children unprovided for. The sight of their miserable situation inspir'd the benevolent Mr. Whitefield with the idea of building

an Orphan House there, in which they might be supported and educated. Returning northward, he preach'd up this charity, and made large collections, for his eloquence had a wonderful power over the hearts and purses of his hearers, of which I was myself an instance.

I happened soon after to attend one of his sermons, in the course of which I perceived he intended to finish with a collection, and I silently resolved he should get nothing from me. I had in my pocket a handful of copper money, three or four silver dollars, and five pistoles in gold. As he proceeded I began to soften, and concluded to give the copper. Another stroke of his oratory made me asham'd of that, and determin'd me to give the silver; and he finish'd so admirably, that I empty'd my pocket wholly into the collector's dish, gold and all. (Franklin, 1777-1788/1909, pp. 101, 102)

Although Franklin does not quote the exact text of the speech that motivated him to give, his recollection describes how Whitefield portrayed the orphans' plight (an appeal to pathos), an understanding of the cause of their predicament and a proposed solution (appeals to logos), and an unambiguous request for financial help (an appeal to the will—he called for action by passing *the collectors dish*). Whitefield was first and foremost a preacher who had learned the art of interpersonal involvement with his audiences. While not considered a particularly good writer, he was considered an extraordinarily gifted speaker, able to connect even with massive audiences on an emotional plane. The subjects of *emotion* and *interpersonal involvement* figure central to the empirical findings of this study—notions which Biber's multidimensional analysis gives operational meaning.

Franklin also noticed a significant nonlinguistic variable that contributed to Whitefield's success: "He had a loud and clear voice, and articulated his words so perfectly, that he might be heard and understood at a great distance" (1777-1788/1909, p. 103). However, being dubious of reports that the preacher's audience had numbered in the tens of thousands, he recalls the night Whitefield spoke from the Courthouse steps on Market Street:

I had the curiosity to learn how far he could be heard, by retiring backwards down the street towards the river; and I found his voice distinct till I came to Front-street, when some noise in that street obscur'd it. Imagining then a semicircle, of which my distance should be the radius, and that it were fill'd with auditors, to each of whom I allowed two square feet, I computed that he might be heard by more than thirty thousand. This reconciled me to the newspaper accounts of his having preached to twenty-five thousand people in the fields. (Franklin, 1777-1788/1909, p. 103)

Thus at a time when Philadelphia's population was estimated to be "1,500 dwellings in the town, housing an estimated population of 10,000" (Weigley, Wainwright & Wolf; 1982, p. 79), Whitefield could have been heard by all of them at once. Although it was the *textual variable* (the actual content of his discourse), that moved others to support the orphanage in Georgia, this *paralinguistic variable* (the reach of Whitefield's voice) was just as significant, since a message that could not be heard was no message at all. The paratextual variables of the physical packaging this study examines, which support delivery and affect response to direct mail, parallel the paralinguistic variables of prosody that supported the delivery of Whitefield's message through his powerful and clear voice. *Paratextual variables* work alongside writing as *paralinguistic variables* work alongside speech.

Mapping the World of Philanthropy: The Needy, The Givers, The Helpers

The essential meaning of the word *philanthropy* guides this research, as described in its two Greek roots—*φιλός* (filial, or brotherly love) and *ανθρωπός* (mankind). They combine to form *ἡ φιλανθρωπία* (the friend of mankind) (Gingrich, 1971). As Whitefield demonstrated, a characteristic of American philanthropy is its continuing willingness to be indiscriminately generous—to treat complete strangers as friends and family, offering help with little or no precondition as modeled by the Good Samaritan’s charity. Whitefield embodied the meaning of the word philanthropy in his indiscriminate generosity. Of his philanthropic zeal Cutlip writes:

In his seven visits to the colonies, Whitefield took up collections for poor debtors, raised money for the victims of disaster, and secured books and financial assistance for hard-pressed colonial colleges. Harvard, Dartmouth, Princeton, and the University of Pennsylvania all benefited from his assistance. If no single institution can be regarded as his monument, the reason is partly that he helped so many. (1965, p. 6)

As a backdrop for this study, I assume the three constituent domains in what I call *The World of Philanthropy*. These domains are illustrated in Figure 1 in terms of the people who populate each: 1.) *the needy* or *recipients of funding*—the persons, institutions, or causes who need aid; 2.) *the givers* or *sources of funding*—the individuals, corporations, governments, or foundations who contribute money to provide aid for *the needy*; and 3.) *the helpers* or *channels of funding*—nonprofit organizations that raise money from *the givers* and channel funds to *the needy* through aid-giving programs. This research focuses on *the helpers*—nonprofit organizations—and divides the work of a nonprofit organization between two major task domains: 1.) fund-raising tasks, which are targeted to *the givers* and 2.) aid-programming tasks, which are targeted to *the needy*:

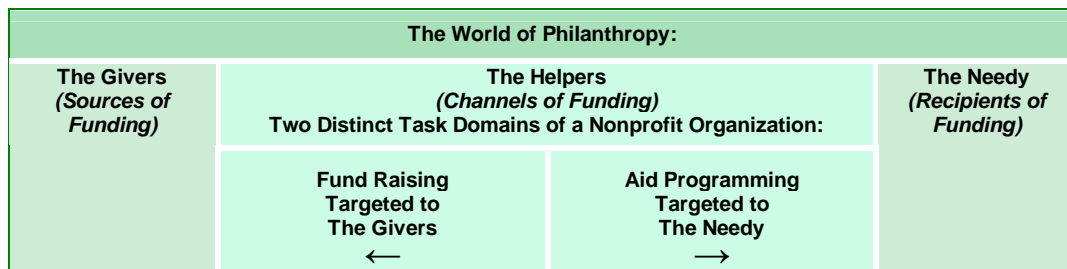


Figure 1. The three constituent domains of the world of philanthropy.

The focus of this research is fund raising targeted to those who can financially support a nonprofit organization’s mission. This follows Drucker’s (1973) contention that not all areas of planning and managing an enterprise are equally important. Drucker offers an intentionally disproportionate taxonomy of eight key result areas that he argues are “the same for all businesses, for all businesses depend on the same factors for their survival” (p. 100). His taxonomy includes: 1.) marketing, 2.) innovation, 3.) human organization, 4.) financial resources, 5.) physical resources, 6.) productivity, 7.) social responsibility, and 8.) profit requirements.

However, Drucker argues that “marketing and innovation are the foundation areas in objective setting. It is in these two areas that a business obtains its results. . . .In all other objective areas the purpose of doing is to make possible the attainment of the objectives in the areas of marketing and innovation” (1973, p.103).

Fund raising is a nonprofit organization’s cognate of marketing. For a nonprofit organization, online and in print fund appeals are a philanthropic voice advocating for those the organization helps. A nonprofit’s ability to attract part of the \$300 billion-plus Americans donate annually to philanthropy depends on its ability to write the voice of philanthropy. Thus, a nonprofit’s fund-raising discourse is its medium of exchange. Apart from what it writes or says, no funds are raised, no people are helped.

Fund raising can be divided among three broad task domains—*strategy* (deciding what to do), *management* (planning, organizing, leading and controlling the implementation of strategy) and *communication* (the essential heart of the process, comprised of oral, written, and visual discourse). This study is limited to the task domain of communication as illustrated in Figure 2. And within the domain of communication, I focus on written discourse targeted by *the helpers* (channels of funding) to *the givers* (sources of funding). Written discourse is subdivided between the dimensions of *language* and *paralanguage*. Finally, I separate *language* into the *rhetorical* and *linguistic* sub dimensions, and similarly divide paralanguage between the *paratextual* and *paralingual* sub dimensions.

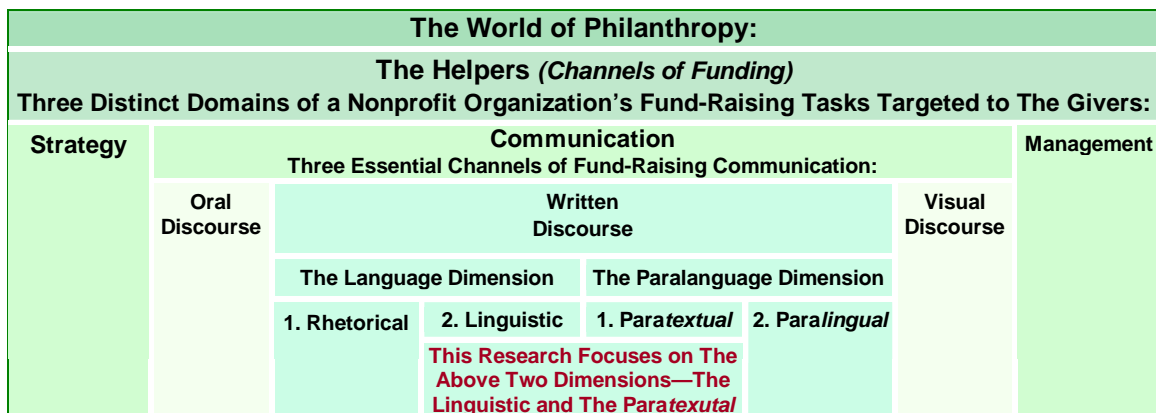


Figure 2. Delimiting domains in the world of philanthropy.

Review of Literature Relevant to the Effect of Paratextual Variables on Direct Mail Fund-Raising Response

Pennycook (1985) notes that Trager (1958) was the first to use the term paralanguage in a study that synthesized linguistic and psychological data to classify factors that, in addition to the actual content of speech, create the overall communicative context between a speaker and hearer. Paralanguage literally means that which *comes alongside* language (whether text or speech) to intensify, clarify, modify, contextualize or otherwise assist in the communicative process. In speech such devices might include changes in the speaker’s tone of voice, a

smile or frown, a wavering voice, laughing or crying, a rapid pace or pause, gestures, whispering and perhaps even silence. In writing the range is more limited, but familiar devices include underlining, headlines like the one above this paragraph with numeric markings (2.12.1), *italicized print*, special glyphs like bullets (●), photographs, lines of text beneath photographs called cut lines. Such paralinguistic features are literally situated *beside the lingual* (literally alongside the tongue). I distinguish between paralinguistic features that work closely with words, and another class of design features those that work above the level of words that are more issues of design. In this research I refer to these design features with the word *paratextual* from the Latin *textus* the style or texture of a work, literally the thing woven, as a cloth (Bringhurst, 2004). The evocative word picture Bringhurst paints is that of a writer who weaves words into a flowing new cloth. Among these are issues of the physical context. For example, a book's cover may be paper or hard, its pages may be of glossy or matte paper, the stock may be text or cover weight. Other paratextual features may be strategically designed to create greater reader involvement (cf. Tannen, 1982), such as greeting formats, addressing with real or simulated handwriting, adding personalized notes in blue penmanship, affixing live postage stamps (Warwick, 2008f) rather than using a postage meter or indicia to communicate a hand-prepared look.

The importance of such paralinguistic and paratextual features can be significant as among the total list of variables affecting communicative outcomes. In the area of speech, Pennycook cites Birdwhistell's claim that "probably no more than 30 to 35 percent of the social meaning of a conversation or an interaction is carried by the words" (1970:158). "These figures appear to have gained fairly wide acceptance," Pennycook observes, "as a number of authors cite 65 percent as the communicative load carried by the paralinguistic channels" (p.261). Thus, many language scholars suggest that in speech and writing alike, paralanguage makes a significant contribution to cohesion. Cohesion, according to Halliday and Hasan (1976), is defined as the quality that gives them the form of a unified whole as compared to a string of unrelated sentences. They suggest that in a cohesive text, "some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another" (p. 4). Schiffrin describes cohesion as "how speakers and hearers jointly integrate forms, meanings, and actions to make overall sense of what is said" (1987, p. 49).

Tannen (1982) says that "cohesion is established in spoken discourse through paralinguistic and non-verbal channels (tone of voice, intonation, prosody, facial expression, and gesture" (1982, p. 3). Then she extends the notion of cohesion to both spoken and written texts, by reframing the orality/literate dichotomy. She argues that "orality and literacy should not be seen as elements of a dichotomy. Rather, any particular

instance of speaking and writing is a rich texture of features associated with these two modes” (1988, p. 40).

Tannen thus advocates avoiding hard and fast labels distinguishing the oral from the literate, and suggests that it is more useful to describe oral or textual discourse using the continuum of more or less involved/more or less detached. Biber (1988, 1995, 1998) develops this notion in his Involved/Information Production dimension, one of seven such dimensions of variation he has identified in written and spoken English. Paralanguage, therefore, applies to both written and spoken discourse.

Though she did not use the term cohesion, Sullivan (1998), a professor of rhetoric at Purdue University, recasts the above discussion in terms of the discipline of rhetoric. She casts many of the paralinguistic features described above as tools of *visual rhetoric*. She traces designers’ history of concern for the look of text as being rooted in a desire to increase readability, utility, and comprehension. Medieval illuminators viewed the works they transcribed as worthy of a context worthy context (which means to literally weave together two things into one). Moreover, in the twenty-first century, holy books in the Middle East are never prepared as cheap paperbacks, as a pocket New Testament might be printed in America. Rather, according to David Harriman (personal communication, May, 2001) a Qur’an would be constructed with elegant design considerations that honor its status. Like McLuhan (1964, 1967) who made the medium of communication more than ancillary but constitutive, Sullivan (1998) suggests that in addition to intensifying the meaning of text, variables of visual rhetoric has the potential to add new meaning: “Even when text is the focus, as it is in print literacy, visual connections carry meaning—through tactics such as grouping, emphasizing, and employing or breaking aesthetic rules” (p. 76). Schiffrin (1987) disagrees with this view, saying: “Cohesive devices do not themselves create meaning; they are clues used by speakers and hearers to find the meanings which underlie the surface utterances” (p.9). Of course, Schiffrin is a linguist. I concur with McLuhan and Sullivan and suggest that if the physical characteristics reflect a wide enough break from aesthetic norms, that deviation in creating a new medium essentially becomes a message in and of itself.

Most systematic attempts to describe a grammar of visual rhetoric have helped enhance readability by setting standards for readability through initiatives like specifying font size and type. Sullivan (1998) notes that researchers (Berryman, 1984; Williamson, 1989) have created helped establish design protocols for that arranging visual elements and according to the natural viewing path the human eye travels as it moves across a page of text (Keyes, 1987; Dragga and Gong, 1989; Meggs, 1992; Hilligoss & Howard, 2002; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). In reviewing the research of direct marketing, both commercial and fund raising (Geller, 2002;

Nash, 2000; Stone, 1979, 1997; Stone & Jacobs, 2001; Warwick, 1990 2003; Yadin, 1994) certain package styles seem to have become standard-bearers for the genre—traditional number 10 business envelope-size packages, use of window envelopes, use of Times New Roman or Arial fonts). However, shifts in elements of the visual side of page-bound rhetoric can add shift style and thus add meaning. For example Tannen notes that type can add the involvement (1982): “An appeal from Rosalynn Carter to support Habitat for Humanity could hardly be expected to follow the strict visual conventions of a government research proposal. We would expect such a letter to have a personal insignia and be printed using a typewriter font. We might also expect handwritten emendations (or at least a handwriting font), perhaps in a blue ink that would create visual contrast in type and color” (p. 84). By shifting the visual rhetoric of the piece, involvement between writer and reader is enhanced.

Following Sullivan’s notion that shifts in visual rhetoric can add meaning and Tannen’s thesis that such elements create both cohesion and involvement, in addition to the linguistic analysis, this research also tests two paralinguistic manipulations of direct mail packages. These include addressing direct mail in real and simulated handwriting and canceling stamps that are normally mailed *naked*—that is, with no cancellation marks, which creates more of a mass-produced look. The working hypothesis is that these *paratextual* manipulations may enhance involvement with the reader, in the way Biber (1988) observes that certain linguistic devices (e.g. personal pronouns, contractions, questions, and narrative style) create involvement at the level of text. This research will test three paralinguistic variables described more fully below—the manipulation of the physical appearance of envelopes to create a more personal and involving look by addressing them in real handwriting or Computer HandScript and by manipulating the appearance of discount postage stamps to make them look like first class postage stamps. These manipulations will test the hypothesis that mail which looks more looks more personal achieves deeper reader writer involvement, and this, in turn, improves response.

These experiments can be valuable in light of the fact that trends in the direct mail fund-raising industry seem to the lack variety and levels of personalization this sort of text exhibits. It could reveal valuable lessons and is significant from a financial perspective in that the best text in a fund-appeal, targeted to the best donors on a nonprofit’s list is of no value if the envelope in it is sent never gets opened. Thus, one of the areas investigated is the impact adjustment in the paratext of a mailing package (e.g. the envelope) on response.

Goddard (1998) illustrates the use of such devices in advertising. For a British charity a black and white full-page photograph shows a baby whose eyes are bandaged. A vertical text box, measuring slightly less than a quarter page, is positioned in the upper left next to the bandaged head of the infant. The 24-point Times

New Roman headline in the text box reads: “All this baby will ever remember seeing is her mother, her teddy, and the tips of her father’s fingers.” In the lower right corner of the ad a similar size text box contains a clip-and-mail coupon, with which the reader can supply their name and address, check a box, and mail the form along with a gift to the charity. At the top of this coupon is the equivalent of a short direct mail fund-appeal that begins: “This child is three months old and blinded for life. In a momentary loss of control, her father repeatedly jabbed her in the eyes with his fingers: (p. 14). The text then continues with a request for a donation to help prevent child abuse before it occurs. Goddard’s point is not so much the verbal message of the ad as it is with the paralinguistic elements that work *para* (*beside*) the text to strengthen and give the message added cohesion. Goddard defines graphic elements like the photograph as “aspects of communication that surround and support the verbal language . . . This baby cannot communicate with us, but the fact that she is pictured as if she could (of wants to) is an important contribution to the overall effect of the image, because it makes us interactive partners in the communication process” (p. 15).

Cook (1992) notes the strong influence in communication of paralinguistic variables: “paralanguage interacts with language and on occasion outweighs it. To see that this is true, one has only to imagine the effect of someone sobbing while saying: ‘I am not upset’” (p. 67). Goddard notes that just as the photograph of an infant creates what Tannen (1982) calls involvement, in this case portraying human vulnerability, so too the style of type used can “suggest particular qualities as a result of how it appears: in other words, writing is a form of image-making too. It could be said to have its own paralanguage, as a result of the type of ‘clothing’ the copywriter has chosen for it” (p. 15). Relevant to this research is the “sharp distinction” noted by Goddard, “in how writing appears . . . whether it is handwriting or typed print, since we are likely to read handwriting as more to do with human agency and therefore more personal and individualistic than machine-produced typeface” (p. 15).

Linguists draw a distinction between involvement and fragmentation (Chafe, 1979), creating meaning versus paradigmatic abstraction (Brunner), identification versus alienation (Burke, 1945). Research indicates that specific linguistic devices help create involvement, meaning, and identification (Biber 1988, 1995; Tannen 1989; Rosen, 1987; Schiffrin, 1987). Little research measures the effect of paratextual variables like human or human-looking handwriting on creating involvement. A valid question is whether handwriting, like linguistic heighten features, can heighten interpersonal involvement as well. This seems consistent with Halliday and Hasan’s notion that words create cohesion in text “where the interpretation of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another” (1976. p. 4). If a text maximizes personal involvement though narrative, direct

quotes, and other speech-like strategies, would the additional involvement device of a handwritten address on the envelope create added cohesion and involvement by creating an emotional tone, as prosody does in speech?

This research examines the impact of two forms of non-verbal paralanguage: 1.) hand-personalized mail using computer simulated and genuine handwriting to address envelopes and add personal notes to fund-raising mail and 2.) manipulation of the appearance of postage, which Warwick lists last among the variables that should affect outcomes. Neither of these variables precisely match Warwick's list, although the moderate potential variable of *personalization* and the low potential variable of *stamp, indicia or meter* come close.

These two paralanguage variables are chosen because they are consistent with the investigation of linguistic characteristics that create affect—those associated with producing involvement and with the use of narrative in texts. Similarly, both of these paralinguistic variables are typically used to enhance involvement by emulating the look of personal correspondence. First, a real handwriting is emulated by addressing envelopes with a computer simulated handwriting program called Computer HandScript. Then nonprofit stamps are canceled to give them the look of first class postage stamps, since stamps that are not cancelled are typically associated with mass mailings, which impression, it is hypothesized, depresses response rates. Stating the research goal as a hypothesis, *is there a statistically significant difference in response between two direct mail fund-raising appeals, one of which is addressed with Computer HandScript and on which nonprofit stamps are cancelled, and the other, which is addressed in Times Roman font and on which nonprofit stamps are not cancelled?* The underlying assumption is that if the addressing and postage treatments can give mail more of a personal correspondence look and will improve response rates—less mail will be discarded and more will pass the first challenge—to just get opened.

Goddard (1998) describes this as an example of paralanguage, “a type of ‘clothing’ the copywriter has chosen, . . . whether it is handwriting or typed print, since we are likely to read handwriting as more to do with human agency and therefore more personal and individualistic than machine produced typeface” (p. 16).

However, Cook (1992) believes such techniques are genre-bending: “Real confusion . . . is sought by junk mail, which, mindful of its unopened destiny in the rubbish bin, frequently poses as something else. Thus there are circulars which look like postcards, telegrams, newspapers and invitations” (p. 31). Cook dislikes the direct mail medium, complaining: “junk mail is particularly persistent, and often very annoying. It also infringes privacy, making use of large databases of personal information about individuals” (1992, p. 199). Yet I argue that Cook also builds a case for combining genuine or simulated handwriting with the unexpected substance of personal-looking stationery to create “a third meaning which is quite different from either. This third meaning may

undermine or enhance the advertiser's intention" (1992, p. 28). Nonetheless, his bias causes him Cook to call hand-personalized direct mail as an ill-advised attempt to "take on and take over, the features or another type. Only one or two of the identifying parameters of the imitated discourse type are different. The sender of the postcard is not a friend but a firm; its function is not to greet but to sell. In every other respect it is a regular postcard. The trick may backfire, not only on the public, who may overlook important communications, but also on the firms themselves, as it is more likely to annoy than persuade" (Cook, 1992, pp. 32-33).

Despite these harsh opinions, several descriptive statistical analyses of hand-personalized direct mail campaigns—both those produced using genuine handwriting and using computer-simulated handwriting—have shown positive results (Williams, 1981; Barnett, 1991; Grace, 1997; Printz and Maltby, 1997; Carpenter, 2001; Lautman, 2001; Lewis, 2001, Warwick, 2001; Warwick, 2003). These studies have indicated correlations between hand-personalization and increased response rates, average gifts, and return on investment. However, none have hypothesized a theoretical explanation for the phenomena observed. I suggest that hand-personalization acts paratextually to create interpersonal involvement in the same Biber observes that linguistic features such as first person personal pronouns, contractions, and private verbs have create an emotional tone in written and spoken discourse. What these are to verbal rhetoric, hand personalization is to visual rhetoric.

Of the homogenization of most direct mail, Burnett (2002) warns: "First you are an individual donor. Then you become an entry on a supporters' file. Then you are part of a database. You can almost hear the machine swallowing the donor" (2002, p. 96). In reaction to the perils of depersonalization that technology brings, some nonprofits use low-tech donor cultivation strategies. Barnett (1991) alludes to value of using a high touch strategy of writing personal notes to donors. And Kay Sprinkel Grace (1997) says:

Personalized letters . . . written by hand from one individual are highly effective in solicitations. . . . The power of the handwritten message cannot be underestimated: a full letter, a note on a word-processed letter, or a thank you note all spiral in their effectiveness when handwritten. A lost art, especially in this age of technology, the handwritten letter is read and valued far more than word processed letters" (p.125)"

Grace's sentiments were foreshadowed in Naisbitt's (1982) content analysis, *Megatrends*, which observed that American culture was "moving in the dual directions of high-tech/high touch" (xxii). One expression of this is seen in handwritten notes sent by nonprofit organizations to donors in order to accentuate the relationship factor by personalizing the communication process. Williams (1981) notes that Ohio Wesleyan University recruited class agents who handwrite letters, which were printed on an offset press, then returned to the class agent who hand wrote salutations on each letter before mailing them to their classmates. Although she

did not report specific results, Williams noted that this personalization process “certainly lifts the Ohio Wesleyan appeal out of the ‘junk’ mail category, and its ability to attract new gifts is quite impressive” (1981, p. 209).

Printz and Maltby (1997) describe, the results of two hand-addressed note card-style mailings. The authors noted, “many of the models for generating donor support (through the mail) for humanitarian organizations rely on high volume of inexpensive mailings to generate strong net revenue (1997, p. 18). The results of their two campaigns are reproduced below, comparing outcomes alongside another mailing described as having “more of a general focus on the needs of the Mission . . . expressed in terms of food, shelter, job training, housing and other ‘traditional’ causes for rescue missions” (1997, p. 18).

Table 1

Conventional versus Hand-Personalized Mail for a Rescue Mission			
	Conventional Mailing April, 1995	By-Hand Mailing April, 1996	By-Hand Mailing December, 1996
Pieces Mailed	28,440	8,767	9,275
Responses	945	2,238	1,658
Response Rate	3.32%	25.53%	17.88%
Average Gift	\$42.27	\$53.51	\$89.50
Gross Income	\$39,943	\$119,747	\$148,395
Total Cost	\$16,729	\$18,916	\$16,881
Net Income	\$23,214	\$100,831	\$131,514
ROI	\$2.39:1	\$6.33:1	\$8.79:1
<i>Note.</i> Adapted from Printz and Maltby (1997).			

Syracuse (2008) reports that Deborah Flateman, CEO of the Maryland Food Bank mails a request to new donors for a second gift using a folded note card with a generic (non-variable) typed thank-you message, but “below the message, in handwriting, is the statement: ‘Thank you for your gift. Repeating your gift of (amount) would mean so much.’ The latter is personalized with the amount of the individual’s donation” (p.28).

The Maryland Food Bank’s hand-personalized package in Figure 3 “has helped the organization achieve an average gift across all donors of \$80” Syracuse (2008, p. 28) reports.

Carpenter (2001) reporting for the trade publication, *The NonProfit Times* cited four

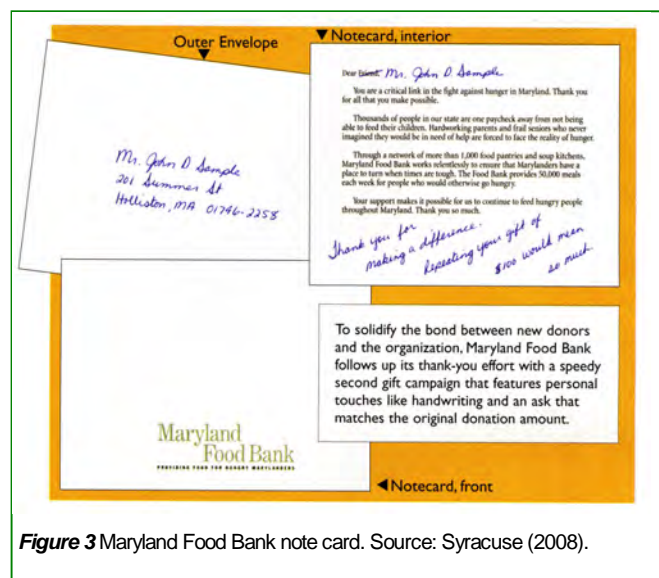


Figure 3 Maryland Food Bank note card. Source: Syracuse (2008).

organizations that use hand-personalized mail: the American Cancer Society (ACS) located in Atlanta, Life Outreach International (LOI) in Texas, Feed the Children (FTC) in Oklahoma, and Lighthouse Ministries (LHM) in Indianapolis. All mailed hand-personalized note cards to both thank donors for contributions and appeal for additional contributions. ACS targeted its note card mailings to donors who had contributed \$100 or more and LOI reported sending one hand-personalized mailing per year. LOI's Vice President, Terry Redmon notes that their hand-personalized mail "typically outperforms other correspondence mailings 2 to 1 and often as much as 3 to 1, considering return on investment. Response rates have also been well above average . . . ranging between 7 and 20 percent" (p. 14). Larry Correa, FTC's Vice President notes that their annual hand-personalized packages, targeted donors who give \$1,000 or more, "drops on December 25 to get that very last donation from the donor" (p.14). Summarizing their Christmas time mailing results, sent to 100,000 donors, Correa reported a response rate of 15 percent. Dale Collie, president of LHM in Indianapolis reported their hand-personalized packages usually yield double their normal appeals' response.

Partney Lautman describes a similar direct mail package that looks more like a friendly note on personal stationery, from New York's Central Park Conservancy. She writes that such packages "are usually sent to high dollar donors because of the expense. The carrier envelope is actually hand addressed while the note is printed. A handwritten P.S. is usually tailored to the donor's past giving history and urges a contribution. For example, it might say, 'Mrs. (name), can you increase your last year's gift to \$150?'" (2001, pp. 86-88).

Warwick (2001) describes a by-hand direct mail package for the San Francisco AIDS foundation, as an "*upscale offer*, entirely consistent with the high production values [and] the \$1,000-and-up ask" (2001, p. 198). Lewis, (2001) describes a by-hand by international relief agency CARE USA, sent to donors who had made gifts of at least \$50, and whose gifts had been made 11 month prior to the mailing date of this renewal package. Like Printz', Lautman's and Warwick's examples, CARE's included a hand-addressed envelope. However, rather than adding just a handwritten P.S. beneath a preprinted message, the appeal was entirely handwritten—34 words in all. Of their ongoing program, CARE's head of direct marketing, Beth Athanassiades, reported that it "typically prompts 9 percent of recipients to give, with an average donation of \$41" (Lewis, 2001, p. 27).

Warwick (2003c, p. 12) notes such mailings can range from hundreds to a millions, are hand addressed with pre-printed body copy, yet personalized with a handwritten P.S. He reports seven cases:

Table	Description	Response
Table 2 Public Radio Station (Fall 2002): Additional Gift Series <i>Note.</i> Adapted from Warwick (2003c).	First drop (conventional bulk mailing)	6.8%
	Second drop (conventional bulk mailing)	4.8%
	Third drop (Written by Hand)	9.5%
Table 3 New England Public TV Station (Winter 2003): Additional Gift Series <i>Note.</i> Adapted from Warwick (2003c).	First drop (conventional bulk mailing)	0.87%
	Second drop (conventional bulk mailing)	0.68%
	Third drop (Written by Hand)	3.0%
Table 4 East Coast Public Radio Station (Winter 2003): Additional Gift Series <i>Note.</i> Adapted from Warwick (2003c).	First drop (conventional bulk mailing)	2.6%
	Second drop (conventional bulk mailing)	4.5%
	Third drop (Written by Hand)	9.0%
Table 5 University (Winter 2003): "Do Not Call", \$1,000 Ask <i>Note.</i> Adapted from Warwick (2003c).	Number sent	249
	Number received	24
	Response rate	10%
	Dollars received	\$4,119
	Average gift	\$172
Table 6 Fraternal Organization (Fall 2002): "Do Not Call" Current, LYBUNT, and LYBUNT Unconnected <i>Note.</i> Adapted from Warwick (2003c).	Number sent	671
	Number received	40
	Response rate	6%
	Dollars received	\$1,750
	Average gift	\$43.75
Table 7 Fraternal Organization (Fall 2002): \$250 Ask <i>Note.</i> Adapted from Warwick (2003c).	Number sent	888
	Number received	100
	Response rate	11%
	Dollars received	\$13,800
	Average gift	\$138
Table 8 National Nonprofit (Fall 2002): \$1,000 Ask <i>Note.</i> Adapted from Warwick (2003c).	Number sent	5,410
	Number received	217
	Response rate	4%
	Dollars received	\$50,174
	Average gift	\$231

Warwick (2003c) describes several paratextual features common to hand-personalized mailing strategies. A typical package “features such touches as first-class postage, real handwritten addresses, personalization, high-quality stocks, and handwritten postscripts and components” (p.1). He reports that the range of response is often “anywhere from 10-15%—although a 20% response rate isn’t uncommon” (p. 1). Common goals, according to Warwick, are to increase the giving of typically 10 percent of an organization’s

mid-level donors, using a series of three highly personalized mailings. Donors already committed to contributing monthly financial support give three times as much as occasional donors, and overall organizations make \$40-\$50 per name mailed. “With an approximate total cost a hefty \$8 per name, the strategy is well worth the investment” Warwick concludes. “Especially when you add in the subsequent years of renewal. Plus, even nonresponders increase their giving the following year” (2003c, p. 1)

Goddard (1998) explains the power of such campaigns, distinguishing between the impact achieved with handwritten and typed copy: “we are more likely to read handwriting as more to do with human agency and therefore more personal and individualistic than machine-produced typeface. These boundaries of ‘human’ and ‘non-human’ are, of course, constructed notions in contemporary society. (p.16).

It is helpful to judge strategies across genres. Certainly one far removed from philanthropy is car sales, where from 1963-1977 Joe Girard “sold more automobiles on a one-to-one basis than anyone else in the world” (AHF, 2008, ¶1). His key was the human touch of hand-personalized cards, which he used to build lifelong relationships and repeat customers. To him mail was “the most important means of contacting . . . prospects and customers on a regular basis” (Girard, 1977, p. 76). He sent customers a card a month, mailing 13,000 a year. He

holds the all-time record for car and truck sales in one year—1,420 vehicles! He sold more cars than anyone ever has in one day—18. His lifetime total of one-at-a-time selling was 13,001 all retail sales. Only five percent of dealerships in the U.S. sold 1,000 cars a year. Girard was averaging that amount each year by himself! Audited by accounting firm of Deloitte & Touche. (AHF, 2008, ¶4).

The increasing popularity of by-hand direct mail is consistent with the major cultural restructuring of American society foreseen by Naisbitt when he observed:

The introduction of the high technology of word processors into our offices has led to a revival of handwritten notes and letters. We couldn’t handle the intrusion of this high technology into . . . our lives without creating some human ballast” (1982, p. 38).

The style of simulated handwriting (Computer HandScript) that this study tests against more conventional means of addressing and personalizing mail, bears a remarkable resemblance to genuine handwriting, since its letters connect and multiple versions of characters adds verisimilitude as Figure 4 shows:

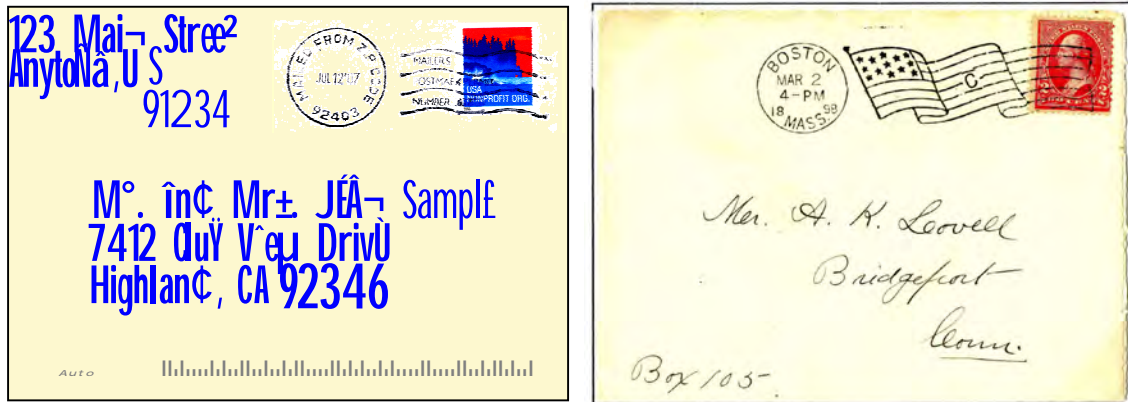


Figure 4. Comparison of 2007 envelope addressed in Computer HandScript with one written by human hand in 1898.

Note. Unlike Fake HandFonts, the letters of Computer HandScript look authentic because they connect, vary, and are made from real handwriting. The intention is to recapture the warmth of personal correspondence exemplified by the 1898 Boston envelope on the right. The Boston facsimile's stamp was defaced by one of its Post Office's first postmark/canceling machines (Barlow, 2008). The HandScript envelope nonprofit stamp is also cancelled to make it look like first class mail and thus boost response.

The idea of using Computer HandScript is to create the look and emotional warmth of personal mail like that pictured in Figure 4's hand-addressed letter from 19th Century Boston. I also test the effect of canceling standard discount-rate stamps (commercial, presort first class, and nonprofit denominations) with a mailer's postmark called PostCode. These classes of postage stamps are normally mailed naked (not canceled), simply because the USPS Domestic Mail Manual (DMM) classifies them as precanceled—a classification that belies the reality they are not defaced in any way. The term *precanceled* is just a technical definition indicating they do not *have* to be cancelled. But the DMM goes further than just *defining* the category and actually *prohibits* their cancellation without a special written exemption from the rule. Exemptions are sought because it is believed that canceling discount stamps makes mail look as though it had been sent at the full first class rate which, in turn, enhances interpersonal involvement, gets more envelopes opened, and thus can increase response. PostCode, shown first in Figure 5, has a round town circle, date, zip code, and wavy lines defacing the stamp. Like the 1896 Chicago and 1922 Dublin examples, this is consistent with a style dating to the first use of such marks in 17th century England:

In 1660 Henry Bishop was made Postmaster General. Bishop is remembered as the man who introduced the first postmark, issued in 1661. The Bishop Mark, as it is called, only showed the day and month of the posting; its purpose was to ensure that the letter carriers did not delay the mail, either for espionage purposes or simply due to laziness. At this time, all letters were taken to London, Edinburgh or Dublin before being sent to their destinations and Bishop marks were used in these cities (Edinburgh's being red). Similar postmarks were simultaneously being used in America, notably in Philadelphia and New York; they are still often referred to as American Bishop marks or Franklin marks (after Benjamin Franklin, the one-time Deputy Postmaster General). (BBC, 2008, ¶3)

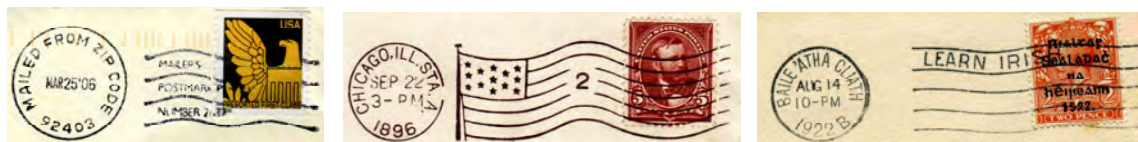


Figure 5. Three examples of cancellation marks: 2006 PostCode; 1896 Chicago, IL postmark; and 1922 Dublin, Ireland postmark.

Note. USPS regulations prohibit postmarking precanceled stamps. But when mailed naked (not postmarked), they look like *junk mail*. So PostCode is used to cancel stamps with a postmark, make letters look like full-rate first class mail, get them opened, and thus increase response rates. The Chicago postmark is from Forte (20008) and the Dublin from Raven Stamps of Ireland (2008).

In his online advice column Mal Warwick, acknowledged as one of the leading practitioners in the field of direct mail fund raising, refers to the cases I cite above in Tables 1 to 8, as well as the recent use of computer simulated handwriting for similar campaigns:

Of course, all produced impressive results—but, as you already know, that merely corroborates the experience that many professionals (including Domain Group and Kay Lautman as well as my colleagues and I) have had using variants of their technique.

However, I have no similar experience using simulated handwritten fonts. That's on my list of tests to conduct . . . I admit that I've seen computer-generated text that, at first glance (and sometimes second) fooled me into thinking it was handwritten, too.

Within limits, the size of your organization or of your donor list doesn't matter. I think you're on the right track to pursue the use of this technique. Since I know that true handwriting usually does work well for me and my colleagues, I have no hesitation in recommending that you try it. If you're a little more adventurous, you might try one of the best, custom-tailored handwritten fonts instead.

(Warwick, 2008e, Do hand-written appeals really work better?, ¶ 13-15)

In another interchange about computer-generated handwriting, Warwick cautions that such strategies must be considered in light of cost/benefit ratio, and do not necessarily enable one to raise more with less:

Q: Are “Hand-signed and hand-addressed” packages worth the cost?

I recently received a direct-mail piece from High Touch Direct Mail, which uses “Genuine HandWriting” or “Computer HandScript” to “get it read!” In addition, the company uses live postage stamps and High Touch BarCodes to “get it read!” When I received a piece from High Touch, I opened it immediately thinking that it was a personal invitation. I fell for it completely. What do you think of this and similar services? Is it worth the cost to invest in this service? Are the return rates higher? Will I spend less to raise more as the company promises?—

Rachel Fine, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, San Francisco, California, 7 September 2004

Mal answers: Packages like these—available from a number of vendors across the country—have been widely adopted for fundraising . . . because they work so often. However, you're not likely to “spend less to raise more.” It's more probable that you'll “spend more to raise more.” Hand-signed and hand-addressed packages like these cost considerably more than offset-printed packages. But, when mailed to the right list—almost always a list of your active donors, not a list of prospects—they tend to give a higher return on investment because the response rate, and sometimes the average gift as well, are substantially higher.

(Warwick, 2008d, Are Hand-signed and hand-addressed packages worth the cost?, ¶ 19-20)

Warwick also comments on the impact of live postage stamps over preprinted indicia or metered mail:

In a businesslike appeal meant to resemble official correspondence, I would almost always specify a metered indicia (as opposed to one that's pre-printed), simply because that gives the appearance of business correspondence mailed from an office.

By contrast, in a mailing designed to convey a personal character, I would opt for live stamps. That would look more natural than an indicia in those circumstances.

(Warwick, 2008f, Which is better—a stamp or indicia?, ¶ 17-18)

Tests of the effect canceling precanceled stamps are rare, since this feature requires special authorization from the USPS. However, many studies comparing the use of stamps versus indicia or metered mail have been conducted by those who mail opinion surveys. Linsky (1975) thoroughly reviews the literature in this area, especially in connection with survey design and response. More recent studies include manipulation

of the envelope used by Asch and Christakis (1994), who found that by using a different style envelope for a survey, they were able to increase response by 20 percent. The effect of postage class was tested by Allen, Cordes, and Filkins (1998); who found no statistically significant difference in response rates when surveys sent by first class mail and at the nonprofit rate. However, Hager, Pollak, and Rooney (2003) discovered that while survey complexity and monetary incentives did not affect response, their recent study showed that the mailing vehicle used did matter. By using Federal Express to send their surveys to half a test segment, they got a response rate of 61.7 percent from the Federal Express segment compared to 38.3 percent from the half sent by first class mail. This result was statistically significant at the .05 level of confidence with a Chi-square of 6.533. Traditionally survey research design has sought to follow systems to increase response rates in surveys (Slocum, Empey, and Swanson, 1956; Dillon 1978, 2000; Dillman, Clark, and Sinclair, 1995).

One of the three main aspects of this study adds to the growing body of research in this arena of paratextual variation in the package design. Specifically, I report the results of six test mailings that measure the effect on response of the variables just discussed—real and computer-simulated handwriting and PostCode cancellation of discount stamps (in one test first class presort and in another nonprofit). Five tests were conducted by the American Heart Association, and one was conducted by Franciscan Friars of the Atonement. Responses are measured in campaigns that targeted mailings to an aggregate of 1,247,064 households. From one test I hypothesize that an organization mailing a similar quantity with a similar offer to a similarly receptive audience (lots of assumptions are made in that statement that are just that—assumptions) *might* be able to save \$301,578.76 and increase net income through those savings alone by as much as 36%. I readily admit that these projected savings and net income fact are based on optimistic best-case assumptions of *possible* not *promised* results. Of course, that is why important variables are tested and hoped-for results are only pre-test best surmises, based on limited facts, exposed to the chance that unaccounted variables might intervene. This was affirmed in one of the six tests reported. Two changes in the paratext of one mailing sent to 464,835 households accrued a loss of \$52,018.87 in income over the test from the prior year. Changes by the nonprofit in two paratextual variables caused response to drop 296% and income to plummet 181%. These and other tests will be discussed in the results section. But first, I describe the three methodologies used in the three major investigations designed to measure the effect on response of the paratextual variables just discussed, quantify linguistic variation in the Dickerson IRS 880 corpus, and profile the individuals who wrote those texts.

Measures of Change Attributable to Paratextual Variation in Package among Six Direct Mail Campaigns

The final area of this study accounts for the effect on response that changes in paratextual variables can create in a direct mail campaigns. Often described in the direct mail industry as A/B-split tests, these procedures often involve dividing a randomly sorted mailing list into two panels or segments. One panel (called the control segment) is sent the organization's typical mailing piece. Though content and appearance does change slightly from time to time, the format and general subject matter of many organizations' mailings are surprisingly similar from year to year. This is especially the case when a campaign targets prospective new donors (those who have never given before). Called *acquisition* campaigns, these mailings often remain virtually unchanged over time, having been proven to be effective through extensive testing. The other major target audience that consistently receives similar mailings are donors from whom a second contribution is being sought. Such campaigns are usually called *reactivation* or *renewal* campaigns.

The typical mailing (collectively called a package) includes a letter or note card, an outgoing envelope, a reply form, and a reply envelope. Occasionally an additional piece such as a brochure or smaller piece the size of a dollar bill (called a buck slip) is enclosed. Typical response rates are almost always less than 10 percent for mailings to a nonprofit organization's regular donors, and response to acquisition campaigns is usually well under two percent, and commonly lower than one percent. Therefore, in addition to changes in text, it is not uncommon for nonprofit organizations to also test physical components of a direct mail package to attempt to increase response.

Two such changes are reviewed in this study—the use of hand-personalization and the cancellation of nonprofit stamps. In the same way that Biber's MD-analysis measures linguistic features that build interpersonal involvement, some tests have shown that paratextual variables seem to similarly increase the interpersonal involvement quality of direct mail package. Such letters are often made to appear more personal than mass-produced through hand-personalization, design that gives the package the look of a greeting card, and postage and bar code treatments that emulate first class mail. As speech is enhanced by the prosody, which creates greater interpersonal connection with hearers through paralinguistic features such as tone, rhythm and gestures), so the ability of the physical elements of a direct mail package can be enhanced to better connect with recipients through paratextual features such as hand-addressing, invitation-style envelopes, and cancelled stamps. Paratextual as I use it is similar to paralinguistic, which literally means *alongside the tongue*.

Paratext literally means *alongside the text*. One panel tested among the six reviewed suggests a strategy that might easily save an organization \$250,000.00 or more in a future mailing.

The survey of fund-raising professionals in this study included comments like the following that suggest paratextual variation, like linguistic variation, are equally important variables in the communication mix. One respondent complained about the difficulty of “getting donors to open the mail piece—our donors have low affinity with the university and rarely open anything we send.” The respondent believes the reason for the problem is “not necessarily because it is a fundraising appeal, but because they see it is from the university in general.”

This reflects the commonly held belief that people handle their daily mail by sorting it into two piles—toss and keep. The final cut leaves on the table bills, what looks like personal mail, and the occasional commercial piece that seems to offer something needed—perhaps a discount coupon. It would seem that the respondent above believes his school’s mail lands in the toss pile. This respondent’s comments seem to lay blame for his university’s failure to get more mail opened on the fact that it communicates a high level of informational content (affiliation with the university) but a low level of interpersonal connection (affiliation with his college as part of the larger university): “our donors have low affinity with the university and rarely open anything we send . . . they see it is from the university in general.”

The literature review documents several tests that indicate such strategies have significantly increased response rates. Huntsinger notes the benefits of such strategies:

Don't let your donors anticipate what you are going to do next. Keep them off balance. Keep them guessing. Every fund raising package they receive from you should contain a strong element of surprise.

When your letter arrives in the home, and the donor knows by glancing at your carrier envelope that it's another appeal from charity XYZ, you are defeated before they even get inside the envelope. What is all this superstition and fetish about always identifying your organization on the carrier envelope ? Sometimes. But not always. Under many conditions it cuts your response drastically.

Examine your mailing package formats. I'm sure you feel comfortable with standardized formats, but perhaps you should feel uncomfortable! Perhaps your donors are anticipating your every move. Perhaps they feel comfortable! Think about it. (1992, pp. 2, 3)

To test the hypotheses put forward by practitioners like Huntsinger, the present study reports the results of six tests to determine the impact of Computer HandScript-addressing (addressing in computer simulated handwriting) HandScript-personalizing (a simulated handwritten P.S. notes) on test packages, and PostCoding stamps (printing a cancellation mark across stamps that do not require cancellation in order to

create a *first class* look, even though the mail is actually being sent at less than the normal full first class rate).

Measures include comparisons of items like response rate, average gift, and income per letter mailed.

The first five A/B split panel and one mixed A/B split panel tests compare the following three types of paratextual variables that constitute elements of visual rhetoric: 1.) package type—comparison among three types of packages (a short-form letter, a box of greeting cards offered as a premium in advance of a contribution, and a notecard-style package); 2.) addressing and personal note writing techniques—in the panels using a notecard-style package, differences in response are measured between addressing and adding notes with genuine handwriting and computer simulated handwriting; 3.) postage treatments—among various panels, the use of various postage treatments such as indicia versus live stamps, canceling stamps versus sending them naked (not canceling stamps), full rate first class versus first class presort. A sixth test compares the difference between response rates between two packages with the variable in package B consisting of a stamped nonprofit stamp which in the A panel of the test is not cancelled. Mailing lists for panels were created from an odd/even numbered record splits of zip code ordered files. It was hypothesized that manipulation of paratextual (physical) variables, designed to create a more personally involving look in test packages, would achieve what Chafe and Daneilwicz (1987) describe as the increased involvement that personal conversation has compared to written discourse, which Tannen (1982) attributes to linguistic features of conversation that “create a sense of involvement between reader and writer” (p. 2). Figures 6 to 10 below describe American Heart Association tests and Figure 11 describes a test mailing by the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement.

Test 1 (AHA 2004) Two panels of 25,000 each:

Computer HandScript Note Card versus Gift Box of Cards

Panel A: Note-card package addressed and personalized in Computer HandScript* *simulated handwriting* with a first class stamp on the outer envelope and no stamp on the reply envelope

Panel B: A *greeting card control package* offered as an up-front gift premium to prompt a contribution mailed in a 5-1/4" x 6-1/2" x 3/4" box with a preprinted postage indicia and no stamp on the reply envelope

* **Computer HandScript simulated handwriting** is a brand of digital handwriting that American Heart Association (AHA) used in their 2004 renewal campaign. This particular version was created from samples of my own handwriting, however American Heart was unaware that I was the source of the handwriting. In their data, AHA referred to **both** the Computer HandScript (used in 2004) and the less robust computer-simulated handwriting font used in 2005 as **fake handwriting**. For clarity, I refer to the Computer HandScript used in 2004 as **Computer HandScript** and I refer to the computer-simulated handwriting used in 2005 as **Fake HandFont**. I discuss the differences between them below.

Figure 6. Test 1: American Heart Association 2004: Computer HandScript Note Card versus Gift Box of Cards.

Note. This and *all* American Heart Association (AHA) tests described in Figures 6 to 10 were coordinated by AHA and its outside agencies. Although tests 1-3 used a Computer HandScript created from samples of my handwriting, I was not involved in decision-making and implementation in any way. I was only given results data after campaigns.

Test 2 (AHA 2004) Two panels of 25,000 each:***Computer HandScript Note Card versus Genuine HandWriting** Note Card***

Panel A: Note-card package addressed and personalized in Computer HandScript *simulated handwriting* with a first class stamp on the outer envelope and no stamp on the reply envelope

Panel B: Note-card package addressed and personalized in *Genuine HandWriting* with a first class stamp on the outer envelope and no stamp on the reply envelope

** ***Genuine HandWriting***—as the word suggests, this involved addressing envelopes and writing P.S. notes on cards in pen by human hand—a control package AHA had already successfully used.

Figure 7. Test 2: American Heart Association 2004: Computer HandScript Note Card versus Genuine HandWriting Note Card.

Test 3 (AHA-2004) Two panels of 25,000 in panel A and 24,977 in panel B:***Computer HandScript Note Card versus Double Remit Letter***

Panel A: Note-card package addressed and personalized in Computer HandScript *simulated handwriting* with a first class stamp on the outer envelope and no stamp on the reply envelope

Panel B: *Double remit control package* mailed in a 3-7/8" x 5-5/8" window envelope with a preprinted postage indicia on the outer envelope and no stamp on the reply envelope

Figure 8. Test 3: American Heart Association 2004: Computer HandScript Note Card versus Double Remit Letter.

Test 4 (AHA-2005) Two panels of 562,232 in panel A and 464,835 in panel B:***Fake HandFont*** Package Stamped on Outer and Reply versus on Outer Only***

Panel A: Note-card package addressed and personalized in Fake HandFont with a full-rate first class stamp on *both* the outer envelope *and* the reply envelope (panels differed in configuration of donors mailed to as the master response table will make clear, making A/B comparisons difficult)

Panel B: Note-card package addressed and personalized in Fake HandFont with a full-rate first class stamp *only* on the outer envelope

*** ***Fake HandFont*** is a computer-simulated handwriting font that differs from Computer HandScript two ways. First it has only 26 letters in its upper- and lower-case character sets, thus each time a letter is used, it always looks the same. However, ***Computer HandScript*** has more than 200 letters in its character set, so occasionally when the same letter is repeated, it will look different in the second instance. This adds realism to the presentation. Similarly, with ***Fake HandFont*** the letters o, b, v and w (which normally connect with adjacent letters *above* the baseline) do not connect naturally with one another. However, ***Computer HandScript*** actually has pairs of letters that are already connected and uses these alternate pre-connected letter pairs to replace individual letters. This, again, adds realism.

Figure 9. Test 4: American Heart Association 2005: Fake HandFont Package Stamped on Outer and Reply versus on Outer Only.

Test 5 (AHA-2005) Two panels of 25,000 each:***Fake HandFont Note Card with Canceled Presort Stamp versus Full-rate First Class Stamp***

Panel A: Note-card package addressed and personalized in Fake HandFont with a first class presort stamp on the outer envelope only and no stamp on the reply envelope. The first class presort stamp is cancelled with a PostCode*** to make it look like a full-rate stamp

Panel B: Note-card package addressed in Fake HandFont with a first class stamp *only* on the outer envelope

**** ***PostCode*** See note on PostCode in the footnote for Test 6 in Figure 3.12 on the next page

Figure 10. Test 5: American Heart Association 2005: Fake HandFont Package with Canceled Presort Stamp versus Full-rate First Class Stamp.

Test 6 Franciscan Friars of the Atonement (FFA-2006)
Two panels of 10,000 each:

***Computer HandScript Note Card Package with
 Canceled Presort Nonprofit stamp versus Naked Nonprofit Stamp***

Panel A: Note-card package addressed and personalized in Computer HandScript *simulated handwriting*, with a canceled nonprofit stamp using a PostCode**** cancellation printed by the mail house on the outer envelope only (no stamp on the reply envelope) In addition, a **lower right positioned bar code** and **Auto** rate designation are printed in the lower right corner to emulate first class mail.

Panel B: Note-card package addressed and personalized in Computer HandScript *simulated handwriting*, with a naked (not canceled) nonprofit class stamp on the outer envelope only (no stamp on the reply envelope). In addition, a **lower right positioned bar code** and **Auto** rate designation are printed in the lower right corner to emulate first class mail.

**** **PostCode** USPS regulations classify first class presort, standard (formerly called bulk) and nonprofit stamps as *pre-cancelled*. This simply means they do not need to be cancelled, not that they have already been defaced. These classes of postage stamps are not open to the abuse of customers who might try to reuse a previously mailed stamp since they may be affixed only to mail that must be entered at a postal facility's BMEU (Business Mail Entry Unit). So the post office does not cancel them since there is little risk of their being illegally re-used. However, DMM (Domestic Mail Manual) regulations go beyond stating that they *need* not be cancelled and state that they *may* not be cancelled. However, by obtaining a written exemption from the USPS, a mailer may be granted an exemption from this rule and be allowed to cancel these denominations of postage stamps with a mailer's postmark (a cancellation postmark normally reserved to cancel full-rate first class stamps at mail houses rather than at the post office). Using a mailer's postmark to cancel precanceled stamps makes them look first class—a paratextual signal that distinguishes mail pieces so cancelled from **Naked Stamps** (those not cancelled). **Naked stamps** look like mass produced *junk mail*, so the benefit of canceling first class presort, nonprofit, and standard stamps is obvious—the cancellation mark is a paratextual signal that makes the envelope look as if it had been sent at the full first class rate. Yet the cost for nonprofit mail is about a third that of full-rate first class stamps. When such letters arrive in donors' homes, such mail will tend to land in the "keep" versus "toss" pile and may thus survive long enough to get opened. This method is called **PostCode** in this study and its affect is measured in texts 5 and 6.

***** **bar code** and **Auto** rate designation. The bar code is a set of numeric values the Post Office prints routinely on first class mail to expedite machine reading, speed delivery, and lower costs. With normal first class mail, this mark is printed in the lower right corner, and recipients of mail have come to expect to see it positioned there. However, if a mail shop, preparing a large mailing, attempts to print barcodes in the lower right corner, the tolerances allowed for skew and vertical positioning make the work time-consuming and risky (if the positioning is off, the mail house will be penalized because the mail will need to be coded). Therefore, rather than run the risk of incurring a penalty, most mail shops prefer to print bar codes immediately above or below the address block, where error tolerances are greater. Printing bar codes in these two spots takes less time and holds much less financial risk. However, a bar code so positioned sends a paratextual shorthand signal that quickly identifies the piece as not being a normal first class letter. So to enhance the first class mail appearance of nonprofit mail, test 6 prints the bar code in the lower right corner just as the Post Office does with first class letters. Plus, the word **Auto**, required to qualify for lowest rates, is printed in a digital font to replicate the style of type the Post Office uses to print information at the bottom of the envelope on a piece of first class mail. So the **Auto** designation, the **lower-right positioned bar code** and **PostCode** are three paratextual signals that enhance the first class mail look of panel 6A. The **Auto** designation and **lower-right positioned bar code** were added to both test and control panels of text 6. So the only paratextual variable that differs between panels 6A and 6B is the use of **PostCode**.

Figure 11. Test 6: Franciscan Friars of the Atonement 2006: Computer HandScript Note Card with Canceled Presort nonprofit stamp versus Naked Nonprofit Stamp

Note. In contrast to the American Heart Association tests described in Figures 6 - 10, in which was not involved in with their campaigns in any way, I produced the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement campaign. However, like the American Heart Association tests, I was only given data that summarized results once the campaign was over.

Figure 12 defines elements of the tables summarizing the 2004 and 2005 American Heart

Association (AHA) donor renewal campaigns. Two tables constructed according to this format appear in the discussion of results.

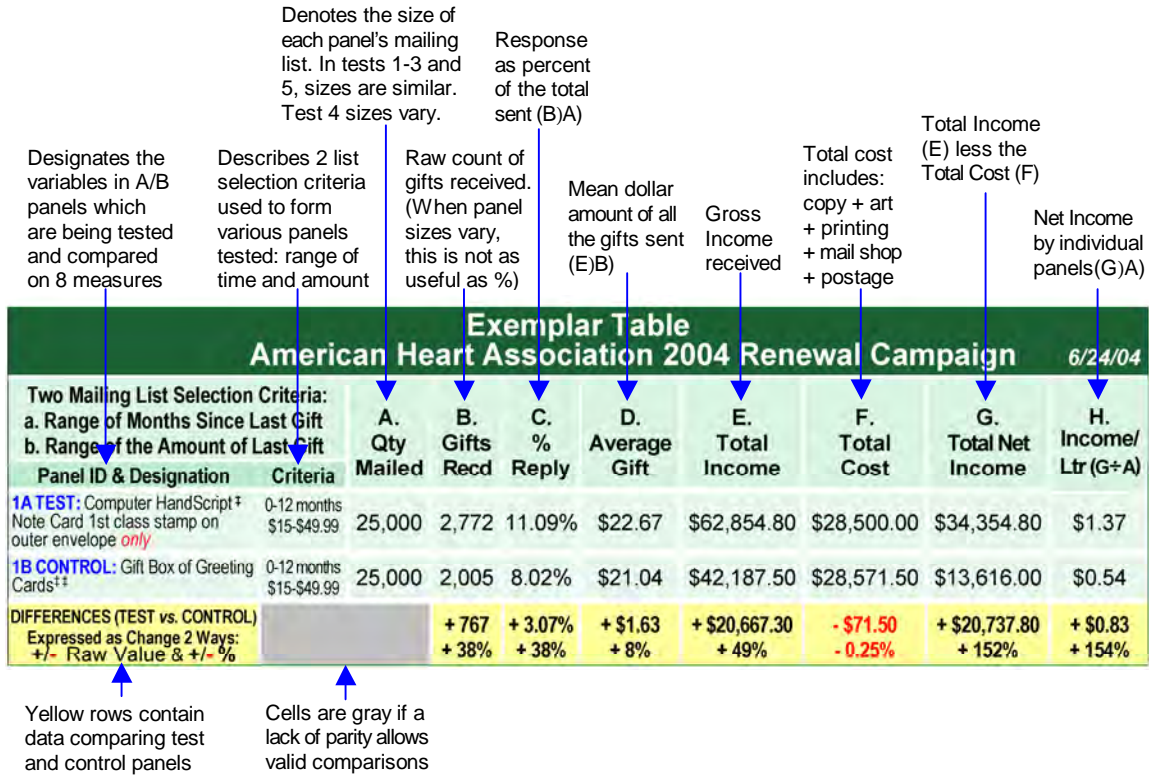


Figure 12. Indices measured on the American Heart Association renewal campaigns.

Note. Depending on the primary objective (e.g. whether to maximize number of responses or net income) different key indicators of actual results would be used to measure success or failure. If the primary objective were to maximize replies in order to regain as many donors as possible, then Column C (% Response) would be the key measure. With this objective a low net income or even a net loss might be acceptable, given the notion that any low performance or losses would likely be made up for in subsequent appeals. This assumption places greater value on gaining the asset of donors over the short-term goal of maximizing immediate net income. On the other hand, were the objective to maximize net income, the key indicators of success would be Columns G and H (Total Net Income and Income per Letter by Individual Panels). As a practical matter, most donor renewal campaigns are concerned with both measures. But like a new donor acquisition campaign, in which it is common to gain names with no profit and even a net cost, similar metrics apply to donor renewal campaigns where maximizing response is the primary goal. This objective is so important in developing an organization's donor base that many practitioners do not even classify an individual as a donor until a second gift is received.

Lack of attention to paratextual variables can nullify all the hard work a nonprofit expends on list selection, segmentation, copy writing, and artistic design. To ignore the issue of *first impression* (the response a person has when seeing mail piece) is like inviting a five-star chef to prepare a White House State Dinner, but then serving it on flimsy paper plates. The importance of the event deserves better. I suggest that nonlinguistic symbols can have the same polar effects on the communicative character of a direct mail piece as the linguistic features Biber identifies and segregates between those that focus on informational content versus those that focus on interpersonal relationships. In fact, even though a letter may be written with the interpersonally

involving and interesting with narrative, those traits would be irrelevant were the envelope never opened. The following 21 responses appear substantially in the same form as originally submitted in a survey of direct response professionals responsible for direct mail in their organizations. Despite syntactical and grammatical disfluencies, comments highlight a dominant concern among professionals in fund raising that the impersonal look of most direct mail prevents it from even getting opened. The rest of this research addresses this problem, given voice in the following 21 responses reproduced as they were written in Figure 13 (highlighting added).

Comments of Respondents Who Cited the Difficulty Faced in Getting Mail Opened:

- Reaching younger prospects who don't **open** their mail
- Identifying creative and interesting ways to communicate case. Getting people to **open** the envelope.
- getting the right list/prospect pool-- more research getting the envelope **opened**—more testing
- getting more people to **open** the envelope--phone solicitation reveals our DM not read
- Biggest challenge--producing attractive pieces that people will **open**
- Getting people to **open** the envelopes! Prospects report being flooded with mail from many organizations so the first step is to make your appeal stand out.
- getting non donors to **open** mail. 80% of gifts come from 20% of base
- good addresses and getting folks to **open** their mail—it is the challenge
- getting donors to **open** letters. Too much mail
- getting pieces **opened**
- I think our biggest challenge moving forward will be to continue to get out mail **opened** and to be able to make our institution stand out among the others. There are SO MANY organizations asking for money, that it seems much more like a competition than it used to.
- getting people to **open** the letters
- Still looking for a very simple way to “connect” to mail recipients. Also searching for a foolproof way to make people **open** the envelope when it arrives amidst a sea of other mail.
- They need to understand the methods of getting someone to actually **open** their piece, and not discard it.
- Strategies on how to get your mail **opened** and not thrown out right away. And describing your cause and explain where the money goes.
- Learn from others. Look into ways to get your mail **opened**.
- How to get people to **open** the envelope and then read at least the main points of the letter. Experience, and market research.
- We've also deduced that direct mail on regular letterhead often does not get **opened**—you need something that grabs at the attention.
- How to get someone to **open** the envelope. Trial and Error.
- Reaching younger prospects who don't **open** their mail
- getting donors to **open** the mail piece—our donors have low affinity with the university and rarely open anything we send. not necessarily because it is a fundraising appeal, but because they see it is from the university in general. also, building a better case of support in the letter that resonates with prospects (right now, I receive very few “needs” from academic areas; also, examples provided to show how previous contributions have been used are weak)

Figure 13. Nothing else matters if the envelope doesn't get opened.

Measures of Change Attributable to Paratextual Variation in Package among Six Direct Mail Campaigns

As Prosody Enhances Speech Paratext Enhances Text. Biber's Dimension 1 distinguishes between informational and interpersonal characteristics of written and spoken communication. On one end of that continuum is academic prose. On the other end are personal conversations. A central consideration of this research is whether direct mail fund-raising discourse reads more like a dissertation or a friendly personal letter. This question, when limited to printed and online texts, considers how certain linguistic features (e.g. private verbs and contractions) can enhance the interpersonal and conversational character of a text. These features can enhance the same words whether spoken or written. When spoken, even more can be done to increase interpersonal involvement with hearers through prosody (e.g. changes in pitch, tone, and pace) and physical gestures (e.g. a frown, a smile, a sigh, or a laugh).

As prosody and gesture add greater control and emotional range to the *spoken* word, so paratextual variables add greater control and emotional range to the *written* word. Similar to the way a rise in volume can add drama, a whisper can add intensity, or a pounded fist can communicate passion in *speech*, so can physical traits (*paratext*) affect the way a *written* text is received. A paperback book, for example, gets a far different reception than a leather-bound volume with a title lettered in gold leaf. The leather and gold are elements of *paratext* that communicate elegance, prestige, and value. Similarly, in the genre of fund-raising discourse, the way a mail piece is *presented* determines the way it is *received*. This research assumes that in addition to language, adjusting paratextual physical characteristics of a mailing package can also affect the communicative impact of text. That is, if a mail piece is marked by traits that make it look like the vast majority of mass-produced marketing mail (*junk mail*), it may not even get opened, much less read. Conversely, if a mail piece can be made to look important and better yet personal, it may not only get opened but read as well.

Therefore, fund raisers continue to test ways to manipulate paratextual variables to increase response. Some argue that by making nonprofit mail look more like personal correspondence sent by first class mail, response can be increased. This research adds six more tests to this genre of investigations. I test several paratextual features: 1.) using real and computer simulated handwriting to address envelopes and write personal notes on letters or note cards; 2.) varying stock and dimensions from the traditional text weight, letter size to a more personal 6" x 9" (folded to 4-1/2" x 6") greeting card format; 3.) consistent with these size and format shifts, using an understated invitation style envelope (e.g. an A-6 4-3/4" x 6-1/2" size) instead of the conventional rectangular business-style envelope; 4.) using first class presort rather than full-rate first class

postage stamps, 5.) canceling these discounted stamps with the same round *town-circle* mark that the Post Office prints to the left of a first class stamps, along with the wavy lines that deface the stamps. (This mark, when added by an authorized mail shop is called a mailer's postmark. I call this paratextual variable a PostCode.)

A legitimate question may be raised regarding the relevance of measuring the influence of paratextual variation in a study comprised primarily of linguistic data. Concern with persuasive content of physical features in direct mail packages would indeed be superfluous were the impact of a text constrained only by words themselves, or were the overarching purpose of this research limited to the identification of register variation patterns. However, in the context of describing the communication tasks of nonprofit leaders when they speak as the voice of philanthropy for people and causes, a valid consideration is how physical characteristics of direct mail packages empower or diminish that. Therefore, this research also seeks to differentiate between paratextual variables in direct mail fund raising that are interpersonally involving and those that are primarily focused on informational content. In her *Talking Voices* (1989) Tannen posited that this informational-interpersonal continuum as a more robust model for explaining language variation than the simple bifurcation of texts as either oral or literate categories. The former is merely a nominal categorization, while the latter is more of an operational definition—classifying texts based on what they do. Tannen's insight presaged and informed Biber's later empirical quantitative analyses that empirically affirmed the co-location of specific linguistic features fitting this model. So the validation for examining more than words alone is the same justification that Tannen found when she expanded her paradigm of discourse analysis beyond bifurcation into oral or literate categories to a more fundamental differentiation among texts based on their contribution on a creating a focus on informational content or interpersonal involvement. The justification, then, for considering paratextual variation is the reality that physical factors work alongside texts to produce their essential character.

Because my research design does now allow for interviews among recipients of mailings to determine their attitudes toward different packages, measurements are limited to response differences attributed to variation in package design. Moreover, the behavior correlated with package variation is, in fact, more important than opinions of which packages individuals like or dislike. Therefore, I measure results vis-à-vis the effect of package variation on ten measurements that follow descriptions of the six packages tested. The first five packages tested were produced in 2004 and 2005 by the American Heart Association. The sixth package was produced in 2003 by Franciscan Friars of the Atonement.

Overview of Six Tests of the Impact of Paratextual Variables. The American Heart Association (AHA) is headquartered in Dallas Texas. AHA ranks 14th on the Dickerson IRS 880 list, raising \$467,576,977 in direct support (990 line 1b), \$14,042,370 in indirect support (990 line 1c), and \$17,500 from government grants (990 line 1d). Their form 990 grand total for funds raised during the tax year ending on June 30, 2007 was 481,636,847 (990 line 1e). AHA had already tested mailings produced with real handwriting and had seen response rates improve. It was assumed that the paratextual variable of handwriting made mail look more personal and thus had led to the increase in response. Confident that a valid link had been established between hand addressing and hand-written notes and increased response rates, AHA wanted to see if equal or better results could be achieved using a package design produced with less expensive computer-simulated handwriting. Thus, the AHA 2004 tests compare performance of a note card package produced with Computer HandScript simulated handwriting in three tests: 1.) against an identical package produced with *real* handwriting, 2.) against a gift box of greeting cards, and 3.) against a half-page letter called a double-remit form. Then wishing to save even more on production costs, their 2005 renewal campaign tested a less expensive version of simulated handwriting which, to distinguish it from Computer HandScript, will be referred to as Fake HandFont.

Below I first reproduce elements of the Computer HandScript test package and the three control packages mailed by AHA in their 2004 renewal campaign. Then later I also reproduce elements of AHA's 2005 renewal package, and the outer envelope of a final test conducted for Franciscan Friars of the Atonement (FFA). All illustrations have been reduced in size and some aspect ratios have adjusted slightly to accommodate page constraints. Following the presentation of packages tested, I report results on a master table, compare key performance indicators, and finally discuss the implications of findings presented.

By way of credit and disclosure, I wish to thank Sherry Minton and Renee Warner of the American Heart Association (AHA) who were the source of the data presented below, reflecting the results of their 2004 and 2005 donor renewal direct mail fund-raising campaigns. They kindly granted me permission to present their findings. The Computer HandScript version of simulated handwriting tested in their 2004 campaign was created from samples of my own penmanship. For the 2005 campaign, AHA chose to use not Computer HandScript, but a more economical Fake HandFont that required no special programming. The Fake HandFont lacked the connectivity between all letters of the alphabet and lacked alternate versions of characters, which traits gave Computer HandScript greater realism in contrast, but which also made it more

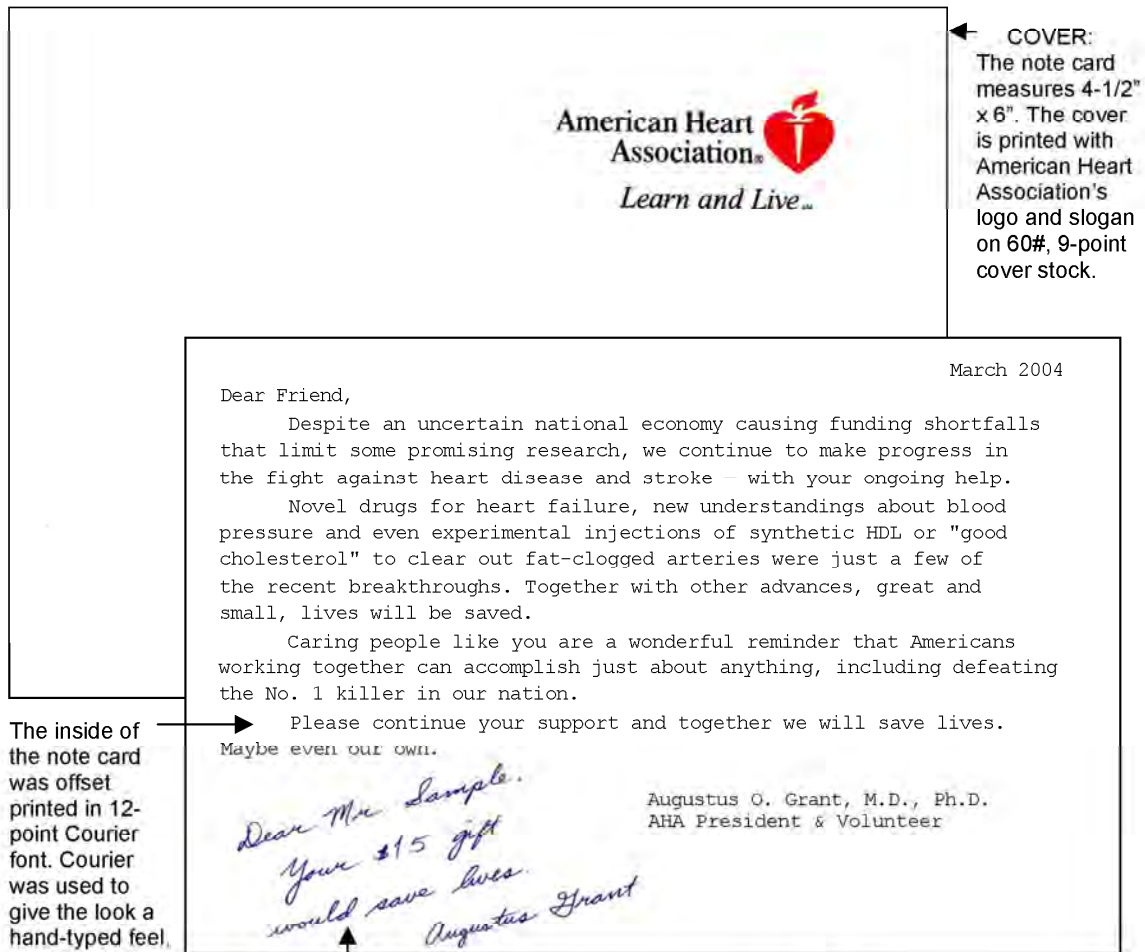
costly to use. The AHA2004 and 2005 campaigns were managed directly by AHA and implemented through a network U.S. marketing and production agencies located on the U.S. East Coast, Midwest and South. After the campaigns were complete, Renee Warner emailed results in Excel spreadsheet format at the direction of Sherry Minton. That data forms the bases of comparisons made between text panels that follow.

Results of the final test reported here was conducted by Franciscan Friars of the Atonement, a Catholic religious community headquartered in Garrison, New York. Founded in 1898, the order has social, ecumenical and pastoral ministries in the United States, Canada, England, Italy, and Japan. Because religious organizations are not required to report income to the IRS 990, no financials are available on FFA. Their test sought to measure any difference attributable to the use of a paratextual variable described above—printing a mailers postmark (PostCode) across precanceled stamps. The AHA campaign measured (panel 5A) the affect of canceling first class presort stamps; this campaign measured (panel 6A) the affect of canceling nonprofit stamps. A 20,000-piece mailing was evenly divided and half the mailing was cancelled with PostCode and half was mailed naked—with no cancellation mark. In contrast to the lack of hands-on involvement in production that characterized my involvement with the 2004 and 2005 AHA campaigns (tests 1-5), I personally managed and produced this smaller campaign for FFA. However, like the AHA campaigns, because donors responded directly to FFA, I received all data on the results of the test from the order's director of development, Ray Morrissey. I wish to acknowledge and thank Ray for granting me permission to report findings from the test conducted in 2003. Following their campaign, he emailed to me a summary of results tallying the difference in response between panels 6A and 6B, reported below. These results follow presentation of the AHA campaign information and presentation of the FFA campaign package, which art is limited to the only item that varied in the panels—the outer envelope.

Like the commercial marketplace, much of the nonprofit sector allows competitive forces to hinder the free sharing of campaign data like that presented here. Agencies in particular are constrained by their relationships with their clients, thus results are generally considered proprietary, since knowledge that leads to improvements in response, net income, and long-term donor loyalty are considered a competitive advantage. Therefore it is particularly encouraging that these two organizations have been willing to share knowledge from their work, which can benefit other nonprofit organizations. Their generosity is consistent with the spirit of philanthropy, which seeks to put the interests of others ahead of self-interest. Moreover, as a graduate student in need of data, they were kind and helpful. I now present facsimiles of the results of these three campaigns.

*American Heart Association 2004 Donor Renewal Campaign.***PACKAGE 1 -- Computer HandScripted Note Card (TEST):**

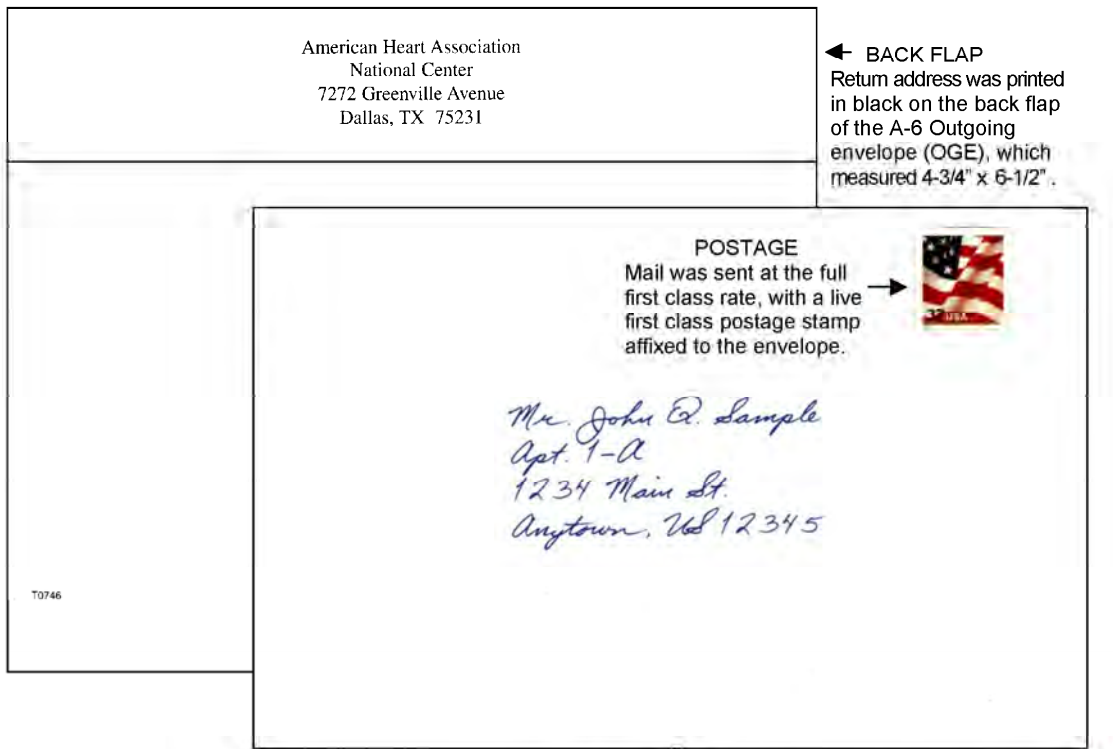
The test package was personalized in Computer HandScript simulated handwriting. In the description above and the tables to follow, the same package is identified as 1A, 2A, and 3A. PACKAGE 1 was targeted to all three segments of the March 2004 renewal mailing in head-to-head tests against AHA's three control packages, described next. Its four components, shown below, include 1.) **Fold-Over Note Card** with preprinted body copy and Computer HandScript-personalized P.S. note, 2.) **A-6 Outgoing Envelope** addressed in the same simulated handwriting, 3.) **# 6-1/4 Reply Envelope**. 4.) **Personalized Reply Device**. Specifications accompany illustrations below.

1. Fold-Over Note Card**COMPUTER HANDSCRIPT-PERSONALIZED P.S. NOTE:**

While the body copy of the note card was preprinted, a Computer HandScripted note, personalized with the donor's name, was printed at the bottom. The Computer HandScript used differs from out-of-the-box simulated handwriting fonts in that it was created from samples of real handwriting. Graphic glyphs were scanned, stored and connected to one another like genuine handwriting with a computer program that swapped individual **un**-connected characters for pairs of **connected** ones. The program also contained several alternate *versions* of many letters to add variety and thus realism to the HandScript (especially letters that join above the baseline).

Figure 14. American Heart Association Package 1: Fold-over A-6 Computer HandScript note card with inside body copy typed in Courier, and P.S. printed in authentic-looking computer-simulated handwriting.

2. A-6 Outgoing Envelope



OUTGOING ADDRESS:

The envelope was also addressed in Computer HandScript. Note the realistic look—how the letter *o* in *John* is slightly different than the letter *o* in *Anytown*. Also, the letters *b*, *o*, *v*, and *w* connect to adjacent letters *above* the baseline. Rather than leaving unnatural gaps as with simpler handwriting fonts, with Computer HandScript these letters connect, as illustrated by the *o* and *w* of *Anytown*.

Hypothesis AHA Wanted to Test

AHA wanted to see if they could get equal or better results with a less expensive simulated handwriting package as they had with mail personalized by human hand. They assumed that to work, the HandScript had to look real.

Which is Real Handwriting and Which is Computer HandScript?

The realism of the Computer HandScript that AHA chose to use is reflected in the following samples comparing real handwriting and Computer HandScript. One of the following lines was written in my own penmanship, scanned, then copied and pasted into the document. The other was created from a Computer HandScript created from my own handwriting (the AHA test was conducted using a Computer HandScript made from samples of my penmanship).

On the Next Page, the Question of Which Line Was Written by Hand and Which was Printed is Answered . . .

Line 1: *Is this real or Computer HandScript?*

Line 2: *Is this real or Computer HandScript?*

Figure 15. American Heart Association Package 1: A-6 outgoing envelope addressed in Computer HandScript by variable data printing

3. # 6-1/4 Reply Envelope

CRE →
The package included a # 6-1/4 Courtesy Reply Envelope (CRE) that measures 3-1/2 x 6", printed on 24# white wove. Tests 1-3 do not use a stamp on the CRE.

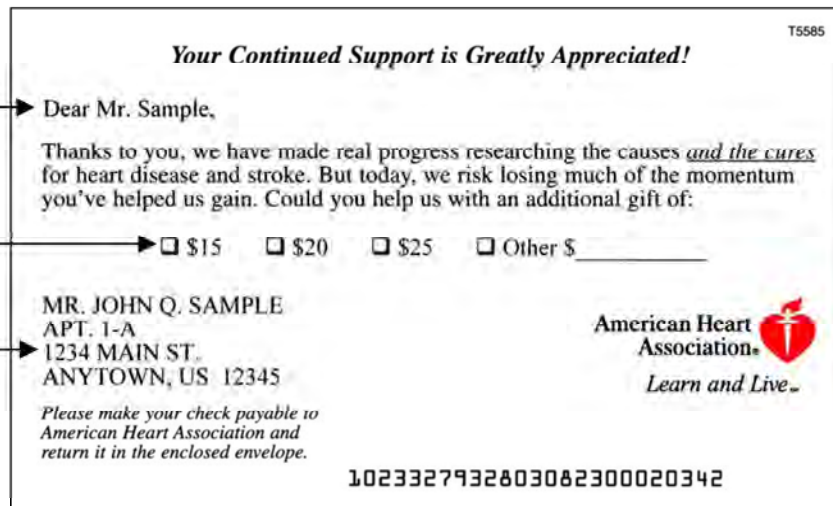


4. Reply Device

The donor's name was used to personalize the salutation area of the reply device.

A gift string, a suggested gift level series, was created.

Donor name and address data was printed.



REPLY DEVICE

The reply device measured 3-1/2" x 6" and was printed on 60# bond text weight stock. The body copy was lasered in 12-point Times Roman font and the logo and American Heart Association slogan were preprinted in black and red ink.

The answer to the question: Which Line Was Written by Hand and Which was Printed in Computer HandScript?

Q: On the previous page I showed two samples and asked which looked real and which looked computer simulated.

A: The handwriting sample on line 1 was written *in my own hand*. I wrote the question with a blue pen, scanned the line with an EPSON 4990 flatbed scanner, saved it as a 58 KB TIF file, then simply pasted into a text box.

The handwriting sample on line 2 was created from a **Computer HandScript** made from samples of my own handwriting. This is the same simulated handwriting used in the AHA tests. I first typed the words in Times Roman, then ran the text through a conversion program that joined the letters and even substituted a new single letter pair (*om*) for the individual letters *o* and *m* in the word **Computer** to avoid an unnatural-looking gap.

Figure 16. American Heart Association Package 1: American Heart Association Package 1: # 6-1/4 courtesy reply envelope and reply device.

PACKAGE 2 -- Real Hand-Written Note Card (CONTROL):

The second package, identified as 2B, was personalized in real handwriting. It is one of three control packages that the Computer HandScript package was tested against. Like PACKAGE 1, it consisted of four items, but varied slightly as shown on the next three pages: 1.) **Fold-Over Note Card** with preprinted body copy and a Computer HandScript-personalized P.S. note (the same card as package 1, but personalized by hand), 2.) **A-6 Outgoing Envelope** (the same envelope as package 1, but addressed in real handwriting), 3.) **# 6-3/4 Reply Envelope** (a slightly wider envelope, and as a result it had to be folded to fit into the A-6 outgoing envelope). Plus, because this package did not include a reply device, the donor information was ink-jetted onto the back of the reply envelope. 4.) **Buck Slip** (a 3"x5" legal disclaimer). Specifications accompany the illustrations below.

1. Fold-Over Note Card

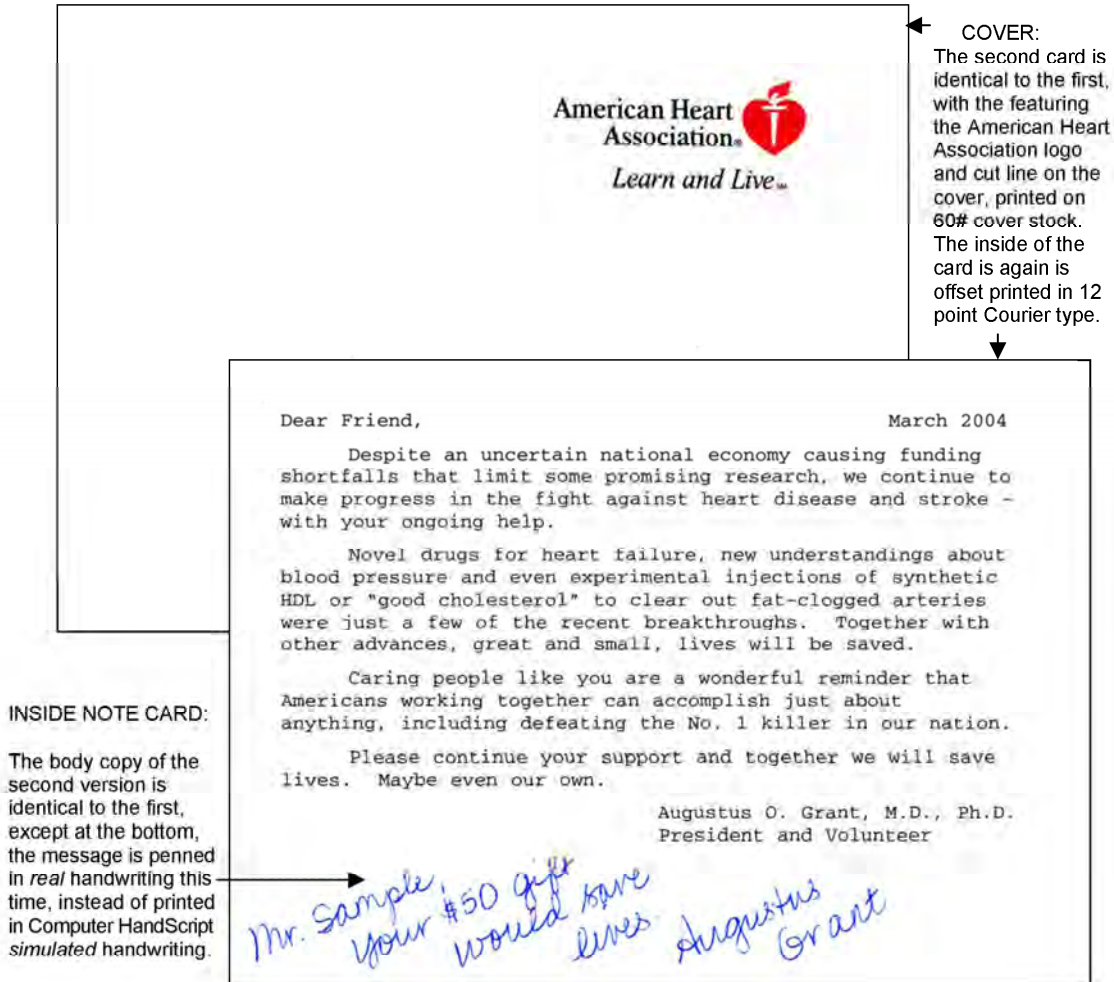


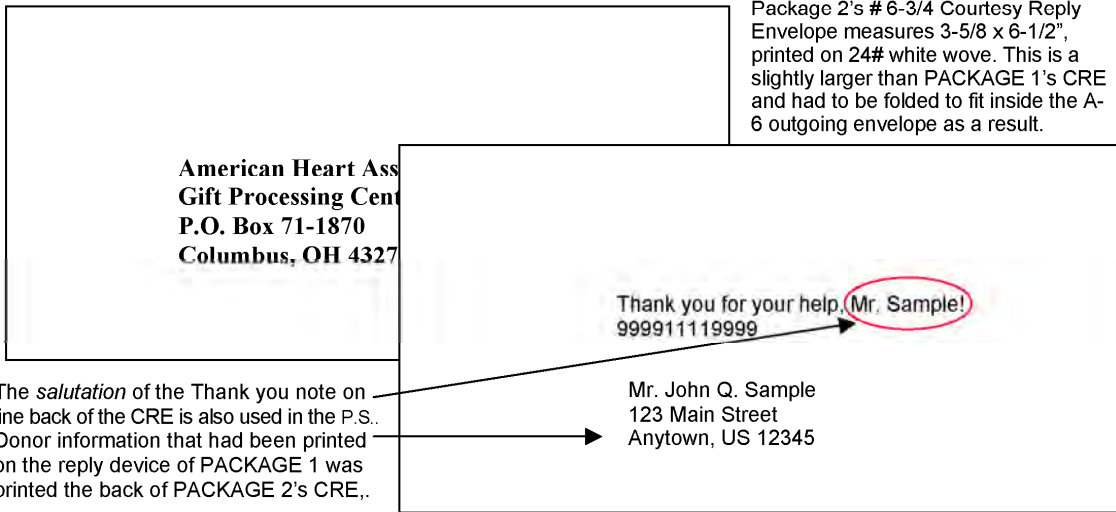
Figure 17. American Heart Association Package 2: Fold-over A-6 size Genuine HandWriting note card with inside body copy typed in Courier, and P.S. penned in real human handwriting.

2. A-6 Outgoing Envelope



OUTGOING ADDRESS
The envelope used
with PACKAGE 2 was
addressed in real →
rather than simulated
handwriting.

3. # 6-1/4 Reply Envelope

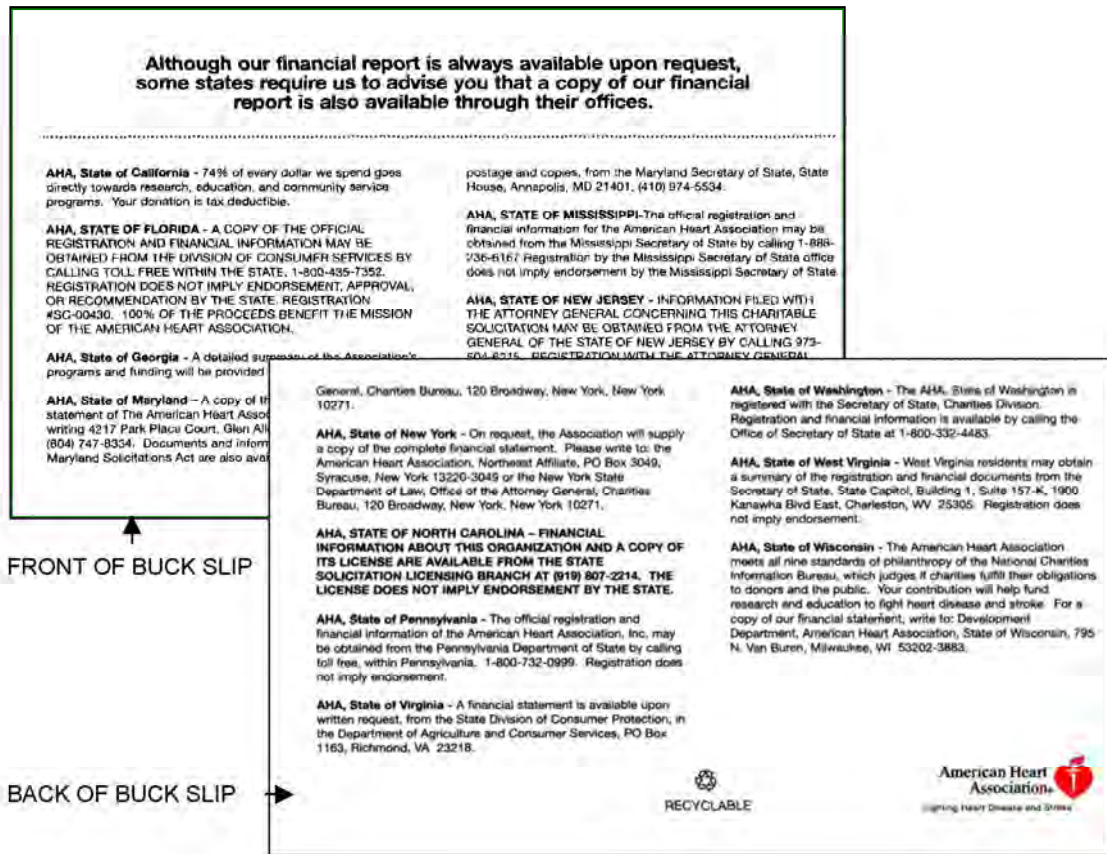


The *salutation* of the Thank you note on
line back of the CRE is also used in the P.S..
Donor information that had been printed
on the reply device of PACKAGE 1 was
printed the back of PACKAGE 2's CRE.,

Package 2's # 6-3/4 Courtesy Reply
Envelope measures 3-5/8 x 6-1/2",
printed on 24# white wove. This is a
slightly larger than PACKAGE 1's CRE
and had to be folded to fit inside the A-
6 outgoing envelope as a result.

Figure 18. American Heart Association Package 2: A-6 outgoing envelope addressed in Genuine HandWriting by pen and ink & CRE.

4. Buck Slip



NOTICE OF FINANCIAL RECORDS AVAILABILITY
 Stuffed inside the note card was a 3" x 5" slip printed 2/1 (Black and red on one side, black on the other) on 20# white bond paper explaining that the organization's financial information is available.

Figure 19. American Heart Association Package 2: Buck slip on availability of financial documents.

PACKAGE 3 – Gift Box of Cards (CONTROL):

The third package, identified as 1B, was a gift box of note cards. The approach of sending token gifts has become common among larger nonprofits and is generally aimed at non-donor segments, or as in this case, to obtain a second gift from a donor who had given recently. This package was targeted to donors who had given between \$15 - \$49.99 within the preceding 12 months. Such gifts are called *front-end premiums*. This strategy, which had been used successfully before, was being tested against PACKAGE 1, the Computer HandScript-personalized note card package. PACKAGE 3 included six items illustrated and described below: 1.) **Gift Box**, 2.) **Note Card Set**, 3.) **Letter**, 4.) **Reply Device**, and 5.) **Reply Envelope**, 6.) **Buck Slip** Specifications accompany illustrations OF PACKAGE 3 below.

Cards were mailed in a gift box measuring 5-3/8" x 6-1/2" x 3/4".

1. Gift Box

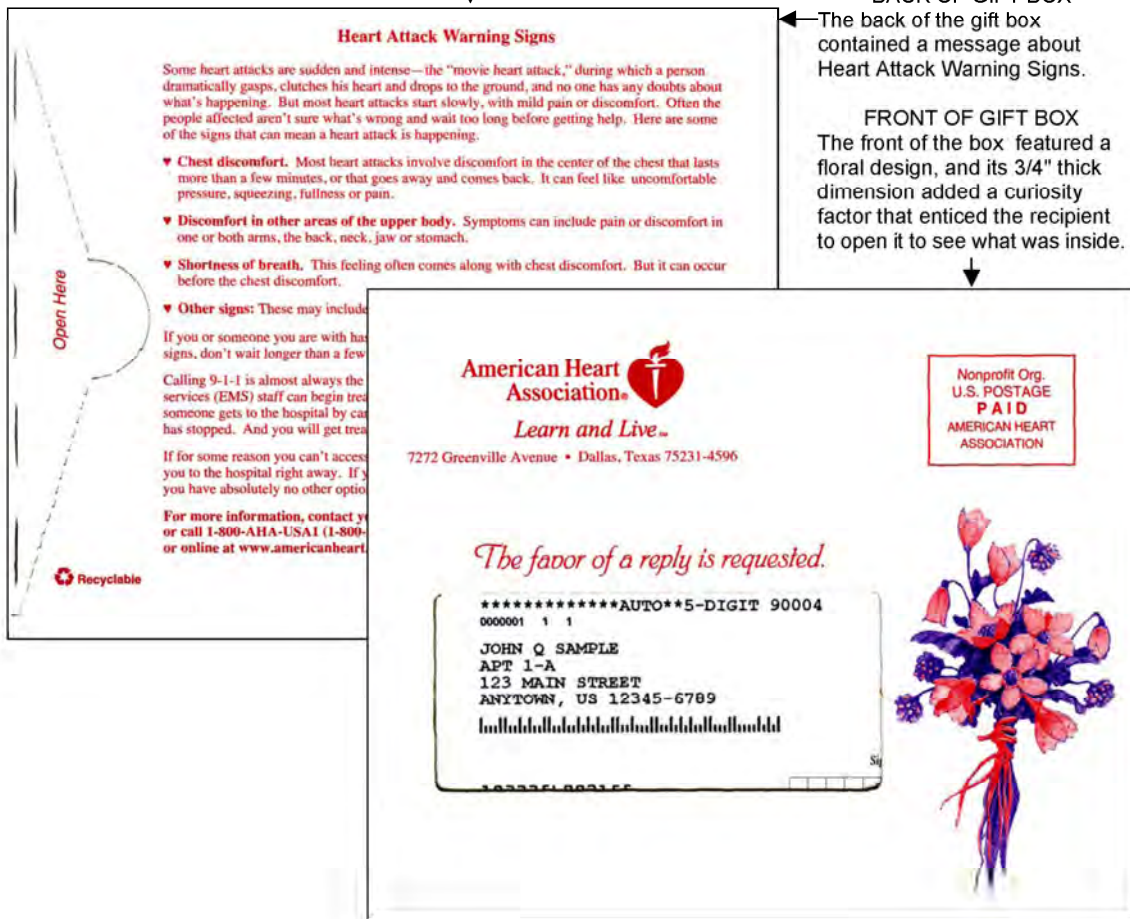
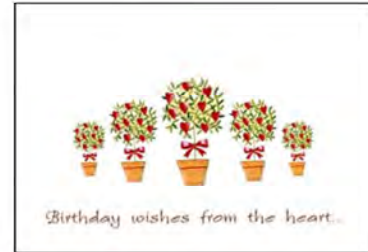


Figure 20. American Heart Association Package 3: Gift box of greeting cards: outside box.

Note. The gift box of greeting cards was a long-standing test package known in the fund-raising industry as a *front-end premium*. That is, it was a gift given *first*, as opposed to a gift given as a token thank you *after* a gift was given (thus the term *front-end*). The premise is that the gift will prompt the recipient to reciprocate with a financial contribution.

2. Note Card Set



On the back of each note card a message describes how to maintain healthy blood pressure levels and at the bottom of the first paragraph a note reads: *The sender of this card supports our work.*



A packet of a dozen envelopes was also provided with the card set. →

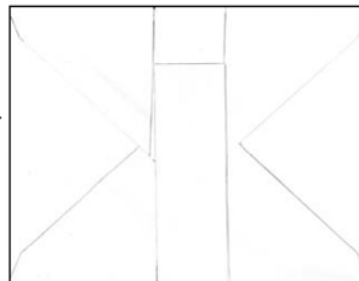


Figure 21. American Heart Association Package 3: Gift box of greeting cards: 6 card designs.
Note. The gift box of greeting cards includes not only cards, but educational information on the back of each card.

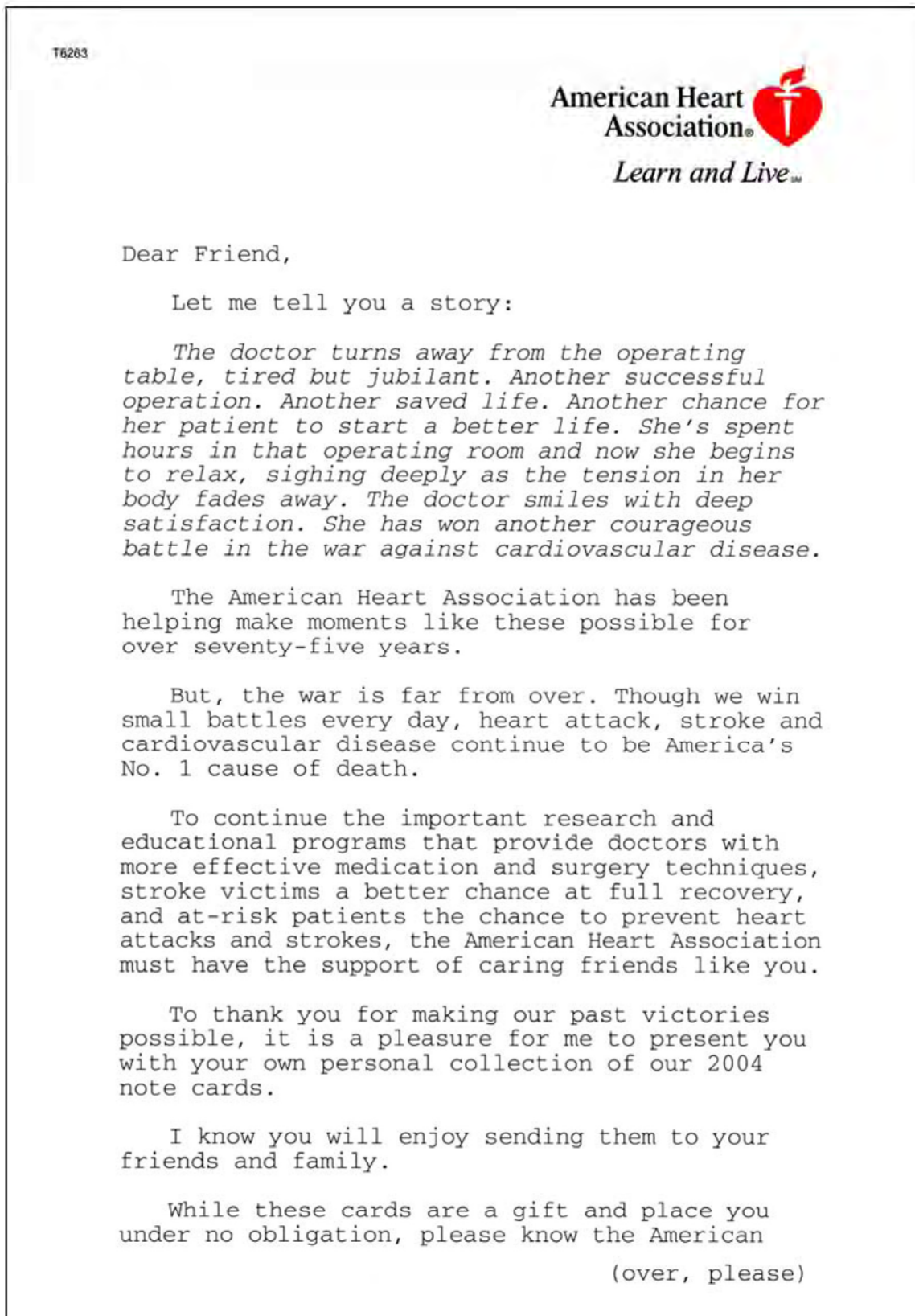
3. Letter (Page 1 of 2)

Figure 22. American Heart Association Package 3: Gift box of greeting cards: Page 1 of appeal letter.

3. Letter (cont.) Page 2 of 2)

Heart Association's medical research and educational programs cannot go forward without the loyal commitment of friends like you.

I hope that you will choose to send a generous contribution to help our crucial cause. Just complete the enclosed reply card and return it to us with your tax-deductible gift in the reply envelope provided.

Although cardiovascular disease and stroke affect more Americans than any other health disorders, hopefully you'll never need us.

But, the fact is...we need you.

Thank you in advance for your compassion and generosity. I look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

Augustus O. Grant

Augustus O. Grant, M.D., Ph.D.
President and volunteer

P.S. Play a personal role in your community's health by making a tax-deductible gift today. Your contribution will be credited to your local affiliate of the American Heart Association.

Figure 23. American Heart Association Package 3: Gift box of greeting cards: Page 2 of appeal letter.

4. Reply Device

Reduce your risk of premature death...

For more information
contact your nearest AHA office or call:
1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721)
or online at www.americanheart.org

Making Physical Activity a Part of Your Life

Whether you're at home, at work or at play, you can take a few simple steps to activity in your life. Swimming, cycling, jogging, skiing, aerobic dancing, walking activities can help your heart. Whether it is a structured exercise program or just exercise adds up to a healthier heart.

The Benefits of Daily Physical Activity

- May reduce the risk of heart disease by improving blood circulation
- Helps keep weight under control
- Improves blood cholesterol levels
- Helps prevent and manage high blood pressure
- Helps prevent bone loss
- Boosts energy level
- Helps manage stress
- Releases tension
- Improves the ability to fall asleep quickly and sleep well
- Improves self-image
- Counters anxiety and depression and increases enthusiasm and optimism
- Increases muscle strength, increasing the ability to do other physical activities
- Provides a way to share an activity with family and friends
- Establishes good habits in children and counters the conditions (obesity, cholesterol levels, poor lifestyle habits, etc.) that lead to heart attack and
- In older people, can help delay or prevent chronic illnesses and disease

© 2004 American Heart Association

American Heart Association **Learn and Live™**

← Back Front ↓

THE FUTURE DEPENDS ON YOU

1023356907155

(Please detach at the perforations and return the bottom portion, with your donation.)

YES, I received my American Heart Association cards and will help save lives with a gift of:

() \$25 () \$30 () \$35 () Other \$ _____

Please consider the American Heart Association in your will. For more information, please check this box.

255031353 0410ZDXEAA 00253

*****AUTO**5-DIGIT 90004
000001 1 1

JOHN Q SAMPLE
APT 1-A
123 MAIN STREET
ANYTOWN, US 12345-6789

1023356907155

I wish to charge my donation to
 AMEX Discover MasterCard
 VISA Exp. Date: / /

Signature: _____

1023356907155168500020347

5. Reply Envelope

An inactive lifestyle is a risk factor for coronary heart disease and stroke. Regular, moderate-to-vigorous physical activity done for at least 30 minutes on most or all days of the week helps prevent heart and blood vessel disease. The more activity, the greater your benefits. However, even moderate-intensity activities help if done regularly and long term.

Your stamp will help stamp out heart disease and stroke. Thank you.

American Heart Association **Learn and Live™**

CARD PROCESSING CENTER
PO BOX 78851
PHOENIX AZ 85062-8851

6. Buck Slip

INFORMATION CARD NO. Y2056

AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION
816 So. Figueroa St., Los Angeles, CA 90017
Phone (in charge of agent): Rob Fowler
For information about this appeal, call: (213) 291-1700

Activity: Appeal for donations through June 30, 2004

Solicitation Dates: July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004 Anticipated Expenses: \$11,317,718

Purpose: To reduce death and disability from heart disease and stroke

Previous Activity: 2002-2003 appeal collected a total of \$42,716,852 of which \$31,787,608 went to charity and \$10,929,197 (25.6%) were expenses

DOOR-TO-DOOR SOLICITATION RESTRICTED TO THE HOURS OF 9 A.M. - 6 P.M.

NOT AN ENDORSEMENT - FOR INFORMATION ONLY
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
SOLICITED LICENSE REGISTRATION

AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION
816 S FIGUEROA ST., LOS ANGELES, CA 90017

Classified: ROB FOWLER Solicitation Dates: 07/01/03 - 06/30/04

Event: GENERAL APPEAL

Anticipated Expenses: \$11,317,718.00 Anticipated Cost: \$45,985,540.00

PURPOSE OF SOLICITATION: RAISE FUNDS TO REDUCE DEATH AND DISABILITY DUE TO CORONARY HEART DISEASE AND STROKE.

THIS CARD IS FOR USE IN UNINCORPORATED LOS ANGELES COUNTY AREAS ONLY

This card is compiled from the official statements on file with the additional investigations. For further information, telephone (213) 674-7965.

Division License Commission
113 E Street, 10th Floor of Administration
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Date: 07/08/03 License: 0123000

ANY ALTERATION OF THIS CARD IS A VIOLATION OF LAW

This buck slip was required by Los Angeles, CA

Figure 24 American Heart Association Package 3: Gift box of greeting cards: reply device, reply envelope and buck slip on Los Angeles solicitation regulations

PACKAGE 4 – Double Remit Letter (CONTROL):

The fourth package, identified as 3B, is a double remit letter. Used by many nonprofits for acquisition and renewal mailings, multiple forms can be produced on large-format sheet cut-sheet or continuous-form lasers, making it quite economical. This package was targeted to donors who had given between \$15 - \$49.99 preceding 13-36 months prior to the date of mailing. PACKAGE 4 included four items shown and described below. 1.) **Double Remit Letter** with local chapter and donor and information lasered on one side of a 7.25" x 7.25" form, 2.) **#7-3/4 Double-Window Outgoing Envelope** 3.) **#7-1/4 Window Reply Envelope** 4.) **Buck Slip** (a 3"x5" legal disclaimer). Specifications and illustrations below.

TOP HALF REPLY OF LETTER IS REPLY DEVICE
The top of the double remit was designed to be removed at perforation to eliminate the need to print a separate reply.

1. Double Remit Letter

American Heart Association
Learn and Live. **Sampletown Chapter**
12345 Chapter St
Sampletown, US 12345-6789

Please consider the American Heart Association in your will. For more information, please check this box . Please make your check payable to "American Heart Association" and return in the envelope provided. Your donation is tax-deductible to the extent the law allows and is credited to your local American Heart Association office.

YES! Enclosed is my gift:
[] \$15 [] \$30 [] \$50 [] \$ _____

You will help save lives in **Sampletown**, perhaps even a loved one in the **Sample** family, by continuing your support with a gift of **\$XX** or more today.

*****AUTO**5-DIGIT 90004
Ms. Pat Sample
123 Main Street
Sampletown, US 12345-6789

Sampletown Chapter
12345 Chapter St
Sampletown, US 12345-6789

Dear **Ms. Sample**,

Did you know that diseases of the heart and blood vessels are responsible for over a third of all American deaths? This year, roughly **XX,XXX** people will die in **Samplestate** alone.

That's the bad news. The good news is that as you read this, researchers funded by the American Heart Association are working on scientific studies that will yield the next lifesaving breakthroughs in diagnosis and treatment -- advances that will impact your life and the lives of everyone dear to you.

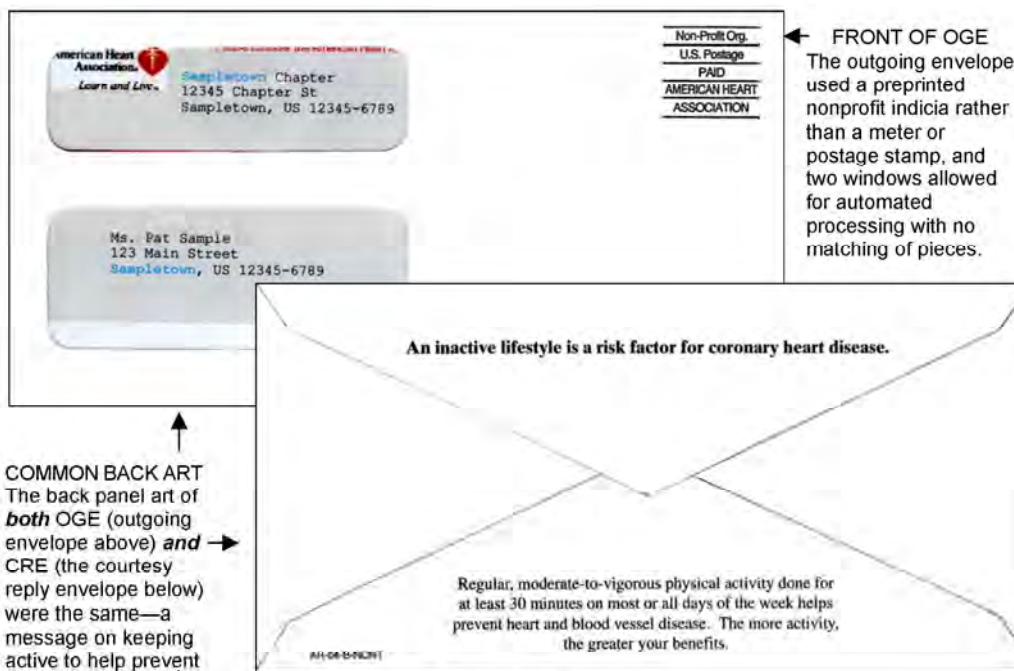
Ms. Sample, I hope you will find it in your heart to send a gift of **\$XX** or more today to help us continue the fight against America's No. 1 killer. Generous and forward-thinking people like you make it possible for us to fund the research, education and community programs that are helping to save so many lives. And the next life saved might be yours.

Raymond J. Gibbons
Raymond J. Gibbons, MD
President and volunteer

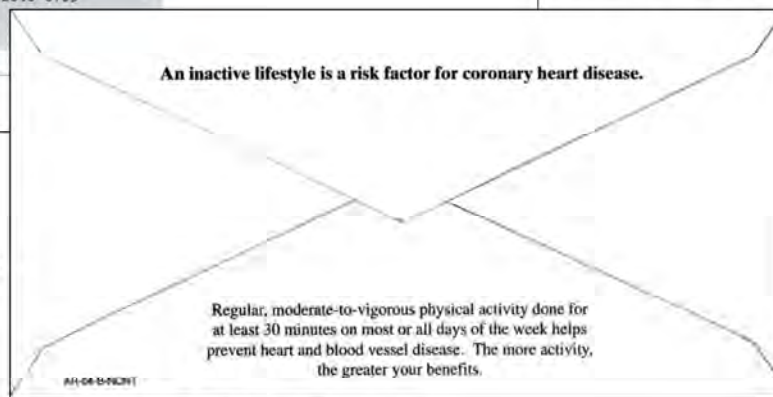
This seal signifies that the American Heart Association meets the BBB Wise Giving Alliance's Standards for Charity Accountability.
giva.org

Figure 25. American Heart Association Package 4: Double remit letter with message and reply together.
Note. This style has become a classic short-form fund appeal with nonprofits and depends largely on *brand awareness*, *low production cost*, and *mass mailings* to break even.

2. #7-3/4 Double-Window Outgoing Envelope



COMMON BACK ART
The back panel art of **both** OGE (outgoing envelope above) and CRE (the courtesy reply envelope below) were the same—a message on keeping active to help prevent heart disease.



3. #7-1/4 Reply Envelope

The custom-size #7-1/4 CRE measures 3-5/8" x 7-1/4" to accommodate the size of the reply device at top half of the letter form, which measures 3-1/2" x 7".

4. Buck Slip



NOTICE OF FINANCIAL RECORDS AVAILABILITY
Stuffed inside the note card was a 3" x 5" slip printed 2/1 (Black and red on one side, black on the other) on 20# white bond paper explaining that the organization's



Figure 26. American Heart Association Package 4: Double remit letter reply envelope and buck slip on availability of financial documents.

I now report the results of three AHA 2004 renewal campaign-mailing tests. Each test contains two separate panels evenly divided using same list selection criteria—the range of months since the donors' last gift and the dollar range of the last gift given. Performance is compared between the effect of a Computer HandScript Note Card *test* package and the three *control* packages shown above. Particularly surprising was the fact that the Computer HandScript Note Card package beat the Genuine HandWriting package on key measures of response.

Table 9. Master Summary of Three American Heart Association 2004 Test Mailings.

American Heart Association 2004 Renewal Campaign										6/24/04
Two Mailing List Selection Criteria: a. Range of Months Since Last Gift b. Range of the Amount of Last Gift		A.	B.	C.	D.	E.	F.	G.	H.	
Panel ID & Designation		Qty Mailed	Gifts Recd	% Reply	Average Gift	Total Income	Total Cost	Total Net Income	Income/Ltr (G+A)	
1A TEST: Computer HandScript ‡ Note Card 1st class stamp on outer envelope <i>only</i>	0-12 months \$15-\$49.99	25,000	2,772	11.09%	\$22.67	\$62,854.80	\$28,500.00	\$34,354.80	\$1.37	
1B CONTROL: Gift Box of Greeting Cards††	0-12 months \$15-\$49.99	25,000	2,005	8.02%	\$21.04	\$42,187.50	\$28,571.50	\$13,616.00	\$0.54	
DIFFERENCES (TEST vs. CONTROL) Expressed as Change 2 Ways: +/- Raw Value & +/- %			+ 767 + 38%	+ 3.07% + 38%	+ \$1.63 + 8%	+ \$20,667.30 + 49%	- \$71.50 - 0.25%	+ \$20,737.80 + 152%	+ \$0.83 + 154%	
2A TEST: Computer HandScript Note Card, 1st class stamp on outer envelope <i>only</i>	0-12 months \$50+	25,000	2,274	9.10%	\$86.20	\$196,015.50	\$28,500.00	\$67,515.50	\$6.70	
2B CONTROL: Genuine Hand- Writing ††† Note Card, 1st class stamp on outer envelope <i>only</i>	0-12 months \$50+	25,000	2,112	8.45%	\$82.22	\$173,639.74	\$40,750.00	\$32,889.74	\$5.32	
DIFFERENCES (TEST vs. CONTROL) Expressed as Change 2 Ways: +/- Raw Value & +/- %			+ 162 + 8%	+ 0.65% + 8%	+ \$3.98 + 5%	+ \$22,375.76 + 13%	- \$12,250.00 - 43%	+ \$34,625.76 + 26%	+ \$1.38 + 26%	
3A TEST: Computer HandScript Note Card, 1st class stamp on outer envelope <i>only</i>	13-36 months \$15-\$49.99	25,000	1,472	5.89%	\$22.48	\$33,091.74	\$28,500.00	\$4,591.74	\$0.18	
3B CONTROL: Double Remit Letter ††††	13-36 months \$15-\$49.99	24,997	426	1.70%	\$23.49	\$10,007.00	\$4,821.42	\$5,185.58	\$0.21	
DIFFERENCES (TEST vs. CONTROL) Expressed as Change 2 Ways: +/- Raw Value & +/- %			+ 1,046 + 246%	+ 4.19% + 246%	- \$1.01 - 4%	+ 23,08.74 + 231%	+ \$23,678.58 + 491%	- \$593.84 - 11%	- \$.03 - 14%	
'04 Totals:		149,997	11,601	7.37%	\$46.81	\$517,796.28	\$159,642.28	\$358,153.36	\$2.36	
Notes on Paratextual Variables Tested in the 2004 Campaign:										
<p>‡ Computer HandScript Note Card refers to a greeting-card-style fund appeal and the simulated handwriting used to both address its outer envelope and write a P.S. note at the bottom of the package's fold-over note card. The premise is that the note-card-style appeal will send a paratextual signal that differentiates it from the typical fund-raising letter received, and will thus enhance chances it will get opened. The greeting card style and hand personalization are designed to produce the interpersonal involvement Biber (1988) describes in Dimension 1 of his multidimensional analysis of linguistic variation. As Biber identifies clusters of linguistic features in texts that create involvement (by communicating feeling and connecting interpersonally with readers), this study posits that physical elements of a package do the same thing. The notion is that as Biber arrays texts (based on linguistic features) on a continuum with interpersonal involvement at one pole and informational content at the other, so can physical characteristics of a fund-appeal (or for that matter any marketing or fund-raising communication) similarly be located on the same continuum based on its physical (paratextual) features.</p> <p>The Computer HandScript referred to above is not a conventional economy handwriting font. In fact, it is not a font but a program-driven set of glyphs made from samples of real handwriting. To produce a nuanced and realistic look, the natural imperfections and inconsistencies of real handwriting are retained. Letters connect with one another, and an algorithm substitutes alternate versions of repeated letters to enhance realism. Plus, the program solves the problem of letters with strokes that end above the baseline (b, o, v, and w) not connecting with adjacent characters that and begin at the baseline (e.g. back, ocular, venerable, write). It replaces these with two-letter pairings that connect naturally (e.g. <i>ba, oc, ve, wr</i>). AHA used the term fake handwriting in reference to both types described above—the Computer HandScript used in 2004 and the conventional economy handwriting used in 2005. However, since I test each as a distinct independent variable, I call the more sophisticated version used in 2004, Computer HandScript and the economy simulated handwriting used in 2005 Fake HandFont. The difference each has on response is gauged by comparing results between TEST and CONTROL panels from both years' campaigns—4B vs. 3A and 5B vs. 2A.</p> <p>†† Gift Box of Greeting Cards refers to a front-end premium. In contrast to appeals that offer to give a token gift in exchange for a donation, the term front-end refers to the fact that the gift (premium) is given first in the hope that it will motivate the donor to reciprocate with gift of their own. The box included a dozen all-purpose note cards with envelopes.</p> <p>††† Genuine HandWriting refers to a greeting-card-style fund appeal and the use of human handwriting to both address its outer envelope and write a P.S. note at the bottom of the package's fold-over note card. Other than using real human as opposed to computer-generated handwriting, the package is identical to the Computer HandScript Note Card version.</p> <p>†††† Double Remit Letter refers to a very inexpensive renewal letter of only 150 words, measuring 7-¼"x7-¼" that is folded once and requires no matching of pieces since it uses a window envelope. In contrast, both Note Card packages require three pieces be matched (outer envelope, reply envelope with donor information, the addressed outer envelope).</p>										

Many practitioners in the field of fund raising (e.g. Huntsinger, 1992; Rosso, 2003; Warwick, 2003) suggest that an individual becomes a donor only when they have made a second financial contribution to a nonprofit organization. The rationale behind this view is that a second gift signifies interest beyond impulse, which is often the prompting reason many initial gifts are made—whether to help victims during natural disasters, to help fund a political contest, or for some other emergent motive. Therefore, nonprofit organizations often spend more on renewal campaign mailings than might be expected. In this practice, fund raisers follow their counterparts in commercial marketing who long ago learned the value of calculating mailing and internet expenditures in light of lifetime customer value metrics, not the cost/benefit of a single contact. For a nonprofit this means that if spending a bit more on a mailing piece can improve chances of securing a second gift from a donor, the investment is deemed justifiable. The reasoning is that after renewed, responses to subsequent appeals will more than make up for the higher cost of renewal campaigns.

So on second-gift (renewal or reactivation) mailings, rather than simply aiming to raise as much money for as little as possible, many nonprofit organizations seek to maximize response (the percentage of recipients who reply) rather than net income (dollars raised less costs incurred). In the cases at hand, the first five panels in tests 1 through 3 of the AHA 2004 renewal campaign were fairly costly compared to the sixth and most economical package (3B, the Double Remit letter). However, in these tests the least costly package was also the least effective one. The first five packages (whose results are detailed in the first five rows of the table 9 above) cost more because they sought to create a more interpersonally involving look by creating paratextual elements like a gift box of greeting cards and a hand-personalized note card. These products were inherently more costly to produce, but added to the message by their very format. In Marshall McLuhan's (1964) words, the medium *became the message*. Yet the added costs achieved paratextually, the effect Biber's Dimension 1 measures linguistically—interpersonal involvement. In this case the interpersonal involvement was produced tacitly, by color, by the human warmth of hand personalization on the addressed envelope and personal notes. It was assumed that these paratextual elements would add emotional range to the mailings, and thus would increase interest, response, and net income (though maximizing response was the key indicator of success, in light of lifetime donor metrics that counted on making a profit through on subsequent mailings).

The data above, and that yet to follow regarding the AHA 2005 campaign and the campaign for the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement, will be evaluated in this context. Table 9 displays differences in performance for each panel, presenting first results for the test panel first, then results for the control panel.

The difference between panels is presented on each indicator of performance as a positive or negative change in the raw value and as a positive or negative change in percentage compared to results achieved by the control package. Key indicator data of test 1 between the Computer HandScript Note Card package (test panel 1A) and the Gift Box of Greeting Cards package (control panel 1B) were not particularly surprising. Nor were data from test 3 comparing the Computer HandScript Note Card package (test panel 3A) against the organization's standard Double Remit Letter control package (test panel 3B). Both controls were obviously mass-produced and did not pretend to look personal. Cost control is readily apparent in the Double Remit Letter, which was produced for \$192.88 per thousand. A single-page form produced on high-speed line printers was folded and inserted into a window envelope, thus requiring no matching between pieces and saving costs. The Gift Box of Greeting Cards was a more costly front-end premium produced at a cost of \$1,143.86 per thousand. The reasoning behind this higher-cost was the assumption that a Gift Box of cards looks valuable, and thus would motivate recipients to reciprocate with return contribution. The Double Remit Letter and Gift Box of Greeting Cards represent opposite ends of the cost spectrum, each designed with different rationales. The cost of the Computer HandScript Note Card package, which was tested against both the Gift Box of Greeting Cards and the Double Remit Letter was similar to that for the Gift Box at \$1,140.00 per thousand (just \$3.86 per thousand or about 4 cents less per box).

In the test against the Double Remit Letter package, the Computer HandScript Note Card package increased response 246 percent. However, the average gift declined by 4 percent (from \$23.49 to \$22.48) and net income per letter declined 14 percent from \$.21 per gift box of cards in the control segment to \$.18 per note card mailed to the test segment. However, the 246 percent increase makes panel 3B the clear winner, since the most important objective in the strategy of any renewal campaign is to secure a second gift, based on the assumption that once renewed, subsequent mailings will more than make up for of any initial losses.

What was more surprising, however, was the fact that the Computer HandScript Note Card package out-performed the same package produced with genuine human handwriting. Most economy computer-simulated handwriting styles are hard-pressed to compete against real handwriting, since they do not replicate the quirks, mannerisms, and variation of real handwriting. Most look obviously fake. The letters of such out-of-the-box fonts do not always connect with adjacent alpha characters; there is no variety since every letter looks the same every time it is used; and those letters with strokes *terminate* above the baseline (e.g. *b*, *o*, *v*, and *w*) cannot connect with adjacent letters that *begin* at the baseline (since the font is designed to connect with the

other 22 alpha characters that connect *at* the baseline. Therefore, it would not have been surprising had response to the Computer HandScript note card been lower than that to the package produced by human hand. However, the Computer HandScript used was not a typical TrueType font, but a software program that manipulated a set of several hundred graphic glyphs created from samples of genuine human handwriting. The program connected all letters for a natural cursive handwriting look; varied many letters when used consecutively; and replaced individual letters that were unable to connect with adjacent ones above the baseline with new pairs that connect naturally. Production costs for the Genuine HandWriting Note Card was \$1,163.00 per thousand while the cost of the Computer HandScript Note Card was \$1140.00 per thousand—30% less. So had response to the Computer HandScript package lagged behind that to the Genuine HandWriting control, an anticipated lower response had already been factored into the cost/benefit calculations. It was anticipated that any gap in the response rate to the test package would be neutralized by the lower production costs.

However, not only did the Computer HandScript Note Card package cost less, but its realistic look apparently enabled it to out-perform real handwriting. The Computer HandScript Note Card test package (panel 2A) beat the response rate of the Genuine HandWriting Note Card control package (panel 2B) by 0.65% for an 8% positive marginal improvement in response. The Computer HandScript Note Card test also beat the Genuine HandWriting package's average gift by \$3.98 for 5% gain; and the Computer HandScript package raised \$1.38 more net income each, for a 26% increase over the packages personalized by human hand.

Given these positive results, and apparently desiring to increase margins still more on their larger roll-out renewal mailing, AHA decided to test a less realistic-looking out-of-the box handwriting font in March 2005—one designated here as Fake HandFont—which required no special programming, but which also sacrificed some of the realism of Computer HandScript as a result.

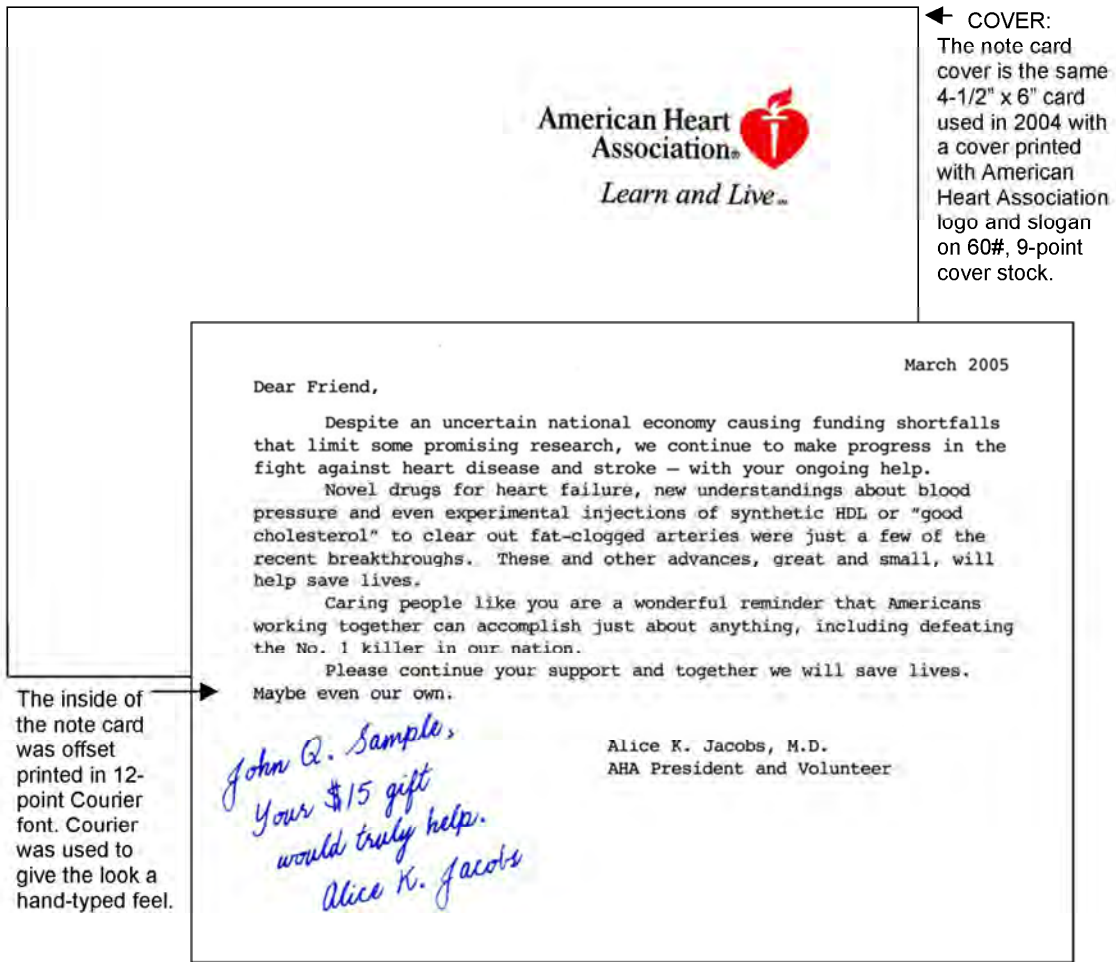
Below I first reproduce elements of the Fake HandFont package mailed by AHA in their 2005 renewal campaign and two alternative postage treatments applied in panel 4A (adding a first class stamp to the reply envelope) and 5A (affixing first class presort stamps to the outer and canceling them with PostCode to achieve a full-rate first class look). Following the presentation of reproductions of the package used and the alternate postage treatments described, I report results on a master table, compare key performance indicators, and discuss the implications of findings presented.

American Heart Association 2005 Donor Renewal Campaign.

PACKAGE 5 – Fake Hand-Writing Font Note Card (TEST):

PACKAGE 5 uses a less realistic-looking fake handwriting font (as opposed to the Computer HandScript used in the 2004 campaign that randomly varied letters and created special letter pairs to connect above the baseline letters). The outgoing envelope is the same for panels 4/A, 4/B, and 5/B. However, for panel 5/A the full-rate first class stamp is replaced with a first class *presort* stamp, which is cancelled (special permission is required of the USPS to cancel this class of postage stamp, which is technically called a precanceled stamp). Also, with panel 4/A, a full-rate first class stamp is affixed to **both** the outgoing **and** the reply envelopes. PACKAGE 5, targeted to all segments of the March 2005 renewal mailing, and has five components shown and described below: 1.) **Fold-Over Note Card** with preprinted body copy and a P.S. personalized with fake handwriting font, 2.) **A-6 Outgoing Envelope** addressed in the same fake handwriting font, 3.) **# 6-1/4 Reply Envelope**, 4.) **Personalized Reply Device**, and 5.) **Buck Slip**.

1. Fold-Over Note Card



← COVER:
The note card cover is the same 4-1/2" x 6" card used in 2004 with a cover printed with American Heart Association logo and slogan on 60#, 9-point cover stock.

The inside of the note card was offset printed in 12-point Courier font. Courier was used to give the look a hand-typed feel.

FAKE HANDWRITING FONT-PERSONALIZED P.S. NOTE:

While the body copy of the note card was preprinted, a personalized with the donor's name, was printed at the bottom in fake handwriting font. The name of the signer had changed from the previous year. And the last line in the second paragraph varies slightly from the 2004 card.

Figure 27. American Heart Association Package 5: Fold-over A-6 size Fake HandFont note card with inside body copy typed in Courier, and P.S. printed in an economy-quality computer-simulated handwriting.

2. A-6 Outgoing Envelope

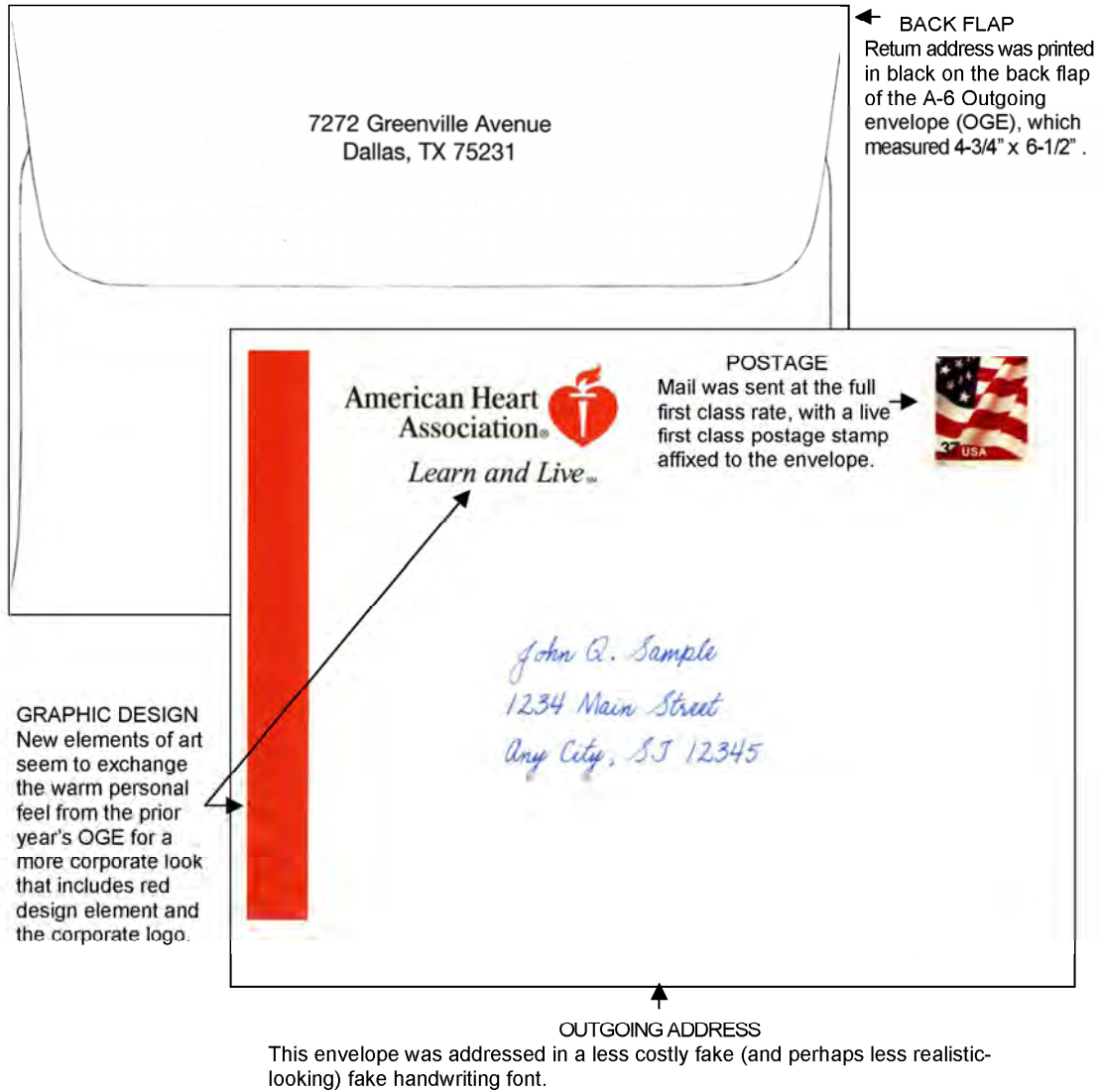
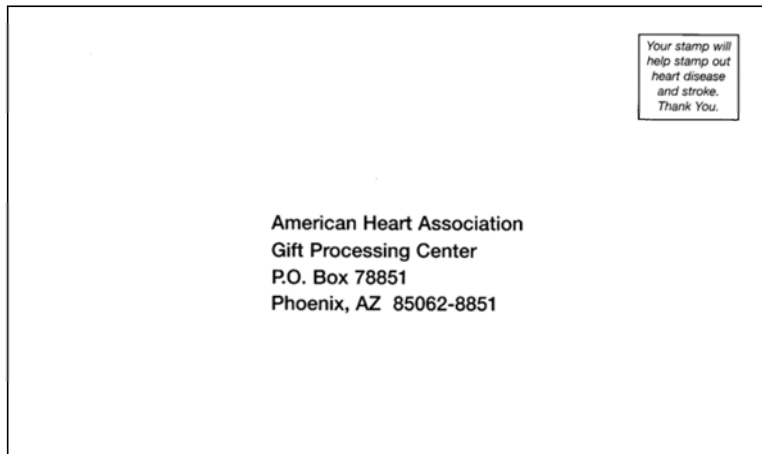


Figure 28. American Heart Association Package 5: A-6 outgoing envelope addressed in Fake HandFont.

3. # 6-1/4 Reply Envelope

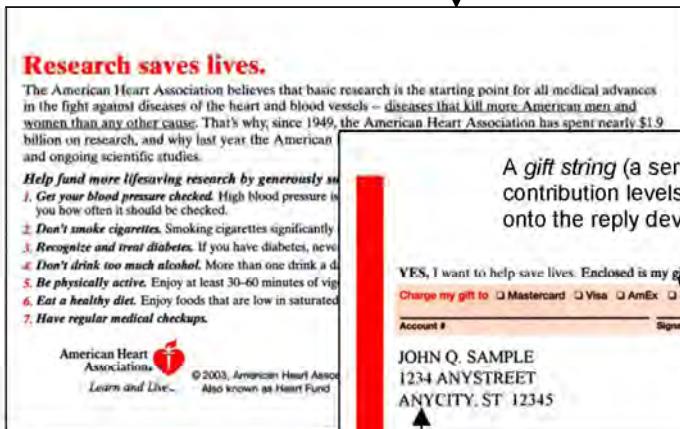
CRE PACKAGE 5 included → a # 6-1/4 Courtesy Reply Envelope (CRE) that measures 3-1/2 x 6", printed on 24# white wove. Panels 4/B, 5/A and 5/B require the donor to place his or her own stamp on the reply. But a stamp is already affixed for the donor on the reply envelope of to the envelope with Panel 4/A.



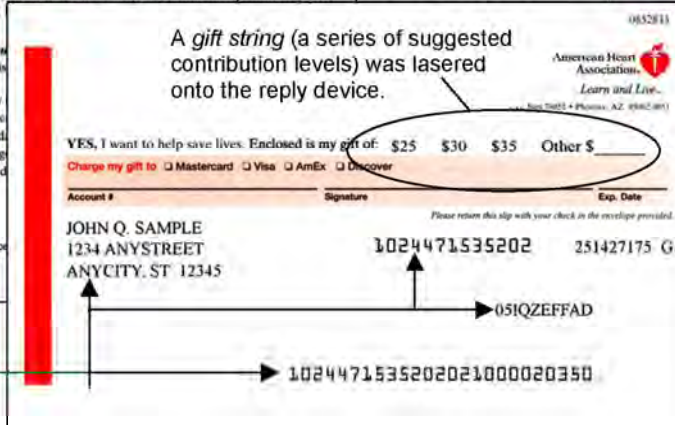
The reply device measured 3-3/8" x 5-1/2" and was printed on 60# bond text weight stock.

The back of the reply device contained educational information on heart disease.

The body copy on the front of the reply device was lasered in 10-point Times Roman font and the logo and American Heart Association slogan were preprinted in black and red ink.



4. Reply Device



Donor name, account and motivation codes were ink-jetted onto the reply device.

5. Buck Slip

Back of Buck Slip

Front of Buck Slip



Figure 29. American Heart Association Package 5: Fake HandFont package reply device, reply envelope and buck slip on availability of financial documents.

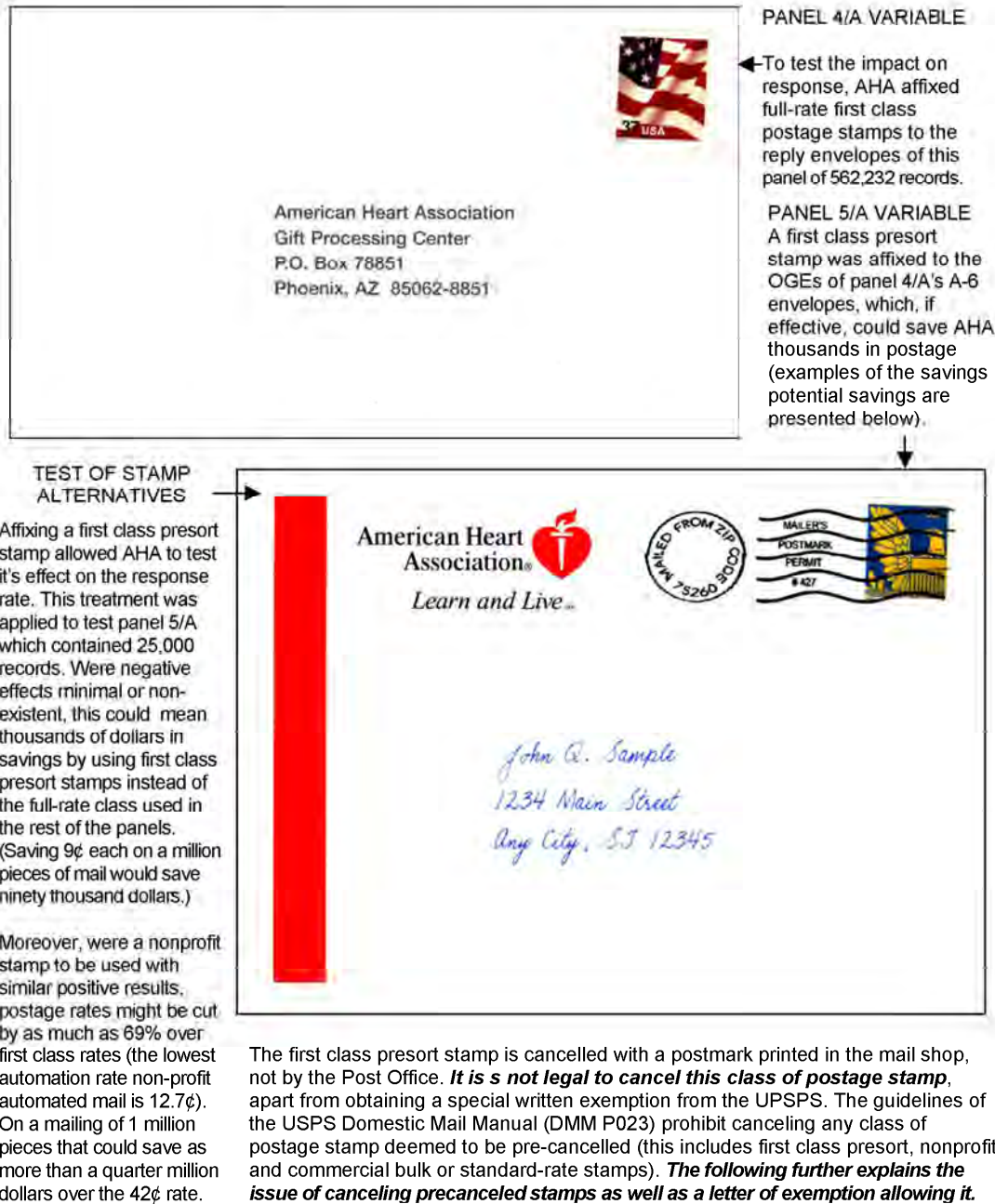


Figure 30. American Heart Association Package 5: tests of stamping and cancellation options.

I now report the results of two AHA 2005 renewal campaign-mailing tests. However, unlike the 2004 campaign, in 2005 uneven counts and differing select criteria between panels constrained and confounded some comparisons, although useful tests involving of paratextual variables include: stamping both outer and reply envelopes, stamping mail with first class presort stamps, and using of PostCode cancellation. Several panels between the 2004 and 2005 campaigns with equivalent mailing list select criteria were also compared and results suggest that a shift to an economy *Fake HandFont* and *branded* outer envelope may have affected response.

Table 10. Master Summary of Three American Heart Association 2205 Test Mailings.

American Heart Association 2005 Renewal Campaign With Comparisons Between 2004 and 2005 Results										
6/24/05										
Two Mailing List Selection Criteria: a. Range of Months Since Last Gift b. Range of the Amount of Last Gift		A.	B.	C.	D.	E.	F.	G.	H.	
		Qty	Gifts	%	Average	Total	Total	Total Net	Income/	
Panel ID & Designation		Mailed	Recd	Reply	Gift	Income	Cost	Income	Ltr(G+R)	
4A TEST: Fake HandFont Note Card, 1st class stamp on both outer and reply envelopes (see note below)		0-12 months \$15+ & 13-36 months \$50+	562,232	38,536	6.85%	\$34.74	\$1,338,749.63	\$531,302.63	\$807,447.01	\$1.44
4B CONTROL: Fake HandFont Note Card, 1st class stamp on outer envelope only		13-36 months \$15-\$49.99	464,835	9,241	1.99%	\$23.54	\$217,577.89	\$269,596.76	-\$52,018.87	-\$0.11
DIFFERENCES (TEST vs. CONTROL) Expressed as Change 2 Ways: +/- Raw Value & +/- %		Differences in Select Criteria Constrain Some Comparisons.		+29,295 +317%	+4.86% +244%	+\$11.20 +5%	+\$1,121,171.74 +515%	+261,705.87 +97%	-\$859,465.88 -1,652%	-\$1.55 -1,409%
5A TEST: Fake HandFont Note Card, 1st class presort stamp on outer envelope + PostCode* (see note below)		0-12 months \$15+ & 13-36 months \$50+	25,000	1,679	6.72%	\$36.55	\$61,367.79	\$23,625.00	\$37,742.79	\$1.51
5B CONTROL: Fake HandFont Note Card, 1st class stamp on outer envelope only		0-12 months \$15+ & 13-36 months \$50+	25,000	1,768	7.07%	\$33.47	\$59,180.00	\$23,624.06	\$35,555.95	\$1.42
DIFFERENCES (TEST vs. CONTROL) Expressed as Change 2 Ways: +/- Raw Value & +/- %		Differences in Select Criteria Constrain Some Comparisons.		-89 -5%	-3.5% -5%	+\$3.08 9%	+\$2,187.79 +4%	+\$0.94 0%	+\$2,186.85 +6%	+\$0.09 +6%
Tests of Paratext Variables With Equalized Selects:		'05 Totals:	1,077,067	51,224	4.76%	\$32.74	\$1,676,875.31	\$848,148.44	\$828,726.87	\$0.77
4B TEST (2005): Fake HandFont Note Card, 1st class stamp outer envelope only		13-36 months \$15-\$49.99	464,835	9,241	1.99%	\$23.54	\$217,577.89	\$269,596.76	-\$52,018.87	-\$0.11
3A CONTROL (2004): Computer HandScript Note Card, 1st class stamp on outer envelope only (see note below)		13-36 months \$15-\$49.99	25,000	1,472	5.89%	\$22.48	\$33,091.74	\$28,500.00	\$4,591.74	\$0.18
DIFFERENCES (TEST vs. CONTROL) Expressed as Change 2 Ways: +/- Raw Value & +/- %		Boxes Gray Where Differences in Qty Invalidate Comparison.		-3.90% -66%	+\$1.06 +5%					-\$0.29 -161%
5B TEST (2005): Fake HandFont Note Card, 1st class stamp outer envelope only		0-12 months \$15+ & 13-36 months \$50+	25,000	1,768	7.07%	\$33.47	\$59,180.00	\$23,624.06	\$35,555.95	\$1.42
2A CONTROL (2004): Computer HandScript Note Card, 1st class stamp on outer envelope only		0-12 months \$50+	25,000	2,274	9.10%	\$86.20	\$196,015.50	\$28,500.00	\$167,515.50	\$6.70
DIFFERENCES (TEST vs. CONTROL) Expressed as Change 2 Ways: +/- Raw Value & +/- %		Envelope Differences** Also Exist Along With Change of Computer HandScript to Fake HandFont.		-2.03% -22.31%	-\$52.73 -61%	-\$136,835.50 -\$69.81%	-\$4875.94 -17.11%	-\$131,959.55 -78.77%	-\$5.28 -78.81%	
5A TEST (2005): Fake HandFont Note Card, 1st class presort stamp on outer envelope + PostCode		0-12 months \$15+ & 13-36 months \$50+	25,000	1,679	6.72%	\$36.55	\$61,367.79	\$23,625.00	\$37,742.79	\$1.51
4A CONTROL (2005): Fake HandFont Note Card, 1st class stamp on both outer and reply envelopes		0-12 months \$15+ & 13-36 months \$50+	562,232	38,536	6.85%	\$34.74	\$1,338,749.63	\$531,302.63	\$807,447.01	\$1.44
DIFFERENCES (TEST vs. CONTROL) Expressed as Change 2 Ways: +/- Raw Value & +/- %		Boxes Gray Where Differences in Qty Invalidate Comparison.		-1.13% -2%	+\$1.81 +5%					+\$0.07 +5%
Notes on Paratextual Variables Compared Within 2005 Tests & Between 2004 & 2005 Results:										
<p>† Fake HandFont is an economy-quality style of simulated handwriting. Such fonts are limited to a set of 26 lower- and 26 upper-case letters. Thus, each character looks the same every time it is used, which sends a paratextual signal that the font is obviously fake. Plus, letters with strokes that end above the baseline (b, o, v, and w) do not connect with adjacent characters that begin at the baseline (e.g. back, ocular, venerable, write).</p> <p>‡ Computer HandScript is not a font, but a program-driven set of glyphs created from samples of real handwriting. To produce a nuanced and realistic look, natural imperfections and inconsistencies are retained, letters connect, and an algorithm substitutes alternate versions of repeated letters. Plus, the program replaces individual above- and at-the-baseline characters with two-letter pairings that connect naturally (e.g. ba, oc, ne, wr).</p> <p>AHA used the term fake handwriting in referring to both types described above—the Computer HandScript used in 2004 and the economy-quality simulated handwriting used in 2005. However, since I test each as a distinct independent variable, I call the economy simulated handwriting used in 2005 Fake HandFont, and I call the more sophisticated version used in 2004, Computer HandScript. The difference in the effect on response of each type is measured in two tests that compare results from both years—a test between panels 4B and 3A and another between panels 5B and 2A.</p> <p>* PostCode is a mailer's postmark that mail shops use to cancel presort stamps (1st class, nonprofit or bulk) to prevent envelopes from looking like junk mail, to create a full-rate first class look, and thus to increase response. Use of this technique requires a written exemption from USPS rules that strictly prohibit canceling discount stamps. The effect of this independent variable is measured in two tests—5A versus 5B and 5A versus 4A.</p> <p>** Envelope Differences in the 2005 campaign included adding a 1/2"x4-1/2" red vertical bar and the American Heart Association corporate logo. This shifted the tone of the outer envelope from an understated personal stationary feel of interpersonal involvement to an informational content focus by using 2005's corporate branding imagery. Moreover, by allowing two items to vary in 2005, isolating which caused response to plummet is confounded.</p>										

In only one test panel of the 2005 renewal campaign (4B containing 464,835 records) was the selection integrity with the 2004 campaign data preserved. The select criteria for panel 3A of the 2004 test mailing (last gift made in the prior 13-36 months in the range of \$15-\$49.99), match with those of panel 4B in 2005 (also last gift made in the prior 13-36 months in the range of \$15-\$49.99). Although the quantities mailed in each panel differed, the important select criteria were stable, making it possible to compare the effectiveness of the Computer HandScript package used in 2004 with the Fake HandFont package used in 2005. Comparisons between the two panels are reported in table 10 above. Those data points that are not valid because of differing mailing list size have been grayed out on the table. Valid are column C (% Response), column D (Average Gift) and column H (Income/Ltr: $G \div A$).

The basic copy of the note card from 2004 to 2005 was essentially the same, but the package's outer envelope and P.S. note used a less natural-looking Fake HandFont instead of Computer HandScript. The 2005 renewal campaign also shifted away from using an understated style of outer envelope that resembled personal stationary. The personal look of the 2004 outer envelope communicated through the use of realistic computer simulated handwriting and a more personal-looking outer envelope exhibited communicated paratextually what Biber's Dimension 1 measures linguistically—the effect of *interpersonal involvement*. Instead of retaining this high touch look, the 2005 campaign opted instead for a package that used an obviously fake style of computer-simulated handwriting and used an envelope style that focused more on *corporate branding* than *personal connection*. The *corporate branding* effect in the 2005 outer envelope included the addition of a vertical 1/2" x 4-1/2" red bar and the organization's corporate logo and slogan. The change in simulated handwriting and envelope reflect a problem Jerry Huntsinger's observes:

When your letter arrives in the home, and the donor knows by glancing at your carrier envelope that it's another appeal from charity XYZ, you are defeated before they even get inside the envelope. What is all this superstition and fetish about always identifying your organization on the carrier envelope? Sometimes. But not always. Under many conditions it cuts your response drastically. (1993, pp. 2,3)

Ultimately the shift to Fake HandFont and a branded outer envelope seem to have worked against the 2005 campaign. Compared to the Computer HandScript Note Card package mailed in 2004, results for panel 4B plummeted in 2005. Panel 4B's response rate declined 66 percent, and although the average gift actually increased 5 percent from \$22.48 to \$23.54, the net income per letter plummeted 161 percent and the campaign lost \$52,018.87. The results seem to support the notion that paratextual variables can increase or diminish *interpersonal involvement* by changing physical attributes of a direct mail letter's *paratextual* elements. This seems to

mirror *paratextually*, what Biber measures *linguistically*. That is *high informational content* seems to have been exhibited in the *paratextual* content of 2005's outer envelope as *fake* (and thus impersonal) *handwriting* and as *branding* while *high interpersonal involvement* seems to have been reflected in the realistic handwriting style and understated personal stationery look of the 2004 campaign's unadorned outer envelope.

Again, the mixing of list selection criteria confounds many comparisons within the 2005 campaign. Panel 4A included 536,232 donors who had given \$15 or more in the prior 12 months as well as higher-value donors who had given in the prior 13-36 months in the range of \$50 or more. In contrast, panel 4B included 464,835 donors who had made a gift of \$15 or more in the prior 13-36 months; no current donors (those who had given in the prior 12 months) were included in panel 4B. This discontinuity made valid comparisons between the two panels virtually impossible. In addition, panel 4A was designed to test the effect of affixing a first class postage stamp to 562,232 reply envelopes. Panel 4B, however, required donors to affix their own stamps to reply envelopes. As shown above in the test comparing panel 4B with 2004's panel 3A (in which select criteria were the same), the new package did not perform well. This discrepancy was amplified when a better list and paying the donors' postage for them was added to the mix. The net income per package mailed reflects this—a 1,652% difference in total net income between panel 4A and 4B.

Results of the second test conducted in 2005 are recorded in the table 10 above for panels 5A and 5B. For panel 5A, rather than using a full-rate first class stamp on the outgoing envelope, a presort first class stamp was affixed instead. In addition to this less expensive stamp, it was canceled with PostCode—a mailer's postmark used to cancel presort stamps (1st class, nonprofit or bulk). This is done in order to prevent envelopes from looking like *junk mail*, to create a full-rate first class look, and thus to increase *response*. Use of this technique, however, requires special written exemption from the USPS (United States Postal Service), since DMM (Domestic Mail Manual) regulations actually *prohibit* canceling discount stamps. Panels 5A and 5B were mailed to lists with identical quantities and profiles—25,000 donors who had given \$15 or more in the prior 12 months as well as higher-value donors who had given in the prior 13-36 months in the range of \$50 or more. The results reported in the table above indicate that the discount first class presort stamp received an response of 6.72 percent compared to an average of 7.07 percent for the full-rate first class stamp (5 percent less for the presort stamp package test). However, the presort stamp package received a 9 percent higher average gift (\$36.55 compared to \$33.47 for the full-rate package stamped with the full-rate first class stamp). In addition, the presort package generated 4 percent more in total income and 6 percent more in net income.

Although panel 5A was mailed to only 25,000 households and 4A was mailed to more than half a million (562,232), both panels shared the same list selection criteria: donors who had given \$15 or more in the prior 12 months as well as higher-value donors who had given in the prior 13-36 months in the range of \$50 or more. The difference in response attributable to the use of first class presort postage is measured in the comparison of these two panels' results (see last pair compared in table 10 above). Again, the package using full-rate first class stamps had a very slight advantage—receiving a 6.85 percent response compared to 6.72 percent for the package using first class presort stamps (an advantage of just 0.13 percent for the full-rate first class package). But again, the presort stamp package outperformed the full-rate first class package elsewhere, receiving a 5 percent higher average gift (\$36.55 compared to \$34.74 for the full-rate package) and \$0.07 net income per package mailed advantage (\$1.51 per package for the presort segment compared to \$1.41 for the full-rate segment, for a gain of 5 percent).

The last comparison test in the table 10 above examines again two panels with differing list select criteria. Panel 5B included 25,000 donors who had given \$15 or more in the prior 12 months as well as higher-value donors who had given in the prior 13-36 months in the range of \$50 or more. In contrast, panel 2A included 25,000 donors who had made a gift of \$15 or more in the prior 12 months. This discontinuity complicates analysis in that it can be argued that 2A had an advantage, being comprised only of higher-end current donors who had given \$50 or more in the prior 12 months. However, the large degree in disparity between 2A and 5B suggest a deeper problem with the 2005 package. The Computer HandScript package used in 2004 garnered a 9.10 percent response compared to 2005's Fake HandFont package that received a 7.07 percent response (a -22.31 percent difference). More severe was the fact that the average gift declined from the Computer HandScript package's \$52.73 average to just \$33.47 for the Fake HandFont package used in 2005. Total net income for the Fake HandFont package declined 78.77 percent, falling from 2004's \$167,515.50 to \$35,555.95 in 2005—a drop of 78.71 percent.

These data indicate that altering a paratextual variable can have a profound impact on the impact of a direct mail campaign. A line seems to exist separating computer-simulated handwriting that looks obviously fake and that which looks authentic. In addition, the paratextual variable of the envelope itself is significant—better to have a piece look like a greeting card from a friend rather than an impersonal corporate communiqué. And finally, affixing precanceled stamps, and then canceling those stamps with a PostCode postmark can improve net income by lowering postage costs. Although AHA tested a first class presort stamp, once a stamp

is cancelled, it is hard to tell the denomination (although some are quite adept at ferreting out a nonprofit stamp). However, the target audience is the average person, for whom a cancelled nonprofit stamp may pass as a full-rate nonprofit stamp.

The intention of such manipulation of paratext is to communicate greater *interpersonal involvement* by essentially shifting the piece from the *junk mail* genre to the *personal correspondence* genre in the eyes of the beholder—a contrast illustrated in the symbolism inherent in the two iconic mail pieces below:



Figure 31 Two iconic images contrasting high touch and mass produced mail.

This research suggests the need for further testing of PostCode cancellation with nonprofit stamps. If response rates were to hold near those for first class letters, postage savings could widen yet further. For instance, at the lowest nonprofit rate, an envelope may be sent for as low as 8-1/2 cents—a savings of more than 500 percent over full-rate first class mail. For example, were a mailing the size of AHA's 2005 aggregate renewal campaign (1,077,067 names) sent at the nonprofit rate at an estimated average of 14 cents, the postage cost would be \$150,789.38. The same list mailed at the estimated first class presort rate of 35 cents each would cost \$376,973.45 to mail. And if sent at the full first class rate of 42 cents, the cost would be \$452,368.14. The

gap between full-rate first class and the estimated nonprofit rate would be \$301,578.76. Were the manipulation of paratextual variables able to create the look of a first class mail for a third the cost, well over a quarter million dollars would be saved. AHA's 2005 campaign generated a net income of \$828,726.87. The potential savings by using nonprofit postage (assuming response would not be diminished) would have been 36% of the total raised. I now turn to an analysis of the campaign.

Franciscan Friars of the Atonement. The last test suggests this with a test of the use of nonprofit presort stamps with a mailing sent by a Catholic monastic order, Franciscan Friars of the Atonement (FFA), headquartered in Garrison NY. FFA wished to test the difference in response that could be attributed to an alternate postage treatment using a Computer HandScripted envelope along with a nonprofit stamp that was cancelled with a PostCode mark.

The envelopes below illustrate the effect FFA tested. Both envelopes were identical, save for the fact that the nonprofit stamp of one was cancelled and the other was not cancelled. As with the American Heart Association test, the assumption driving the test was the hypothesis that paratextual variables could have an effect on the way donors received the mail piece.

Two panels of 10,000 pieces of mail each were equally divided into A and B splits of a 20,000 record data file. Every other record in the zip code-ordered file was assigned alternatively to either panel 6A or panel 6B. Panel 6A's stamps were mailed naked while a cancellation mark was printed across panel 6B's stamps. Written authorization was obtained from the USPS to be able to cancel nonprofit stamps. As with the AHA mailing described as panel 5A the hypothesis was that the closer a mail piece resembled personal correspondence, the higher the likelihood it would get opened. Secondly, the purpose was to also judge if this could also lower postage costs.

Test 6 -- Franciscan Friars of the Atonement

Each panel of this A/B split of a 20,000 record mailing list was sent a Computer HandScript note card package. Panel 6A was addressed and personalized in Computer HandScript simulated handwriting. A nonprofit stamp was then affixed and canceled using a PostCode mailer's postmark by the mail house. Only the outer envelope was stamped. The outer envelope's bar code and the *AUTO* rate designation were also printed in the lower right corner where the USPS prints the bar code on full-rate first class mail. This was done in order to give the envelope the look of first class mail. Panel 6B was sent an identical package. Like panel 6A, panel 6B's package was addressed and personalized in Computer HandScript simulated handwriting. A nonprofit stamp was also affixed and was the outer envelope's bar code and the *AUTO* rate designation were printed in the lower right corner. However, nonprofit stamps on panel 6B's outer envelopes were mailed naked (not cancelled). The test was configured to determine if the effect cancellation of a nonprofit stamp would have on response.

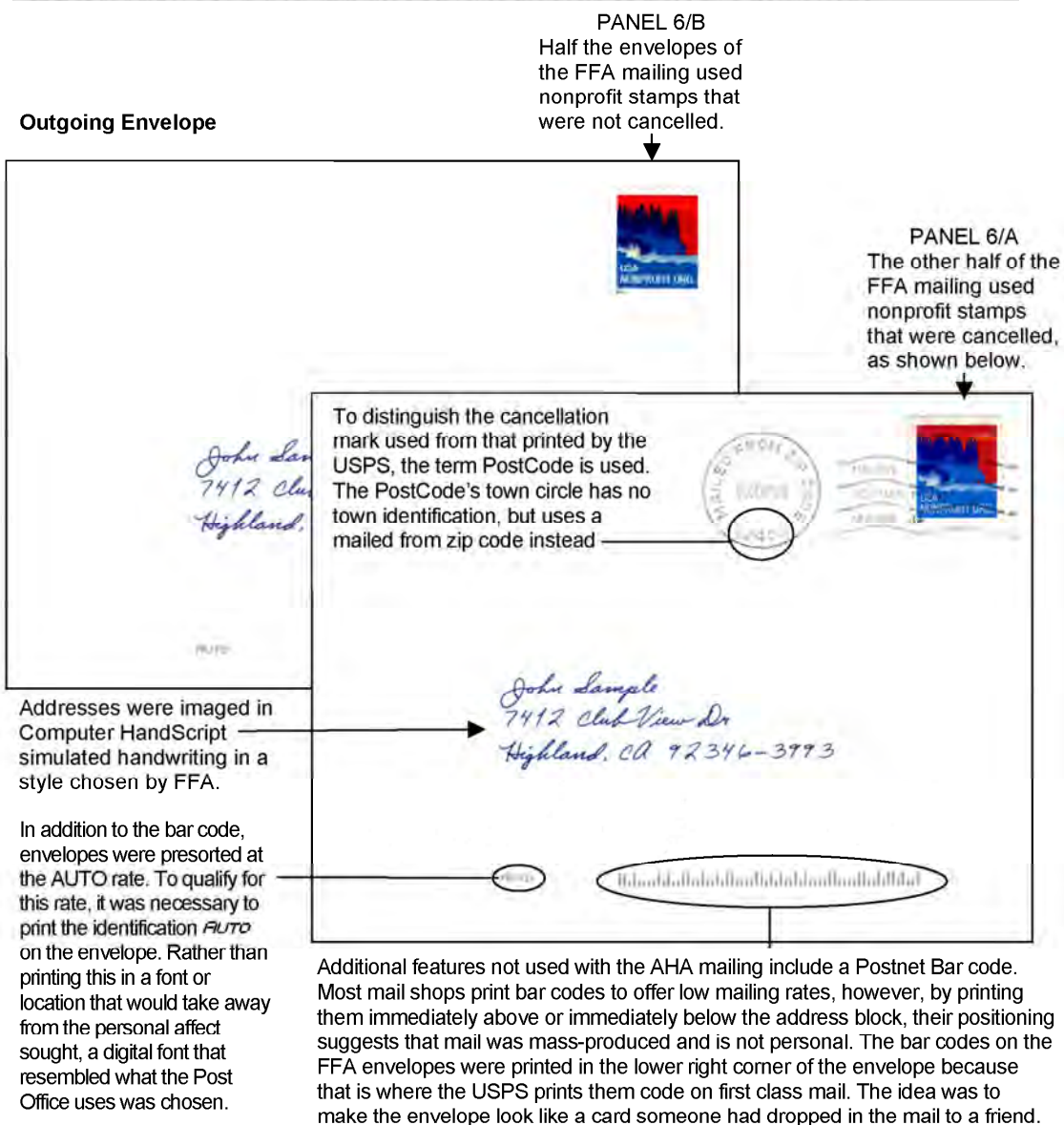


Figure 32. Two contrasting envelope treatments for Franciscan Friars of the Atonement: a Computer HandScript addressed envelope with a naked (not cancelled) nonprofit stamp versus another with the stamp PostCode cancelled.

Table 11. Master Summary of Test of PostCode for Franciscan Friars of the Atonement.

Franciscan Friars of the Atonement Test of Postcode Cancellation of Precanceled Stamps			
TEST/ PANEL	Description of Test and Control Panels	Note Cards Mailed	Percent Change in Response Rate of Test over Control:
6A	TEST: Computer HandScripted Note Card, Mailed with a PostCoded* Nonprofit stamp on envelope (Test <i>Cancelled</i> Look)	10,000	5.6%
6B	CONTROL: Computer HandScripted Note Card, Mailed with a <i>Naked</i> Nonprofit stamp on envelope (Control <i>Not Cancelled</i> Look)	10,000	4.4%
Two Measures of the Percentage Change in Response Attributable to the Printing of a PostCode Cancellation Mark Across the Face of Presort Nonprofit Postage Stamps:			<p>Incremental Lift in the Response Rate of Test Panel (with <i>Cancelled</i> Stamps) over Control Panel (with <i>Naked</i> Stamps): +1.2%</p> <p>Overall Lift in the Response (measures what the 1.2% difference between the two panels is as a percentage of the Control rate of 4.4%): +27.27%</p>
<p>* A PostCode cancellation mark includes what the USPS calls a <i>town circle</i>—literally a circle the size of a nickel coin—inside of which are printed the date of mailing, zip code of origin, and optionally the date of mailing. (The date of mailing is required if the mail piece is sent at the first class presort rate).</p> <p>Ironically, the PostCode town circle does not actually include the <i>town</i> identification. Called a blind postmark, the PostCode town circle only includes the zip code of origin. This is an advantage for those using a mailing service in another city because it creates the illusion that their letters were mailed locally (unless, of course, someone with a keen eye were to notice the different zip code).</p> <p>Finally, to the right of the <i>town circle</i>, four wavy lines are printed across the face of the postage stamp. Together the town circle and four wavy lines are called the PostCode Cancellation. It basically looks just like the cancellation mark the Post Office has printed across first class stamps since Benjamin Franklin was the Postmaster. He designed the cancellation mark after that used in England in the colonial era.</p> <p>The rationale for printing a PostCode Cancellation Mark across the face of precanceled stamps (which the USPS defines as commercial bulk, nonprofit, or first class presort denominations) is the hypothesis that by canceling them, they will look like ordinary first class stamps. The reasoning is that this additional step will keep a piece of mail from being discarded because instead of obviously looking like junk mail, the reader may think it is something he or she should keep and read. Moreover, if the strategy increases response, the savings can reduce postage costs of mail normally sent at the full first class rate by as much as a third.</p>			

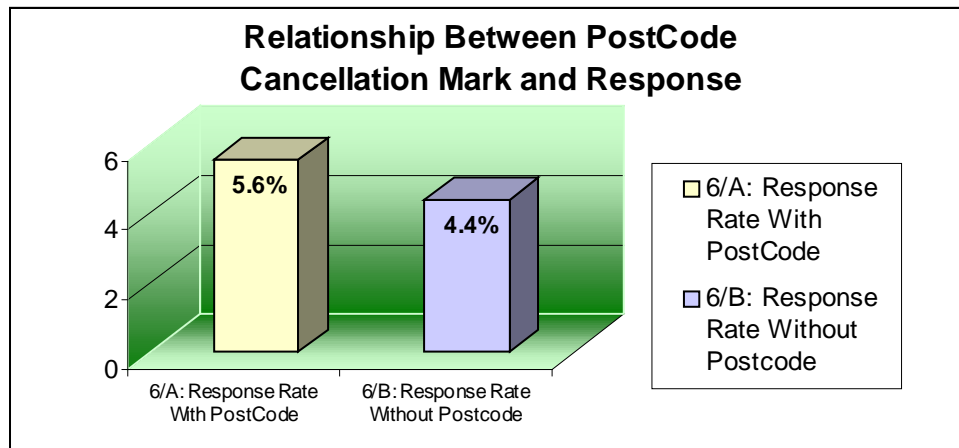


Figure 33. Response variation between packages with cancelled versus naked nonprofit stamps.

This back-end information provided after the results of this mailing were processed does not begin to approach the level of data sophistication exhibited in that provided by the American Heart Association. However, the simplicity of the FFA test makes analysis is thus less complicated and adds one more bit of credence to the suggestion that use of PostCode as a method of personalizing mail is in order.

The *incremental* lift in the rate of test panel 6A (with *Cancelled* Stamps) over Control Panel 6B (with *Naked* Stamps) is +1.2%. Overall Lift in the Response (measures what the 1.2% difference between the two panels is as a percentage of the Control rate of 4.4%): +27.27%.

The result of this test helps confirm again that perhaps one of the most significant moves nonprofit can make to improve response rates is to give attention to how their mail appears as it lays on the table where their donors lay it as they bring it in from the mail box. Does it land in the keep pile? Or does it blend in with other mass-produced pieces? The following illustrations summarize the challenge nonprofits face with getting their mail opened and the hope hand personalization and canceling discounted stamps holds out.

As important as the ability to use linguistic features that connect with donors by creating interpersonal involvement, as important as the ability to humanize the voice of philanthropy with stories about real people, as important as targeting the correct segments of a list by understanding what the data says motivates individuals to give—none of that matters if the envelope doesn't get opened.

The data on tests of two paratextual variables (hand-personalization and the cancellation of presort stamps with PostCode) seems to give hope that mail can be given a more personal look that will help it survive the sort when it reaches donor's homes and in turn increased response, at least in this test, helped to improve

campaign results. Moreover, as noted above, if the use of discounted postage along with PostCode could even make nonprofit stamps look first class and get similar results as the AHA test did with first class presort stamps, the savings could be more than a quarter million dollars on postage alone on a similar mailing of 1 million-plus pieces of mail. While every organization and every organization's donors are different, the results American Heart Association and Franciscan Friars of the Atonement were able to achieve, should prompt organizations to test the techniques they found successful.

The tests of mailings extended the notion of interpersonal involvement to the paratextual realm by examining the response to mail pieces by the American Heart Association and Franciscan Friars of the Atonement that heightened interpersonal involvement by virtue of the physical appearance of the direct mail piece looked. The intention was to manage the first impression made as the piece met the recipient's eye. It was suggested that envelope treatments, which most would dismiss as having nothing to do with a serious study of rhetorical and linguistic and rhetorical variables, has everything to do with them. It is actually *job one* for any nonprofit organization that depends on mail for a significant part of its income. Prize-winning copy, elegant art, the perfect reason to give, and the perfectly targeted list are irrelevant if the envelope in which the letter presenting the above does not get opened. *Nothing else matters if the envelope doesn't get opened.* In testing, the variables of hand-personalization and envelope design show relationships between these variables and response.

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Note: The following represents the entire reference section in the dissertation from which this chapter was excerpted. Therefore, some of the entries that follow may not have been cited in the chapter excerpted here.

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