

Voices of the Vampire Community (VVC) Public Meeting – April 25, 2009

Attendees (21):

Cole St. Valentine – Black Lamp Bay & Carpe Noctem Meetup Group
Corvis Nocturnum – Dark Moon Press & Independent Representative
Eric Bloodstorm – Portland Vampire Community
Diaboluslupus – Southern California Meetup Group
Gabriel – House Lost Haven
Gypsy – House Scarlet Moon
Isealdor – Vampire Realm Of Darkness
Merticus – Atlanta Vampire Alliance (AVA) & Suscitatio Enterprises, LLC
Michelle Belanger – House Kheperu & MichelleBelanger.com
NyteMuse – House Rosa
Ravena – House Lost Haven
RavenHarte – Clann Caladvwlch
Reija – Independent Representative
Sable Twilight – House Vespertine
Shishain – House Quinotaur
SphynxCatVP – SphynxCatVP Real Vampires Support Site
Sylvere ap Leanan – Real Vampires Community Alliance (RVCA)
Vyrdolak – By Light Unseen
Xeurika – House Quinotaur
Zero – Atlanta Vampire Alliance (AVA) & Suscitatio Enterprises, LLC
Zilchy – Independent Representative

Discussion Agenda:

I. Meeting Info & Introductions

Welcome to the first public meeting of Voices of the Vampire Community (VVC) for 2009. If you have not attended a VVC meeting before or are reading this for the first time please briefly take note of how this meeting will be conducted. The transcript from tonight's meeting is being logged and will be made publicly available.

Topics will be presented in the order they appear on the agenda (VVC members may refer to the forum or their e-mail for tonight's schedule). Please do not skip ahead and please do not suggest discussion of items not on the agenda until at the end of each major discussion topic.

Feel free to speak your mind on any and all topics in a civil manner and offer any supporting information, links, or material as needed. Thank you for coming and now let's begin!

II. Background & Introduction

VVC was founded January 2006.

The purpose of the Voices of the Vampire Community (VVC) is to develop friendly relations among the various Houses, Covens, Orders, and other organizations of the vampire community; to encourage cooperation in solving community related problems and in promoting respect for the views, ideas, and opinions of others without seeking to establish a unifying or governing body; and to be a center for harmonizing the actions of groups in attaining these ends. – August 8, 2006

Voices Of The Vampire Community (VVC) does not assert itself as the exclusive organization of leaders or notable persons in the vampi(y)re community nor do we view ourselves or our actions as legislative or authoritarian.

The members of the VVC are representative of multiple groups, Houses, Orders, paths, beliefs, and segments of the vampi(y)re community who meet and are able to put aside personal differences to work together to discuss, suggest, implement, and support projects, ideas, and other intellectual works that help to improve the overall community.

For more information please visit our web site at:
<http://www.veritasvosliberabit.com/vvc.html>

We are available to answer questions through the community feedback form available at the site above.

III. Discussion

As a departure from the specific matters we discuss in business meetings, tonight's meeting will take a broader and more relevant approach to the vampi(y)re community. Opinions offered from members of the VVC who are unable to attend tonight's meeting will be posted first after the asking of each question. All present members please allow time for this to occur prior to posting your own response. Just as a reminder, conversation is to be kept civil, statements or claims backed by example where necessary, and in cases of insuperable disagreements; a concession between parties to respectfully agree to disagree.

Let's start the evening with these questions:

a. Keeping Our Community & Our Donors Safe - A Three-Part Question: (1) What steps can we take as a community to responsibly and accurately inform of potential threats or suspect behavior to our members and donors? (2) How can we properly assess the severity of threats and work effectively with law enforcement and other officials when necessary to ensure our safety? (3) What educational initiatives can we promote and/or offer to assist the members of our community and others in learning about the warning signs and behavioral patterns of potentially dangerous individuals, groups, or cults?

b. Evaluating & Responding To Offers From The Media - A Three-Part Question:

(1) What expectations should we have of the media and what questions should we ask prior to consenting to participate in an article or documentary? (2) How can we determine what media requests originate from legitimate sources and what, if any, reasonable expectation of personal privacy should one have for each type of media (print, radio, and film) should they consent to participate? (3) If and when we decide a media proposal is worthwhile to pursue, how do we best match the requests and needs of the project to the specific members of the community who may be able to assist?

c. Improving The Quality & Availability Of The Information Presented On Real

Vampirism: How can we improve upon the existing information on our web sites, groups, and forums while at the same time increasing our visibility to the newly awakened and seasoned veterans alike who are actively searching for information on real vampirism? Let's discuss for a moment the benefits of ensuring we host the most current and responsible information pertaining to vampirism, feeding practices, and donor care, coupled with search engine optimization (SEO), streamlined web site design, and cross-directory linking to other web sites.

d. The Vampire Community - 2012 & Beyond: Should we have goals, defined agendas, or other aspirations for the vampire community? If so, what should they be and why? Where do you see the greater community headed in the short-term and long-term? Presently, what do you view as the greatest hindrance to the growth and cohesiveness of both your local community and the greater community?

e. Other topics you'd like to bring up for discussion?

IV. Business Reminders

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effectively with law enforcement and other officials when necessary to ensure our safety?

<Merticus> **(3) What educational initiatives can we promote and/or offer to assist the members of our community and others in learning about the warning signs and behavioral patterns of potentially dangerous individuals, groups, or cults?**

<Diaboluslupus> I think because of the national/international scope of the community we should focus on warning the community about verified threats - where someone has filed charges or sworn out a complaint. We should avoid hearsay unless there is some good collaboration. There are often a lot of wild claims and down right libel that gets tossed around the community. I was a victim of smear campaign a few years ago where a moderator for local group went around claiming that I was sexual predator.

<Diaboluslupus> There are a lot of "borderline" cases. One person's nut case can be another person's ideal match. Outside of the criminal action - we should also try to monitor cult like behavior. There are various accepted "cult checklists". I have some encounters with vamp groups that have cult like or cult of personality traits - such as telling members who they can associate with, etc.

<Diaboluslupus> I think this could be served by educating the community about what is a legally actionable. I've found that a lot of people in the community are poorly informed about laws against stalking, harassment, and intimidation.

<Isealdor> Education is key. We're likely not going to be aware of all of the crazies and potentially dangerous groups or people, if for no reason than that often the most dangerous ones are the ones who blend in the best. Instead, and instead of trying to make some sort of "blacklist" for the community at large, I think we need to emphasize educating our members on what is considered safe or not.

<Isealdor> We as a community can warn each other about the extreme crazies, anyone who has a past record of abuse, unsafe practices, etc, of course, but that's not going to do anything about the majority. Obvious community precautions, though, would be to not make it too easy for a stalker, not support unsafe practices, educating members about what is or isn't ok, etc.

<Isealdor> I strongly support that anything of any consequence needs to be taken to law enforcement. The community can help warn about some of the worst situations, but most of it really falls to the individual and far outside the control of the community. As soon as it strays into the territory of potential legal matters, there's really very little the community can do about any of it.

<Isealdor> Being open and discussing a lot of the potential issues with members, providing warning sign lists and education material about the cults or dangerous behavior, encouraging people to

constantly question the motives and goals of any group/cult, and providing as much full disclosure of perspectives and information about different individuals and groups as they apply to potentially dangerous behaviors I think are the most important things to try to prepare and help members recognize the warning signs.

- <M_Belanger> First, we should maintain informative websites and other real-time resources (reputable meet-ups, for example), where people can go to learn about what behavior and expectations are acceptable and ethical. Those of us who run such things should maintain a list of other sites and real-time organizations that are reputable and informative in these areas and share this list freely.
- <M_Belanger> Back-end communication among the individuals who maintain such sites and real-time groups should be carried out, and information about potential threats and abuses should be shared in good faith among these organizers. We need also to stop viewing law enforcement and other authorities in an “us against them” light, instead using the law to our advantage when we are confronted by threats and blatantly illegal behavior within the community.
- <M_Belanger> As a part of this, I feel that we also need to increase awareness across the board within the community on what exactly constitutes illegal behavior in terms of donor abuse, assault, battery, criminal threatening, and so forth. If people learn how to recognize problem situations before they get out of control, they have a better chance at getting out of those situations before they get out of hand.
- <M_Belanger> Out-reach to other fringe communities that have to deal with similar issues of potential abuse coupled with a fear of reporting and/or distrust for official legal channels would help us greatly. A lot of this territory has already been covered by organizations in the Pagan, GBLTQ, and BDSM communities.
- <M_Belanger> At the very least, we should seek out their resources and FAQs on these issues and crosslink with established vampire webpages – and we should not be afraid to contact people in these communities directly to attempt to build bridges and work with them to promote knowledge of these vital issues across our communities.
- <RavenHarte> I think first of all clarification what exactly constitutes threats or suspect behavior needs to be made. Do you mean a vampire who routinely uses unsafe practices (sangs who haven’t been tested, psi's who get donors drunk, etc) or do you mean a member of the community who is actually issuing treats of violence or is luring underage donors, etc? I mean we can’t do the Chicken Little thing. There has to be real proof of threat not just rumor or hear say or when a real problem comes people will discount it.

- <RavenHarte> Second I think if we have a real problem child - a vampire who routinely uses unsafe practices - a donor who is lying about being tested or their actual status but is letting themselves be a blood doll etc, then people in that person's community need to actually make it known to the person the behavior isn't acceptable.
- <RavenHarte> If you stand idly by and watch someone do something unsafe, you are complicit... you are showing that person no one will do crap about it. Where is the incentive to stop then? It's not something that can be worked on some message board somewhere. Those who are seeing it need to be doing something about it. *I* can't do anything about someone practicing unsafely in say NY and shouldn't because all I've got is hearsay on the matter.
- <RavenHarte> We first have to empower each other by making sure everyone is on the same page about what is NOT OK. Supporting each other about saying no to unsafe situations. Supporting each other when small violations are made. You'll never know a threat is coming if donors are too afraid to tell anyone when the small violations are being made. And it usually starts small.
- <RavenHarte> Getting the Donors Bill of Rights type info out on EVERY board, website, etc. Making sure that in general people know what's a safe practice vs. unsafe. Getting Bonewits' info on how to ID a cult info on every site and message board. Making sure vampyric workshop style events like Twilight always have a Donor's panel or class etc. where donors alone can meet and learn better how to manage their vamp relationships.
- <RavenHarte> I mean seriously I think all vamp/donor relationships should be contracted the same way the BDSM community does - where its clear what the vamp wants, what the donor wants, limitations, etc. Maybe some of that info needs to be on more vamp websites and message boards - the contracting BDSM communities do.
- <Shishain> We need to be open and honest with each other and with our donors/family/anyone else affected by our activities. This would require a significant effort at reducing the cattiness/drama in the community; VVC and DN seem to have made an excellent start at that. If we can get everyone else to follow suit in that regard, we're flying.
- <Shishain> Threat assessment is tricky. You can't usually tell a predator by their looks-- ask any kid who's been molested by the nice fellow next door-- and over the internet it's even harder. We need to keep our eyes and ears open, use our best judgment, and communicate with each other.
- <Shishain> Before we can work effectively with law enforcement and other officials, we need to get them to take us seriously. That, I think, is a few decades out yet. There's some good work going on, but

it'll take time. Unfortunately, I really don't have any more productive/helpful suggestions on this front.

<Shishain> If I recall correctly, there's a document kicking about on the warning signs of a cult. That's a good place to start, and I think a few folks have already gotten it out there.

<xeurika> I think that different situations require different levels of response. It should be common sense that any illegal activity be turned over to proper authorities early on. For donor safety, perhaps we need to reach out to the donor community on their input on what actions would make them feel most comfortable.

<xeurika> Identifying potential threats in individuals and groups should be balanced with the need to protect individuals and groups from political or unfounded claims.

<Zero> I really think that this community needs to sit down and decide what's OK behavior and what's not, and establish a culture where we all call people out when they do things that we don't want to tolerate. I hate top-down declarations of status; there are lots of problems with a system that allows people to be in favor or disfavor based on their actions, but our biggest problem is strategic - even if we came up with a completely universal and

<Zero> totally just system of standards, which would never be abused, we're not centrally organized and there's no way to enforce it. I think the best way might be to help individual community members establish their own internal assessment so that a problem person can't simply switch cities to keep doing his/her same crap to a new community.

<Zero> In terms of actually dangerous behavior, I think it's perfectly reasonable to use societal standards of legal behavior - hard drug use, recruiting for cults (technically not illegal, but will get you followed by three-letter agencies), violence, did I mention hard drug use, etc.? We can introduce physical safety elements into the community culture which other subcultures have used effectively- educating about problem behavior (yes, the drugs are a problem, not just an unsavory personality trait),

<Zero> set up cultural expectations and guidelines for personal safety and for enforcing legal standards of behavior (i.e. call the cops, talk to the club owner about trespassing individuals, talk to the bouncers about keeping an eye on certain people).

<Zero> I would love for our various communities to have dialogue with their local law enforcement. This is not always possible, but I would really like to see some sort of system where officers who already have relationships with their local communities might be able to facilitate introductions in other cities and towns, either informally, or in the guise of a seminar or other event.

<Zero> Also, charlatans like Don Rimer and Dawn Perlmutter go cross-country for speaking engagements with law enforcement

agencies, and basically lie to them outright. We could do something similar but without the blatant lying.

<Zero> As a very basic start, I always point people at the Bonewits' cult evaluation framework. I think it's a good tool for community members to use to evaluate the claims and nature of any group they join; it's as applicable to a messianic kool-aid cult as it is to AmWay or Mary Kay, and can help individuals (and community leaders) start to think about group-dynamic issues like social control and manipulative behavior. I've seen neighborhood homeowners associations that could benefit from an ABCDEF evaluation.

<Zero> In general, we as a community are not shy about voicing our values of individual thought and personal truths, but I think that we should eventually make our value of individualism part of the architecture in the same way that safety issues are brought to the foreground.

<Zero> We could do with some formal statements that a solitary path is OK, and that groups and Houses are there to facilitate personal path choices that individuals have already made, not to make them for you. I know that most Houses have a screening process to weed out the impressionable, but I'm not sure if that is well-known to the general community, especially the newest members.

<Zero> Part of the reason for the community going more public in the first place (back in the early 1990's) was to speak up and provide a voice of truth to counteract the worrying number of scam artists who were preying on the fringes of the community. We've cut back on so much of that by simply being out there and available, and being vocal about the character of the community and what we are and are not.

<Merticus> (1) When a particular situation comes to our attention we should try to obtain both sides of the story and then make the best possible determination as to the validity and seriousness of the threat (anything from violence to unsafe feeding practices). Granted, this is a very murky area because everyone's idea of a 'threat' may be different.

<Merticus> Those we know who are in direct contact with the individual(s), reside in their geographic area, or otherwise peripherally involved in the matter should be privately contacted. If there is a direct threat to an individual's personal safety or life, law enforcement should be notified and detailed records of all e-mails, messages, and phone calls kept.

<Merticus> If donors are being abused by a vampire in some manner there are several Donor Networks (Black Swan Haven in particular) who should be notified so that others don't fall victim.

<Merticus> (2) I'm a strong advocate for maintaining good relations with

local enforcement officials who are level-headed and willing to listen to your situation. Officers, family crisis counselors, and intervention specialists are human beings like everyone else and more often than not are willing to listen if approached sincerely and professionally.

<Merticus> You may even find that many are members of other subcultures, the pagan community, or share similar interests so it often goes a long way to ask around within your friend groups, clubs, and organizations.

<Merticus> (3) Isaac Bonewits' Advanced Bonewits' Cult Danger Evaluation Frame should be linked to throughout the community via our web sites (<http://www.neopagan.net/ABCDEF.html>) along with the BITE Model that concerns mind control and cults (<http://www.freedomofmind.com/resourcecenter/articles/BITE.htm>).

<Merticus> Additionally, resource guides exploring the common indicators of sexual and physical abusers, anti-social personality disorder, and recognizing erratic behaviors or warning signs of severe (clinical) depression coupled with suicidal and/or homicidal tendencies.

<Merticus> If you live in a major metropolitan area you should keep a listings of counseling centers, shelters, and if your situation permits host a temporary safe house. The bottom line is that if we see something transpiring on our forums, in our groups, or offline that seems suspicious or troubling we should be willing to take the time to explore the matter rather than pass it off as someone else's problem.

<Zilchy> 1) I believe it was on LadyCG's page, where there was a list of characteristics that indicate a predator or roleplayer with intent to be predatory on newcomers to the community. I'm also an avid proponent of the ABCDEF, which I've recently reviewed in a video.

<Zilchy> 2) Proper assessment is difficult in "fringe" groups such as ours, but I think that perhaps establishing something like what Dawn Perlmutter has ("The Institute for the Research of Organized & Ritual Violence", now "Symbol Intel"). Of course it might be somewhat difficult to justify to law enforcement that we're not part of the problem, as identified in Perlmutter's text - but the refutation of her points and credentials has already been done.

<Zilchy> 3) What educational initiatives can we promote and/or offer to assist the members of our community and others in learning about the warning signs and behavioral patterns of potentially dangerous individuals, groups, or cults?

<Zilchy> Again, the ABCDEF is fantastic at this - also I believe this would be a great question to pose to someone who actually deals with unstable people on a daily basis. While there are guides on

the internet for identifying unstable people I think it would be more credible to hear such instruction "straight from the horse's mouth," so to speak.

<NyteMuse> Doesn't this get somewhat into the tricky gray area of the notion of blacklists? I mean, I can see merit in warning others, but posting those sort of open blanket condemnations seems to be rather opening-for-trouble.

<NyteMuse> The BITE method Michelle dug up is good as well...somewhat shorter than ABCDEF

<Merticus> Yes, I mentioned in the link above.

<Merticus> BITE Model - Mind Control, etc.

*
Zilchy makes a note to review BITE

<Sylvere> The majority of us aren't law enforcement officials or forensic psychologists. Any action we take without evidence sufficient to meet the burden of proof for a formal investigation is legally slander or libel. Without the proper training, we are not qualified to assess the severity of any perceived threats. Neither are we qualified to work with law enforcement or other officials.

<Sylvere> We have neither the responsibility nor the right to inform others of "potential threats or suspect behavior." By taking this upon ourselves, we become little more than rumor mongers. What we can and should do is provide access to resources such as the Bonewits' Cult Evaluation Frame or the Donor's Bill of Rights. From there, it is up to each individual to determine whether or not a person or group is a threat or acting in a responsible manner.

<Sylvere> While we are free to give our opinions or present information *to* law enforcement or other officials if asked, we can only offer this as a personal view, not fact. What benefit the other party takes from the information and views given is up to that person or group.

<SphynxCatVP> A-1/A-3) Information is a good start - ensure as many eyeballs as possible see things like the cult evaluation frame, and the sociopath profile. Get more discussion of same on forums so that people who don't visit the sites also hear something about it.

<SphynxCatVP> A-2) We need input from law enforcement - mainly to ensure that what we interpret as a threat is also a legal threat, and what we can/should do in both assessing and dealing with it. We need to be sure our responses are above-board and legal. :)

<Gabrielx> Personally half of my family is in law enforcement so it's a tad easier for me to contact them or others that are in the field to assess risk and legality.

<ColeVonCat> Would donor safety classes be a good idea? How could we advertise such things?

<EricBloodstorm> As far as donor safety classes, I would think that each communities leadership should over see that.

<NyteMuse> Here's a question: do we have any places available where someone who HAS been the victim of abuse can go to a "safe place" to report such things, with the assurance that it will be handled properly? If not, could we create one or some?

<SableTwilight> What about working with shelter and anti-violence organizations?

<SableTwilight> At least to help make them aware of the subculture

<ColeVonCat> Eric: Let's say I want to set up such a class? How would I reach the potential donors in the area?

<EricBloodstorm> In my area?

<ColeVonCat> In any area.

<ColeVonCat> Well, I am pretty much the community leader out here.

<Vyrdolak> D.V. and similar organizations tend to be extremely negative about fringe groups

<EricBloodstorm> Well there is the option of having a community leader host or you can use bulletin boards like the donor bank on SangSpace.

<EricBloodstorm> Personally I think forums on line that are targeted at donors would be a great start.

<Ravena> 1. Except in exceptional and very rare circumstances, I don't think it's generally a good practice to start bad mouthing individuals. A lot of time the issue is more personal than anything and people end up soiling a person's reputation over something petty. Instead, educating on what would make someone dangerous or a possible threat and how to recognize these people, would be a lot better. Members and donors should be able to make their own decisions about

<Ravena> 2. Well, we can measure the severity of the threat by what harm is being done. If someone is being harmed as a result of the person's illegal activities, then that's a good indication they need to be brought to the attention of law enforcement. If we see minors (or others) being harmed or sexually exploited, we should reporting it to the authorities, there should be no question about it.

<NyteMuse> What about offering online classes? Like through Moodle or something?

<ColeVonCat> Hmmm never tried it.

<NyteMuse> Seems like from what I've seen on Black Swan Haven, the donors are quite spread out, much like the vamps.

<Corvis> That is the highly recommended avenue for any responsible adult, I think.

<ColeVonCat> Anyone have experience with online classes?

<NyteMuse> I have friends who swear by it... we're looking into using it for House Rosa.

<Ravena> What would the online classes be for?

<NyteMuse> I teach online classes through a sort of amateur-coded site... it's tricky, but can be done.

<EricBloodstorm> I went to some of the online classes via the Vampire Church. Some were ok and some were great.

<Merticus> There have been times in the past where some of us have received direct information (photos, incident reports with police, etc.) of situations. In situations such as these what, if any, role do we have to inform individuals who are directly or indirectly involved with the individual in our community? I know it's "touchy legal ground" and some incidents are less gray than others.

<Corvis> We have a responsibility as leaders, teachers, writers, etc. We cannot stand on the sidelines.

<ColeVonCat> I think if we know someone involved with an individual we think is dangerous, we have a responsibility to tell that person to stay away.

<Sylvere> We can't legally do that.

* NyteMuse agrees with Sylvere

<Ravena> We can warn the person, but most people don't really like being told what to do.

<Reija> They're still entitled to free will.

<ColeVonCat> Warn is what I meant.

<SableTwilight> We can't tell people to stay away, but we can share our opinions and known information about an individual.

<Sylvere> If we say or write anything, it's considered slander and libel.

<SableTwilight> It's how some other alternative groups monitor themselves.

<Sylvere> Not a territory I want to enter.

<Vyrdolak> Sylvere - I have to disagree.

<Vyrdolak> You can always talk to someone about a relationship--depends what you say.

<Vyrdolak> I'm a certified domestic violence counselor, I've spent years doing just that.

<Sylvere> Vyrdolak - You can if you like, but I'm not going to get sued.

<Ravena> I think it's better just to teach people how to spot a predator or a cult mentality.

<Ravena> Rather than pointing fingers at people.

<NyteMuse> I'd see online donor classes possibly covering dangerous people/group evaluation (ABCDEF & BITE), health risks, how to meet people safely, negotiations, and the various tips on recovery afterwards. Possibly even some basic energy perception stuff.

<SableTwilight> That would be good NyteMuse, but do they have to be classes?

<NyteMuse> Hard to say, Sable. I mean, all of that information is out there, much of it in the same location (like Black Swan Haven) but it seems like some folk don't take it seriously or read it all the way.

<NyteMuse> I see people take stuff more seriously if it's presented as a "class"

<NyteMuse> With quizzes and tests and such.

<ColeVonCat> Not if it's in a personal email or phone call to an individual we

know.

<ColeVonCat> People are still entitled to share opinions, legally.

<GypsyHSM> You mean like if we openly dis the ToV for psionic training for pure power play?

<GypsyHSM> What about this Madame X Vampyre Lounge thing on YouTube - this is going to go badly.

<GypsyHSM> All houses are not the same and all do not wish to be represented in PVC with a Whip.

<EricBloodstorm> I have an idea.

<EricBloodstorm> There is a membership web site called "girl don't hate him".

<EricBloodstorm> Maybe form a membership website where people can simply share their negative experiences with vampires?

<Ravena> I don't think that site is a good idea.

<Ravena> Because there would be no way to validate the claims at all.

<Ravena> Most forums are already set up for character assassination and bitch fests anyway.

<Reija> If somebody chooses to make an informed decision to join a suicide cult, then that's their own choice... if they're pulled in not knowing what they are getting themselves into, then that's a different issue.

<Sylvere> If we start "sharing opinions" what makes us any different than the rumor mongers?

<Sylvere> If there's documented evidence like police reports, we can let people know those things exist. But I don't think it's in our best interest to start telling tales.

<ColeVonCat> Sylvere: I am not letting a friend of mine get involved with a creep without at least mentioning why I think he/she is a creep and sharing whatever personal experience I might have.

<ColeVonCat> From there, said friend can make his/her own decision.

<Merticus> I don't think we're talking about a "blacklist" and a central "rumor mill" site etc. more than we are direct notification via e-mail, phone calls, etc. to specific individuals (rather than community-wide).

<Zilchy> NyteMuse: What about articles that then spawn Socratic seminars?

<NyteMuse> Zilchy, that too. Moodle allows for discussion forums and topics.

<SableTwilight> It would still be a good resource NyteMuse. For instance, I spent most of a day today writing to a new donor helping her understand her experiences with links and being feed on.

<NyteMuse> I'm completely with you, Sable, on still keeping all of that information out there...just suggesting it might not be the worst idea to consolidate that in a "class" and have it offered on BSH or something.

<ColeVonCat> It's just about sharing information.

<Sylvere> Cole: If it's your friend, that's one thing. It's a bit different when

we start keeping a blacklist.

<Merticus> I agree with the factual sharing of third-party information, documents, etc. - not subjective opinion or hearsay.

<Merticus> Education with the warning signs is more paramount in my opinion.

<ColeVonCat> No one's talking about a blacklist.

<Ravena> I'm not for supporting a blacklist.

* Sylvere agrees with Ravena

* Merticus agrees with Sylvere and Ravena in so much as a blacklist - though I still believe we should be prudent if we're informed of a situation that goes beyond rumor and includes supporting legally filed complaints, etc.

<SableTwilight> Yeah, go with Zilchy's idea and do a combined resource center and classes :)

<ColeVonCat> I agree that classes on recognizing "red flags" for potential (first-time) donors might be a good idea.

<Sylvere> A class on "Here's what a cult is and here's how to recognize red flags" doesn't have to mention anyone by name either.

<Sylvere> It's a positive action rather than a negative reaction.

<SableTwilight> Indeed.

<NyteMuse> Mmhmm. And, rather than creating something new, I'd prefer seeing it all in one place and just getting it more activity. Black Swan Haven is a good idea, and the admins are good people.

<ColeVonCat> A lot of people might think that certain things are just "what vampires do", if they do not have prior experience.

<NyteMuse> Dear gods yes...some people pop up on Black Swan Haven with... interesting questions.

<Ravena> Which is why we would provide them with reliable sane info.

<Zilchy> Cole - In line with that, why not a universal standard of classes and a sort of requirement that in order to take further action in the community that you need to check the block of having attended the classes?

<Zilchy> And/or taking a test on the material and passing out (like the US CLEP program).

<ColeVonCat> We basically want a class that says "Vampires should be sane" and if they are not... it's dangerous.

<GypsyHSM> How would we film blood lust, psivamp nerve burn syndromes, and the problems - House Scarlet Moon is not the happy household of vamps?

<GypsyHSM> No one really focuses on the downside in any of the books, the info, etc.

<NyteMuse> Universal standard of classes, Zilchy? Establishing standards on "anything" in the VC is an uphill battle on one leg...

* SableTwilight chuckles... can't help but think about SSC (Safe, Sane, & Consensual)

<Sylvere> RACK (Risk-Aware Consensual Kink) baby!

<SableTwilight> I agree Sylvere.
<ColeVonCat> I think just training going over the methods already established, but with emphasis that the VC is NOT an exception to any of the rules or sanity checks.
<Zilchy> NyteMuse, I'm just saying that there should be a universal set of courses that everyone should be required to have taken regarding safe practices.
<Ravena> No one should be required to do anything.
<Ravena> We aren't rulers.
<NyteMuse> Who's going to require or enforce?
* NyteMuse agrees with Ravena
<ColeVonCat> Zilchy: There should be for BDSM in general, or anyone wanting to join any religious organization
<Sylvere> We don't have to require it, but we can strongly suggest.
<ColeVonCat> I don't think it's happening
<Zilchy> True Ravena... I guess it should be left for individual houses to decide.
<NyteMuse> Now, if the movers n shakers want to post a link to said classes and "recommend", it's all good.
<SableTwilight> re: required classes for kink groups - that only works because the spaces have to and can regulate who enters and participates in them. In cases of donors, I'm not sure that most locations have central areas where vamp folks congregate in that these sort of things would work.
<NyteMuse> True, but if a good class is created and made available and known, it can spread to multiple locations as like a bonus when folks know about it.
<SableTwilight> Well a good class would inspire participation in itself and might be useful for presenters looking to engage various related communities.
<SableTwilight> For example, if I had the material I would likely use it for doing a presentation at one of the local kink clubs or with the local pagan/new age groups.
<Merticus> How many of you here have the ABCDEF or BITE method clearly linked or prominent on their web site?
<Ravena> Not me.
<Ravena> But hadn't seen BITE before.
<NyteMuse> We do on Kherete, but not Rosa.
<Sylvere> Merticus: I don't yet, but after graduation both will go up.
<ColeVonCat> Well now, houses can set any rules they want for potential members.
<Ravena> Yes, but not everyone is in a house.
<Zilchy> But then we're back in the same predicament we're in now - how to educate people who are just coming in.
<Ravena> Make the resources available.
<SphynxCatVP> And KEEP them available.

<Ravena> People can choose if they want to take advantage of them.
* NyteMuse agrees with Ravena

<ColeVonCat> Making the classes easily available and highly recommended goes a long way.

<Sylvere> I know we're not supposed to skip topics, but this sort of thing might make for a good YouTube or roundtable.

<Merticus> I think a good start would be to make sure these resources and education guides (or links to the sites that host them) are on ALL of our web sites, pages, and forums. This is the quickest (and less time consuming) thing we can start with and then build as we see fit personally with classes, educational videos, and other projects.

<Merticus> As time is most certainly a factor with many of us.

<EricBloodstorm> Aye
* NyteMuse nods
* Sylvere nods
* ColeVonCat agrees

<Sylvere> I've got Belfazaar's Donor's Bill of Rights on my Meetup group and it's going on the RVCA site too.

<NyteMuse> The Kherete material has added a fair bit on donors in the first book, some of which will end up as standalone articles on the site or forums.

<EricBloodstorm> Well any good information is appreciated. I try to make sure it's required reading for membership in our community.

<Merticus> The Donor Bill of Rights and/or a common sense guide to how to treat donors should be included on our sites as well IMHO. Even if we don't like the Black Veil or question the "legal" strength of contract with the DBOR we can at the very minimum type up a list of common sense suggestions individually and place them on our web sites.

<NyteMuse> On the other side of the coin... some of the donor material out there is extensive...I came up with a lot of sites and articles when doing my research. It might not be a hugely bad idea to create a more concise "just the facts" article for people of the tl:dr (too long, didn't read) school.

<GypsyHSM> Well, the vamps at my occult shoppe ruined my pagan/new age business years ago.

<GypsyHSM> Because they don't understand our natural energy manipulation abilities can make us excellent Reiki practitioners.

<GypsyHSM> They see dark and light - no middle ground, or that we exist without being EVIL.

<Sylvere> I'm game to distill the donor info into another FAQ.

<Merticus> Anyone have other thoughts on this topic they'd like to share?

<EricBloodstorm> In smaller communities couples counseling is also an option. I know I use it here a lot for donor education.

<SableTwilight> *nod* And thinking about it I know individuals involved with

our local anti-violence programs who might be interested in such material.

<Merticus> **b. Evaluating & Responding To Offers From The Media - A Three-Part Question: (1) What expectations should we have of the media and what questions should we ask prior to consenting to participate in an article or documentary? (2) How can we determine what media requests originate from legitimate sources and what, if any,**

<Merticus> **reasonable expectation of personal privacy should one have for each type of media (print, radio, and film) should they consent to participate? (3) If and when we decide a media proposal is worthwhile to pursue, how do we best match the requests and needs of the project to the specific members of the community who may be able to assist?**

<Diaboluslupus> My expectation is that we should be paid - unless we are being interviewed in relation to real news/events. I've felt from dealing with media people that a lot expect the community to just leap at the chance for 15 seconds of fame for free. I usually ask for a reference to past work.

<Diaboluslupus> Often the person contacting is also listed in industry databases like IMDB.com.

<Diaboluslupus> I think we should created a directory of those who are willing to speak to the media, and break it down by what types of media one is willing to deal with. For example I will not do broadcast interviews, but I would be willing to do interviews for print/web.

<Isealdor> I don't think we can really have any solid, universal expectations of the media. The media is going to do what it wants to do, regardless of what we say. I think we can form expectations for what we're willing to work with or not, though, such as that we get to have a bit of a say in the editing (note not final say--for most media things, that's not a reasonable expectation).

<Isealdor> As for questions, I'd say we need to always ask what their focus for the publication is, what sort of editing will be employed, if they're looking for sort of a "freak show" or not, who their intended audience is, and the motivations/goals of the publication (ie: are they trying to capitalize on the Twilight obsession or are they wanting to genuinely do an article about the subculture).

<Isealdor> Determining what media requests are legit is actually fairly straightforward--contact the parent organization and ask and use some common sense about where the media request is coming from. If it comes from a name that you can't connect to anything and from a weird, non-official email, question it. If it clearly comes from a producer, who you can Google and find other things they've done, and it's their official contact lines, there's a good chance it's fine.

- <Isealdor> Contact someone over them directly and double check, if you're concerned, and if you're too scared to send an email or make a phone call saying you were contacted by someone about an article/show/documentary and wanted to double check that it's legit, you might want to reconsider being in the media. About privacy, I think we can have an expectation for reasonable privacy, such as if we ask not to have a real name published for print or radio things, they should be willing to abide by that or we don't work with them.
- <Isealdor> Reasonable is the key word, though--if you're going into the media, I think there has to be an expectation and understanding on our parts that when you deal with any media, a certain portion of your life is going to be exposed to the public. With TV, that expectation of privacy is naturally going to drop a fair bit from print or radio media--the moment you're on TV, culture dictates that people are going to poke into your life.
- <Isealdor> At that point, I think all we can really ask of the media is that if we say we're not going to talk about a specific topic, it means we're not going to talk about it.
- <Isealdor> Networking and communication would be the best answer about matching the requests to people in the community. If you're contacted by someone in the media about a project that you're not sure you want/are able to do, talk to others about it, see who they know who would be good for it, etc.
- <Isealdor> The more we can match media with good sources in the community, the fewer more insane people are likely to get the projects. If we're willing to basically aid the media with getting into contact with community people all over and matching them with someone suited to their show, they're that much more likely to work with us rather than doing their own open media calls.
- <M_Belanger> On the media, the first thing I want to point out to people is that it never hurts to email someone back and ask for more information. Opening a dialogue with a production company is not a commitment to work with them. Especially where television and radio are concerned, you are in control and can choose to step out of the project at any point in time – right up until you sign a contract.
- <M_Belanger> I strongly suggest that individuals who are approached by the media, especially television media, respond and ask to hear more about the proposal. The more you talk, either through email or telephone conversations, the better a chance you will have to evaluate the professionalism and intent of that particular group.
- <M_Belanger> An updated list of community members who are willing to work with the media and are able to present themselves intelligently on a relevant subject should be maintained so we can steer acceptable media proposals toward them -- and away from

randomly chosen individuals who may or may not have the community's best interests in mind when they agree to work with that particular project.

<RavenHarte> Expect that the media is going to spin whatever they get into what they want to present and will cut up your responses to fit what they want you to say period. So #1. Ask what their angle is. What is the point in them doing the article, interview etc.

<RavenHarte> Ask why NOW, is it because the latest Twilight movie is coming out, or because some kind of crime has happened etc. All of this will pretty much tell you what direction they are going to be going in if they can't tell you up front.

<RavenHarte> Find out the company, and call the general number for the company asking for the specific individual and see what they say. Ask to speak to that individual's superior even. As to privacy, you basically have none. They will use whatever they can find on you within public domain. You have to know that going in. They cannot use what might put you at risk (your address, phone, employer name) but if most will use whatever they can get away with so people understand you are a real person.

<RavenHarte> I think we're doing the best we can with matching people to media requests we determine to be worthwhile through the VVC already.

<Shishain> We should expect that the media will distort anything we say to its own advantage in order to get higher ratings. Not having had many dealings with the media, I'm not sure if this is possible, but can you ask to see a piece after editing and before release and have the ability to stop it from going out if they mangle you too badly?

<Shishain> Once the media latches on to you, I don't think you get privacy any more. Again, not having dealt with this area, I'm not sure how accurate that is. I suspect we don't have to worry about vampaparrazzi yet, but it's worth being cautious.

Communication is the key.

<xeurika> At this stage of public awareness, I am more leaning to the position of "there is no such thing as bad publicity. It will take some time to change opinions, and we should expect early efforts to be met with skepticism and incredulity. I think adopting a good media strategy is also important.

<Zero> I think we as a community and as individuals deserve to be able to expect that media who approach us should do so in good faith. It's probably too much to ask not to get turned into a media sideshow, but we should expect that when media want to present us to the world that they have a bit of our well-being in mind - they should not insist on real names, should be mindful of personal safety concerns, and should not insist on sensationalism.

- <Zero> On our part, we should be mindful that when we participate in mass media, we are representing our entire subculture, and think hard about what image we're presenting. We have a list of problems with our portrayal in the media - sensationalized horror aesthetic, objectification as "freaks" and deviants, objectification as romantic figures, accusations of criminality, religious demonization.
- <Zero> We should ask media representatives what they are trying to say with us as an example, what they are trying to say about us, and what they think we are to begin with, and judge their answers against our past media problems.
- <Zero> Once you talk to the media, you have NO expectations of personal privacy. Journalistic integrity went out of style with the 20th Century; reporters will lie, cheat, and steal to get what info they want. Some will not make it a personal project to invade your privacy, but some will, and you will likely not know which you are working with until you are surprised to see your name in print. If you can't risk being outed, do not talk to the media.
- <Zero> Legitimate sources should be judged on a personal basis, since the standards of media are so low these days. A piece in a major metropolitan newspaper might be as inflammatory and biased as something out of the Enquirer. Research the author's past works and try to assess the tone, identify any possible bias, and determine their general level of literacy.
- <Zero> Foremost, we want to know what the media treatment wants to say about us. We want a competent journalist or producer who is interested in a well-rounded view of the community as a culture and of its members as full human beings. We should be aware of the objectification of our people and culture in the media, and be able to spot portrayals in which objectification figures heavily.
- <Merticus> (1) You should ask the specific focus on the documentary/article/project, what goals they wish to accomplish or convey, and what background research the production company or individual has done into real vampirism and/or the community. It's also a good practice to ask who else they have contacted so that you can gauge their level of research on your own rather than simply take their word.
- <Merticus> What role would you be serving in the project, what rights would you have to viewing a final cut of your segment or draft of written material you contributed (some will and some won't permit such so you need to attempt to establish a personal dialogue with those you are dealing with in cases where you're taking a leap of faith),
- <Merticus> what timeframe and commitments would be required from you, what contracts or legal waivers would need to be signed, if your legal name will have to be included in any final publication, and

if you'll be provided with a final copy of the work in the form of video/newspaper/magazine/recording/etc.?

<Merticus> (2) They should be willing to e-mail you from an official account and contact you via phone if requested. Some companies may use a common-host account (Yahoo/GMail/etc.) in the initial canvassing and research stage but if you e-mail them and request to be contacted by the company involved with the project they should oblige.

<Merticus> If you have not heard of this individual or company before perform a WhoIs search on their domain, a Google search, make sure their IP address matches the geographic area they claim they are from, and request the names of other articles/productions/projects they've been involved with. You should never provide personal information (legal name, address, and photos) to an intermediary agent claiming to act on behalf of a production

<Merticus> company, network, etc. unless you have verified they are contracted to that entity.

<Merticus> The VVC deals with a high-volume of media inquiries so if in doubt you can also contact a member and have them check the latest listing of projects. As to your personal privacy,

<Merticus> if you consent to participating in a visual-related project then consider yourself to have no expectation of privacy unless you've worked it out with the production company/network under contract to have your face or voice obscured.

<Merticus> Likewise, you should consult with your family, friends, and loved ones prior to consenting to appear on television and be in a solid financial position if there are workplace reprisals.

<Merticus> (3) This is the tricky part because in the last year the community has begun splitting more down the center on whether to become more public or more underground. Personally, I feel the answer to this question is both in moderation. We shouldn't feel the obligation to jump at every media opportunity that comes across our desk and at the same time we

<Merticus> shouldn't unilaterally close the door when legitimate and professionally produced opportunities present. We need to be careful what information we're willing to present for public consumption while providing others with a basic understanding of vampirism in so far as to establish we're not a cult, new religious movement, or dangerous subculture cultivating societies' youth.

<Merticus> An increasingly fewer of us are willing to consent to being interviewed and especially on television. While in some ways I view this as a positive, I also recognize that it opens the door for the more spurious and radical in our community to fill the void.

<Merticus> Those who represent sane, intelligent, and balanced voices who

aren't in danger of losing their children, occupation, or way of life by going public should be encouraged to make it known they are available to serve in such capacity.

<Sylvere> We should **expect** for media to attempt to use us to boost ratings and make money. Such is the nature of the business. We **cannot** expect the media to set aside the need to turn a profit in order to present us in the most positive light possible. What we need to ask is what angle the media outlet wants to use to sell the story -- is it going to be sensational, freak-of-the-week type stuff or is it going to focus on presenting us

<Sylvere> as real people with real lives that just happen to include vampirism. Are we going to be expected to dress in "vampire drag" and present something "visually interesting" (i.e. ham it up for the camera) or will we be allowed to present our everyday selves, however mundane we may be, to the audience?

<Sylvere> We should be allowed to use a chosen pseudonym to protect our privacy, though most media personnel will ask for a legal name. However, we should ask for and receive a guarantee that it will not be disclosed before revealing it, if using a legal name would pose a significant challenge for us. We should also request and receive a guarantee that our faces will be photographed in such a way as to prevent recognition for print media if recognition

<Sylvere> poses a risk. Families, of course, should not be photographed or filmed, or if they are, faces should be blurred out. For television, this should be guaranteed in writing.

<Sylvere> As far as determining who is or is not "legitimate" -- well, define legitimate. Maury and Tyra are legitimate in that they have television shows that get millions of viewers. But do we really want to appear on tabloid television? Other companies have websites and any legitimate media contact is going to include a telephone number. We can visit the website and/or do a reverse lookup on phone numbers to determine the validity of the contact. Assuming we determine the media is something worthwhile and which has the potential to present us in a

<Sylvere> reasonably positive light, we should have a database or contact list of members willing to appear. The bio for each person should include location, age, whether the person prefers sang or psi, whether or not the person is able to travel and how far, what types of media the person is willing to do, and any particular areas of expertise -- for example, Michelle and Corvis are prolific writers, Merticus has experience speaking to academic groups,

<Sylvere> I have appeared as an expert panelist at the ACJS Conference, and so on. We can then refer the media personnel to quality people in the area and age range desired for the piece. After that, it's up to the individuals to decide whether or not they're

interested in doing that particular bit of media.

<Zilchy> (1) It's definitely important to know who it is we're dealing with and to see examples of their previous work. Additionally we should make it clear that we won't just sit by and allow ourselves to be misquoted and taken out of context. Perhaps a contingency plan that resembles what some authors do when publishers edit their works to death? Also a requirement to air relevant information for those who want to know more?

<Zilchy> (2) I think it's important for publishers to recognize that some people may not want to be named or pictured. This is sort of a touchy area because it's difficult for a television program to be engaging without actually picturing someone talking (unless it's a voiceover with things happening on screen, which could be problematic if they choose to show something that's different than what's being said since images tend to burn into thoughts more.

<Zilchy> (3) I've already had my fanbase suggest that a documentary be done by us for us or that a Suze Orman style Q&A show be established. Perhaps this could work out if one or a few of us with significant followings were to head up the effort. It's critical that the needs of the networks be identified as well or a project such as this will never get off the ground. Ideally we'd have our own network...

<Merticus> Sylvere: As far as travel; generally most production companies arrange such on their dime or ideally come to you (if in a one-on-one interview setting).

<GypsyHSM> Self-publishing like I do allows us to keep complete control over the edits.

<GypsyHSM> I know it doesn't get you money and marketing, but no one twists your words.

<Ravena> Editors aren't evil.

<ColeVonCat> I really do like the idea of doing our own documentary.

<GypsyHSM> And yes, not a soul talks to me about our studio with audio for visual capacity. We've done DVDs.

<ColeVonCat> Gypsy, do you have a media studio?

<GypsyHSM> Yes

<GypsyHSM> Recording studio - main room, vocal and drum booth – isolation.

<GypsyHSM> Audio for video.

<GypsyHSM> If may could get Dave to do the filming and the editing on the House Kheperu Open House weekend.....

<EricBloodstorm> Well the media has pretty much lied to me and bent me over in each and every experience outside the vampire community, so I personally have not trust for them in regards to appearing as a vampire so they can make ratings.

<ColeVonCat> I don't think anyone should be doing it for the money...

* Gabrielx nods to Eric – I've been bent over as well, it's why I

just chose that for our group Anshar would represent us in media style events etc.

- <Ravena> Yes, Anshar is our postervampy.
- <SableTwilight> The only problem with self-publishing is that it does not establish legitimacy.
- <Ravena> True Sable.
- <ColeVonCat> Oh right, because MTV will gives us legitimacy?
- <Ravena> Anyone can self-publish.
- <Sylvere> Self-publishing is B.A.D. if you want to be taken seriously in the publishing industry.
- <SableTwilight> We need third party publications which can be further sourced and quoted.
- <Ravena> Quality and correctness is optional.
- <Corvis> May I interject here?
- <Corvis> As an author, and publisher seeking media attention, I agree with Eric and Sable. I have been self publishing and it ONLY gives you legitimacy on the grounds of sales to your fans...
- <Corvis> Sylvere - but it does give you credibility in having established a voice...
- <Corvis> And it is a huge responsibility, I feel, in representing this group the best way possible IF I am picked to ever speak out for us.
- <Sylvere> Corvis: Not that much.
- <Sylvere> Some publishing houses won't deal with anyone who has self-published.
- <Ravena> Also true Sylvere.
- <SableTwilight> Now the key is to develop relationships with media.
- <SableTwilight> Don't wait for them to come to you. You have to research contacts, who is doing what.
- <SableTwilight> And develop media/press releases.
- <Merticus> The success of some projects is dependent on who's involved and who's interviewing to a large degree... granted they may cut and splice as they wish but increasing the quality of the material they have to do that with should be our focus. If they are given poor representatives of this community don't expect a great result... given good or decent reps expect a fair or moderate result. Increase the odds in our favor.
- <NyteMuse> Hm. I won't argue that the inquiries from "bad" media sources have definitely gone up, but haven't the inquiries from semi-decent ones gone up as well too? Yes, MTV on the surface does seem like a bad idea, but from what I saw in some of the conversations the casting person had with others, they were NOT equivalent with Tyra, Jerry, or Maury.
- <NyteMuse> Unless she was lying through her teeth in order to get a sell.
- <Merticus> I tend to give credibility to those who allow transparency with their actions, casting, and storyboarding.
- <Sylvere> I thought my interview was good.

<Corvis> Agreed. Which is why I stepped up to help. I turned away from Tyra.

<GypsyHSM> I was turned away from Jerry - I'm too normal

<Gabrielx> Gypsy: They didn't turn you away cause you wouldn't punch someone and jump them for their blood?

<GypsyHSM> Shit yeah Gabriel - you are really good!!

<Sylvere> If I'd been willing to flog someone, I could have gone on WE TV and then Tyra. *eyeroll*

<SphynxCatVP> I've actually told a couple "shock jocks" in the past "Sorry, I'm not freaky enough for your fanbase, good luck"

<Corvis> Some of us are lucky and need not worry about family or jobs, but what of the back lash of those who do?

<EricBloodstorm> Aye!

<Ravena> Well, we all choose our level of privacy.

<Merticus> Those who do have those worries should not be actively involved with the public media (ie: don't appear on television).

<GypsyHSM> This is true.

<Ravena> If you worry about losing your job and how it might affect your family, don't do media or be public about being a vamp.

<Sylvere> How is anyone going to know if one is a vampire unless one decides to reveal that info?

<Corvis> I am safe - it helps my writing and my store, but by NO MEANS do I take the cause lightly...

<Corvis> It is all about honor and integrity for my friends, and you, my extended family.

<Ravena> With my writing everyone thinks I'm a vamp..

<GypsyHSM> Most of my family died in the last 2 years - so, I have less to lose but also I already own the occult shoppe and wrote the much hated Christian Wicca book.

<GypsyHSM> So what the hell, I'm a vampire too.

<Sylvere> No one appearing in media should need to worry about Joe Schmoe Vampire getting outed unless we mention Joe's name.

<Corvis> People can be exposed though, by accident even.

<Sylvere> Corvis: People can also get hit by buses.

<Merticus> One of the problems is some of us bitch, whine, and moan every time someone "less than credible" from our community appears on a show (regardless of the caliber of the show) but consistently don't put forth a viable candidate pool for the networks to cast from. (granted some are rejected but this is not always the case).

<EricBloodstorm> I think we have offered some very viable candidates

<Corvis> Anshar is very good. Nice looking and professional.

<Sylvere> I'm a lot more willing to appear in media than I used to be, but I live in BF Missouri. No one wants to talk to me.

<ColeVonCat> I have a question.

<ColeVonCat> What if you think the media source is legitimate, but you know they are also going to be interviewing people who are crazy?

<Ravena> Well, I suppose you'll look sane in comparison.

<SphynxCatVP> Part of the problem is many of the reliable and sane members of the community have other things preventing them from being in the spotlight - family they don't want exposed, jobs they want to keep, etc.

<SphynxCatVP> And it *seems* a lot of the, ah, less than sensible members don't have such concerns.

<Ravena> I'm reasonably sane, but I have no desire to be in the public eye.

<Merticus> Yes, and those of us who are sensible with concerns etc. are naturally excluded from the equation.

<Merticus> There's still a quandary and a vacuum that's created by not knowing "who can consent to appearing" etc.

<Corvis> I'm very concerned.

<Sylvere> Hey, when you're a f'ing psycho, you don't worry about repercussions of your words or actions.

<ColeVonCat> I would go public if the show had a level-headed approach.

<SphynxCatVP> I was trying to be polite, but yes, that's one way to put it.

<Sylvere> That's why we get whack jobs in media more often than level-headed folks.

<Corvis> Why is it only the demented get picked?

<Ravena> It sells more.

<ColeVonCat> I live in San Francisco... I am not going to lose my job for anything I would say.

<EricBloodstorm> Well lets face it, whack jobs are also more entertaining because they are nuts.

<EricBloodstorm> And they confirm peoples opinion that we collectively are all nuts.

<SphynxCatVP> The masses love a show?

<Corvis> But by no means should we give up.

<ColeVonCat> Right, most of us are interested in dispelling those fantasies.

<Sylvere> People *want* us to be freaks. They need us to live up to their fantasies, whatever those are.

<SableTwilight> Not always Sylvere. Sometimes they want is to be human as well. Sort of look at the shift in transsexual awareness has gone over the past 20 years.

<Ravena> They want to believe that someone else out there is more messed up than they are.

<Sylvere> It scares them when we prove to be more sane.

<Sylvere> Sable: That took a lot of work from the TS community though.

<SableTwilight> Yes it did and still does.

<Sylvere> I don't see us doing that kind of work.

<Corvis> We 'dark' people are more balanced than other people!

<Merticus> Not every media request desires the "freak element" - it's an assumption we've formed from past experiences, etc. The interest in basic subcultural explorations is growing... the psychology of who we are rather than just kids who hang out at

Goth clubs and host blood rituals. Some... not all mind you.

<EricBloodstorm> Well the media thrives on ratings, so some boring Mr. Rogers type librarian is not going to be an interesting vampire interview for them, much less hold viewers.

* Ravena retrieves Gabe's Mr. Rogers cardigan from the dry cleaners.

<SphynxCatVP> "There, but for the grace of the \$diety, go I...."

<Corvis> The power of the black suit...

<Corvis> Dark, but respectable. It's a transformation I have undergone on purpose.

<NyteMuse> Ok, but then the question becomes, how can we move from the dark uber-spooky appealing archetype to grab interest in a less-spooky fashion?

<Ravena> I'm fine with being dark and scary.

<Ravena> Less people want to talk to me then.

<Zilchy> Suitpower? :-D

<Corvis> Yes

<Corvis> Be dark, but classy, respectable with an edge of fear.

<Merticus> Suit power went a long way in your case Zilchy based on conversations I've had with a couple media representatives lately.

<SphynxCatVP> Oh that's good to know :)

<Zilchy> Really now? It's working. :-)

<EricBloodstorm> Aye that 5 button suit looks good on ya man

<Ravena> Yep, that's me, dark but classy with a touch of... if you step closer, I might decapitate you.

<Ravena> It works well :)

<SableTwilight> It requires folks to be out there, open, pointing out how we're just everyday folk.

<NyteMuse> Seems from this side of things like maybe we need to do less in the way of instant rejection, even from bad sources. IMO. Not to say we should accept everything that comes along, but at least make an effort to explain the truth and see who's still interested. Maybe the tides will turn...

<NyteMuse> I know we do that a fair bit, like with the MTV stuff, but I also suspect if an inquiry came in for a follow-up from Tyra, or from some other tabloid show, most of us would ignore it and not bother.

<Ravena> I'm leaning more towards acceptance from the general public is like a transparent dangling carrot.

<Corvis> Exactly. I want to be published through others than just my company for credibility.

<SphynxCatVP> It'll take time.

<SableTwilight> Personally I could care less about acceptance from existing general public, but more about transforming general public.

<NyteMuse> Sphynx: Of course, but if we manage to change the minds of one

network or producer, is it a waste?

<Corvis> Nyte: No it is not, due to the huge ripple effect.

<Sylvere> From now on, I'm going to do whatever media will have me.

<SphynxCatVP> Never a waste :)

<SphynxCatVP> I just don't expect people's opinions to change overnight.

<NyteMuse> Nor will they change if nothing is done or changes aren't made.

<Sylvere> I trust my ability not to say or do something stupid a lot more than I trust anyone else's.

<GypsyHSM> It depends on if its the smallest indie network that airs once.

<Ravena> I don't think change is possible with how things are currently.

<Ravena> With everyone bitching about the other person/group.

<Ravena> It's just fodder for that dramatica site.

<NyteMuse> That is sort of true, Ravena, I'll agree.

<Corvis> Effort must be made, if not us, then who?

<SphynxCatVP> I've had a few conversations with producers in the past, given them food for thought.

<SphynxCatVP> Some of that's been distilled into site articles, of course.

<ColeVonCat> I think that recently, a lot of "Freaky" vampire stuff has been done.

<ColeVonCat> Which means any other media groups looking to jump on the Twilight-inspired money wagon and do a vamp-themed show, need a way to set themselves apart.

<ColeVonCat> Possibly, presenting vampires as normal humans would be that "unusual twist".

<Merticus> The community will evolve one way or the other - with or without us... I'd rather have some input personally in where things head.

<NyteMuse> It'd be nice to get off the niggling intracommunity issues, since those serve no one aside from the drama-llamas.

<Corvis> Merticus, I agree with that!

<Sylvere> Merticus: The more we appear in media, the more likely we are to be requested for media.

<Sylvere> If we're getting requests, we can have more influence on media.

<Merticus> The demand for "sociology" and "English" papers on vampires has skyrocketed lately... having to write FAQ's to send to college students.

<Corvis> The public and part of the community grasp only what is sensational.

<Merticus> Right now we're a "commodity"... one who is in the position to make some demands of the media and shape things the direction we'd like them to head to some degree. I'd rather us start realizing that rather than play the victim. They need us more than we need them to sell commercial spots and keep active interest in their programming. We should respond in kind with educational yet innovative ways for them to accomplish such using us as the subject matter.

<Sylvere> Merticus: I disagree.

<Sylvere> Our position isn't solid enough to make a lot of demands.

<Ravena> I think the crazy vamps are in more of a bargaining position than sane ones.

<SableTwilight> But we can still make contacts with the media.

<Sylvere> There are plenty of psychos who are willing to make a spectacle of themselves. The media don't need us.

<Merticus> My position for involvement with almost everything I do is negotiated under terms... they are met or I rescind my assistance.

<Corvis> But unified, via the VVC we are powerful.

<Corvis> They DO need us.

<EricBloodstorm> Aye

<Sylvere> Merticus: What happens then? Who do they get if you refuse? That's a concern we need to consider.

<Sylvere> Everyone saw who WE TV got after I said no.

<Merticus> Yes, and they have to deal with those crazies. Many in casting and upper management would rather deal with level-headed individuals than those who are unstable. Yes, we get people who end up setting their son on fire. And if that is their intent/format we don't belong on their show in the first place.

<Merticus> It's an odds game.

<Sylvere> I just keep kicking myself over that.

<Merticus> Yes, I wish it had been you on there. I think we all do.

<Sylvere> I could have dressed up and played to the camera. But I didn't.

<Corvis> But can we do nothing in advance? We have people here involved in media, do we not?

<Corvis> Thoughts, people?

<Sylvere> Corvis: My answer to that will come under D on tonight's agenda.

<EricBloodstorm> Well you could have at least been carried out in a coffin.

<ColeVonCat> I think if the show has potential, the sane ones should represent if at all possible.

<ColeVonCat> If the show is just for shock value, stay away... it won't matter what you say.

<ColeVonCat> That is to say, I really wish more level-headed individuals in this community WERE willing to go in front of a camera.

<Ravena> I'm level headed, but so not doing any media.

<Ravena> Aside from the writing I already do.

<GypsyHSM> But the choice is not ours and editing is a bitch.

<SphynxCatVP> Most of you have said what I wanted to say already, heh :)

<SableTwilight> I would love to say that I would work on coming up with a PR strategic plan... but this past semester about kicked my tail

<SphynxCatVP> Michelle made a point somewhere about training for public speaking - for anyone who goes in front of a camera, this should be, well, mandatory :)

<SphynxCatVP> Just to be able to tone down things like nervous body

twitches/body language/etc.

<SableTwilight> Indeed

<Corvis> Sphynx, Yes, I talked a lot about that to her and Don Henrie, back last year.

<Corvis> Public speaking classes helped me as an author at colleges, online radio... highly recommend it for everyone.

<Ravena> I even took public speaking courses

<ColeVonCat> I have taken public speaking classes... may be somewhat relevant to television, don't know.

* Sylvere has over 20 years of public speaking & acting experience.

<ColeVonCat> See, see? That's a problem we have.

<Merticus> My suggestion, if you know of individuals who are able to appear on camera who you feel are competent to do so and would not risk personal loss by doing so notify others via our forum and others who deal with the media. We have to start somewhere...

<SableTwilight> So who do we have that's willing to go in front of a camera?

<GypsyHSM> Who will stick with the plan Sable? We're vamps not really fitting the norm - not working and playing well with others.

<SableTwilight> *laughs* it's purely optional Gypsy. Basically a plan for the VVC itself, as an organization. Members of the VVC would participate as they wanted.

<GypsyHSM> I'm with you Sable

<Ravena> Anshar will go on camera. He's pretty too.

<ColeVonCat> Hell I'll go in front of a camera.

<Zilchy> I go on camera on a semi-routine basis...

<NyteMuse> It's possible this may be a stupid idea and shooting ourselves in the foot here, but...what about posting some of these ideas and lessons openly, in the RSS feed or on the site if nowhere else? Considerations, negotiations, etc... case studies.

<NyteMuse> Just in case there are some folks in the VC who might not turn out to be batshit crazy and would be able to go on camera...

<Merticus> Personally I keep a list of individuals who I feel are capable of presenting themselves well on camera and/or knowledgeable of the material. Sometimes I contact them asking if they want to participate in certain media related projects. I don't think it would hurt for the rest of us to do the same or pool resources when necessary.

<ColeVonCat> Does the VVC have a "people who will go on camera" list yet?

<ColeVonCat> If not, that's an obvious step.

<EricBloodstorm> Media pool.

<Sylvere> That might be best discussed under "goals and agenda"

<NyteMuse> Perhaps folk like that should be encouraged, tutored, guided...

<Corvis> It is an innate quality though...some are just more comfortable, and that ease shows.

<SableTwilight> I agree NyteMuse

<SphynxCatVP> We could use tutorials for that, maybe articles written by people who've been ON camera, tips and such for people considering being on camera in the future

<Corvis> Not everyone can pull it off well.

<SableTwilight> Well some people have a desire and presence to be in front of a camera. They just might need to be taught how to message.

<Ravena> 1. Dress up in your most Goth outfit ever, frills are mandatory.

<Corvis> There goes my suit theory.

<NyteMuse> Yeah, and what things never to talk about in a media interview, as well as how to dance around questions to give a safer answer, if not a full/complete one.

<Zilchy> Corvis - suit theory still applies.

<ColeVonCat> 2. Bring a dark red blood-colored beverage in a clear glass. Sip it with a straw between sentences.

<Ravena> They just have to learn how to answer a personal question, without really answering it.

<EricBloodstorm> Yes

<Ravena> Talk like a lawyer.

<NyteMuse> It's not always personal questions...sometimes it's about where to put the emphasis in an answer.

<Sylvere> Lawyer hell, talk like a politician. Or a gamer. :-P

<NyteMuse> Damn, still need to look up NLP (neuro-linguistic programming) stuff...

<SphynxCatVP> NyteMuse, very true! :)

<Ravena> A lot of politicians were lawyers before.

<Merticus> Anyone else wish to chime in on question B?

<Merticus> Are we ready to move on to question C?

<Merticus> **c. Improving The Quality & Availability Of The Information Presented On Real Vampirism: How can we improve upon the existing information on our web sites, groups, and forums while at the same time increasingly our visibility to the newly awakened and seasoned veterans alike who are actively searching for information on real vampirism?**

<Merticus> **Let's discuss for a moment the benefits of ensuring we host the most current and responsible information pertaining to vampirism, feeding practices, and donor care, coupled with search engine optimization (SEO), streamlined web site design, and cross-directory linking to other web sites.**

<Diaboluslupus> I think we should consider maintaining a directory of Junk Vampire sites. Sites that mix real and RPG vampirism. Sites that encourage illegal behavior or sites that provide dangerous info - such as claiming that vampiric people are more resistance to intoxication or toxic substances. I just saw one site that claims you can test if you are vamp or not by taking an overdose of iron

supplements.

<Isealdor> The reason most of the community sites don't get the levels of traffic, don't get the search engine results, etc that they should (given age, membership numbers, amount of info, etc) is poor site design and background coding and/or constant changing of it. I think educating everyone who runs/owns sites we would like to see more visible on SEO and site design, and stressing the importance of site stability, would go a very long way in improving search results.

<Isealdor> What a lot of people don't particularly realize is that just because a site looks good visually to the end user, that doesn't mean it will do well in search engines--if the coding behind the site isn't clean, there aren't proper meta tags, containers, site maps, etc, the searches wont work well. And if a site is constantly redesigned, the links constantly changed, etc, it also won't do well on search engines because they're looking for stability of the links and pages.

<Isealdor> For example, if a search engine crawler goes through and crawls a site, then goes back through a week later and all of the content and urls are different, it will return that the site has a lot of dead links and pages. Over time and if that's repeated, it will knock the site's ratings in search results, plus makes it difficult for people to find the info they were searching for.

<Isealdor> Also, having things like banner exchanges and well design link pages to other sites and communities in the OVC with information would help increase traffic throughout the community, and help spread the resources each community or site has.

<Isealdor> While I know it's not the policy of most sites to refer people to other sites, if someone has a question that is perfectly addressed by an article on another site, passing them on to that site and information is more likely to benefit the education of the community as the whole.

<Isealdor> None of this can be really talked about without addressing why it's important...sure, we're findable as it is, the information is there for the people who search, etc. But the problem is that there are other people who will put their own information, which may not be good information, out there and who will use SEO techniques to boost their search ranks and traffic, and then we're having to try that much harder to counteract the information they spread.

<M_Belanger> Quite some time ago, the idea of peer review for vampire sites and literature was brought up on the Dark Nations forum. This is a worthy idea, and it's something that the community as a whole should pursue further. This requires that we as a community take an interest in more than just our own sites – and that we do so in

an informed and unbiased manner, seeking to promote information, authors, and resources not for specific personal agendas but because these things have intrinsic value to the community as a whole.

- <M_Belanger> I believe that we should also be more vigilant in combing the resources, such as online encyclopedias, that claim to have reputable articles on real vampires and their practices. Many of these are user-edited, allowing anyone to sign up and submit content. When none of the reputable and informed individuals in the community take an interest in submitting, or at least editing, this content, there is no guarantee that the user-driven content will be intelligent, well-written, or well-informed – not to mention unbiased. By ignoring or failing to challenge user-submitted information that clearly has an agenda to twist information or to willfully misinform people of our community, we become complicit in that agenda. Apathy is probably our greatest foe in the arena of Internet information maintenance.
- <M_Belanger> Make sure your links to valued info are clear on every website. Make sure your links are valid. Don't list anything you think is sub par, even if 1 pg on a website is good if the rest is crap, its crap.
- <RavenHarte> This is one of the primary needs and opportunities for The Community in my opinion. While I think the goal should be a central, peer reviewed nexus of information, in the present there is much that can be done from encouraging those who have well regarded sites to cross-link to other sites to teaching search engine optimization and other techniques to insure that the best possible information shows up first on search engines.
- <xeurika> First, decide what kind of information and which topics need to be at the forefront of an information campaign. I think the thinking that we're doing on community safety and not drinking the kool-aid should factor in to a list of stuff we want people to know. But in general, what this will do is set the ethos for the community, and signals the character of community interactions, both to veterans, newcomers, and outsiders.
- <Zero> This, far more than spotty media appearances, will be the public face of the community if implemented. The implementation is secondary to the discussion and evaluation of what information is universal enough that we can all push it with the same voice, and what is necessary enough to highlight in that way.
- <Zero> The Atlanta Vampire Alliance and the Vampirism & Energy Work Research Study web sites will be undergoing updates this summer and will feature additional content to better answer questions asked of us. We're already working on an extensive FAQ and better linking to existing sites through our Community Directory page.
- <Merticus>

- <Merticus> We'll also be implementing a Flash-based calendar and other features that can be updated automatically. These site improvements will include a changing in many of our meta-tags and we'll allow full robot crawls of our sites and directory structure.
- <Merticus> I think it's important that we all make an effort to cross-link to each other and the VVC Resource Links section is a good start
- <Merticus> (<http://www.veritasvosliberabit.com/resourcelinks.html>). If we're willing to feed each other traffic based on our areas of expertise we can better manage the quality of information individuals performing web searches they come across.
- <Zilchy> Perhaps for cross linking we could have a master link list that could be used as a PHP include or something similar? I remember webring and their popularity in the early days but I rarely see them anymore, perhaps the VVC could become a webring of sorts?
- <Zilchy> I'm not the best with SEO (my stuff's been rejected for AdSense on the basis of being too difficult for the spiders to navigate) so I think some if not all of us could benefit from a tutorial on the subject.
- <Sylvere> All of the information on the RVCA site and all of the links are either written by me using quality sources such as the CDC or Mayo Clinic for health information, or are personally vetted by me after extensive research. This is the reason the RVCA site isn't as massive as, say Sanguinarius.org. I want to make sure all of the information is high quality. I don't want to toss up an article just because someone wrote something about vampires.
- <Sylvere> Not that Sanguinarius or anyone else here isn't posting quality stuff. I just haven't had time to do as much work on the RVCA site as I'd like. That will change in the next few months. I don't know enough about SEO to comment productively on that aspect. I'm definitely interested in suggestions.
- <SphynxCatVP> I might be closest to having SEO experience, keeping my site "lean and mean" so to speak.
- <NyteMuse> The Kherete and Rosa sites will also be getting at least content editing, if not layout tweaks, this summer...when I have a life again.
- <NyteMuse> Pretty sure mine aren't... that was something I was going to look into.
- <Ravena> I don't know if my site is SEO or not.
- <ColeVonCat> Sorry, explain SEO? I missed it.
- <NyteMuse> Search Engine Optimization
- <ColeVonCat> Ok, thanks.
- <Ravena> I think Sanguinarius thinks the articles she posts are good information or viewpoints.
- <Ravena> She doesn't just post anything.

<Sylvere> Ravena: I know Sanguinarius used to post a wide variety of articles in order to try to represent *all* sides of an issue.

<Sylvere> I don't have room for that and I'm not going to put up articles I think are crap in the interests of being "balanced."

<Ravena> Yeah, that was her aim Sylvere.

<Ravena> I know that.

* NyteMuse agrees with Sylvere

<GypsyHSM> Well, Sanguinarius has a wonderful site but even some of her articles are conflicting with others on the same site.

<GypsyHSM> So it's not going to be easy. Sangs and Hybrids and Psi's view blood feeding in various ways - all with a grain of credibility and reasoning.

<Ravena> She wants to have all views represented, not just her own or a certain group of persons.

<Ravena> On my site I try to post only the sane stuff.

<Ravena> Most of the content currently on there was written by me.

<Ravena> I link to a few other sites.

<SphynxCatVP> Which is a lovely goal, but yes, there are some inherent conflicts because of that.

<Corvis> I know the feeling. Sometimes it is needed to state your own stance.

<NyteMuse> Well, because Sanguinarius does it doesn't mean everyone has to.

<Sylvere> It's a time-consuming process.

<NyteMuse> I mean, you can post your opinions on your own House/site and then link to Sanguinarius for the more complete view?

<Sylvere> Sanguinarius has a great site and I definitely respect her efforts. It's just not the direction I want to go with the RVCA site.

<GypsyHSM> No - I wasn't Sanguinarius-bashing, I'm just saying what do we do write them a VVC parking ticket?

<Merticus> What steps is everyone taking... personally?

<Sylvere> I'm researching the validity of a lot of articles based on science. Others are researched based on known and accepted spiritual practices.

<SphynxCatVP> I'm getting into more of the medical end of things, and will be updating some of my articles based on what I've been learning lately.

<Merticus> Have we all cross-linked to one another, linked to the VVC page on our web sites, created a circle if you will of information?

<ColeVonCat> Sure but I don't actually have a vamp website.

<NyteMuse> Sable and I have been working with our other admin to put together some fairly open distribution guides to various topics and will continue to do so.

<Ravena> No one is linked to me I don't think.

<Merticus> Ravena you're on my internal list:
<http://www.darkerthanhou.net>

<Ravena> Yep, that's it.

<Ravena> I linked to Sanguinarius's site, and Sphynx, and Lost Haven's

<NyteMuse> Rosa is in the process of linking to sites as we come across them and find them useful. Kherete is a tad more debatable, trying to keep not too clogged or partisan.

<GypsyHSM> I'll get into the medical end with you Sphynx as much as I can because I hate this shit

<NyteMuse> I know Rosa links to Sanguinarius and Sphynx for sure

<NyteMuse> As well as VVC and HK (House Kheperu).

<NyteMuse> Kherete links to HK and VVC.

<NyteMuse> Possibly Sanguinarius.

<Sylvere> I've got links to Sanguinarius, Sphynx, and a number of others. There will be more going up soon.

<Corvis> I agree we need to be united as far as info sites are concerned.

<Corvis> That is community.

<Corvis> Differences on exact opinions aside.

<SphynxCatVP> Sanguinarius's site gets like 8x the hits mine does when she and I compared notes.

<SableTwilight> House Vespertine currently does not have a web presence, though when we do get one we'll likely do a lot of cross linking, pulling from the vvc resource links

<NyteMuse> I know AVA (Atlanta Vampire Alliance) does a nice comprehensive link list, but honestly, sometimes it seems almost overwhelming to me, so I can only imagine how new visitors see it...

<NyteMuse> I...honestly couldn't sit all the way through it, I'll admit it.

<Merticus> Yes, that list is also in the process of being updated:
<http://www.atlantavampirealliance.com/communitylinks.html>

<SableTwilight> Well now that I have this list Merticus, it makes my life easier when sending out resources to folks.

<Merticus> What other web and information sharing projects/plans are people pursuing?

<Merticus> I think a big problem is few of us actually take the time to crawl each other's sites to know what's out there (resources, articles, etc.)

<ColeVonCat> I am going to make a bookmark folder for all of Merticus' sites.

<EricBloodstorm> Well that's been a problem for me of late, although my time is beginning to free up much more

<Corvis> Gotcha.

<Ravena> I've visited a LOT of vampire sites over the years.

<SphynxCatVP> Probably most of us have if we've been in the community more than a few years.

<Sylvere> I'm a Zilchy and DJ subscriber. I will have more time to check out sites after I graduate.

<GypsyHSM> I am glad you said that Sylvere so I didn't have to always be the bad vamp.

- <Corvis> Were talking about a unified front for the public sake no?
- <Ravena> Not unified per se...
- <EricBloodstorm> Clamato drinkers unite?
- <Corvis> As a resource, info wise.
- <Merticus> We don't all have to be on the same page... though it would be nice to cross-link and share resources.
- <Corvis> Right
- <EricBloodstorm> Aye
- <SphynxCatVP> Cross-linking is a good idea, I think.
- <Merticus> **d. The Vampire Community - 2012 & Beyond: Should we have goals, defined agendas, or other aspirations for the vampire community? If so, what should they be and why? Where do you see the greater community headed in the short-term and long-term? Presently, what do you view as the greatest hindrance to the growth and cohesiveness of both your local community and the greater community?**
- <Isealdor> I think individuals and groups in the community can have defined agendas, goals, etc., but that the community as a whole by its very nature cannot. The community is a subculture and has no real agenda or goal besides the collective ones of those within the community and the general evolution natural to a subculture.
- <Isealdor> In the short-term, I see the community having to absorb and fall into a new equilibrium based on the most recent vampire craze and finding a balance with the higher publicity the community has had, and either embracing that and the majority being more willing to be out in the open a little more, or rejecting it and going back even more into the shadows. The long-term depends very much which way the majority of the community goes with that.
- <Isealdor> I would like to see a few things: First, continued and improved networking and communication throughout the community. Second, a greater amount of good material throughout the community and less tolerance of bad material. Third, a spread and more connection between the vampire community and other related communities, such as the paranormal, energy working, etc. And fourth, a move toward more real research about vampirism.
- <Isealdor> The greatest hindrance I see is the global insistence by a large majority of the community that the rest of the community needs to agree with them and do what they believe should be done. We are a subculture "community" of communities and individuals, and the entire community is never going to agree on what course of actions should be taken.
- <Isealdor> However, instead of just working with the others who do feel the same way, the popular thing is to try to convince everyone who doesn't agree that they should, too, which degenerates into

disagreements, between individuals, groups, and even communities, and leads to more time, energy, and progress being moved into trying to convince others than toward making any progress.

- <M_Belanger> Too many individuals involved in the modern vampire community take a passive role in that community's growth and direction. Many of us participate in forums and message boards online, but only on a personal level, rarely writing content with the consideration that we are creating documents that scholars may source at some point in the near future.
- <M_Belanger> I think that, as a community, on the whole, we are not self-aware. We do not consider the bigger picture – our cultural context, our existence as an identity group, our place in history. The sheer number of media inquiries and inquiries from scholars argues that our community and its development is noteworthy on some level. We can either remain passive in the process of our community's development and unfolding, or we can become aware of our own relevance and make conscious choices on how we present ourselves. The greatest hindrance to our existence as a community are those who are content to simply glide along in this passive stance, experiencing without reflecting, acting without considering the long-term consequences of those actions – not only for the vampire community, but for our culture as a whole.
- <RavenHarte> I think concentrating on the here and now is more the point. Get the work done now to make sure the future is on solid ground. You need a better foundation because right now, with all the infighting, the foundation of the community remains tenuous and rocky.
- <RavenHarte> Be more open-minded and inclusive to each other and other communities. The snippy snotty attitudes and the elitism is a HUGE turnoff to people just coming into the VC. You never know what gems or allies you might find if you could just drop the "this is better, that is better" attitudes and realize the VC's strength is that its already a collective of diversity, and its only going to survive if it remains Diverse.
- <Shishain> We can't even agree on how to spell whatever we choose to call ourselves. Do you really think we can get the community to agree on a long-term goal? I've got a great cat-herding prod to lend if that's the case.
- <xeurika> The first step in attaining anything is setting goals. Finding goals that the community can agree on is much more problematic, but I think the process even with the requisite drama and pitfalls is important. All in all, we do know precious little about our shared nature. Learning and refining our knowledge through teaching and debate should be a priority.

- <xeurika> Locally, the greatest hindrance to our community is that we are as a group so very rare, and finding and connecting on a local level can be quite a challenge.
- <Zero> What is the list of demands for the Vampire Agenda? Airlift food relief to downtown Los Angeles? 20K and a helicopter? Seriously, the health and well-being of our members has always been one of our primary goals, and the entertainment and aesthetic of our subculture has been the other.
- <Zero> If we want to start refining these (we have a bit already - club nights, targeted media appearances, dispelling stereotypes, etc), that's entirely possible. If we want to start adding broad categories to community goals - cultural efforts, art, literature, social justice, whatever, we should think about where vampire nature guides us and where vampire community interest lines up with the interests of our greater community.
- <Zero> I think that in general, the vampire subculture has a lot to say to the superculture, but we'll have to decide what we're going to focus on.
- <Merticus> While I recognize the importance of a cultural identity and the desire for our particular subculture to flourish, be self-supporting, and encouraging of one another, I'm afraid some of these "ideals" are unrealistic in a macro-only setting. If we want to move things a particular direction, provide a useful service, or spread a message then it needs to begin on a local level and transition past talk and into action.
- <Merticus> Those who are in areas where there is a semi-active or active community should be doing everything possible to foster growth and support. Get in touch with the people in your area, invite them to dinner/coffee/drinks, establish a meetup and don't be discouraged if it takes a while for things to get off the ground, and be available to those who have questions or need your help.
- <Merticus> The greater community needs to do a better job supporting each other and our respective projects rather than retreating to our own comfort zones, trying to undermine people's efforts, and launching gossip campaigns or attacks against others. We're not all going to see eye to eye on every issue but there is no reason we can't be respectful to one another
- <Merticus> and reduce our egos to the size of quaint single-family mansions rather than sprawling estates or castles. I don't see public or media interest in the "vampire" abating anytime in the near future and we're going to have to deal with people who have the wrong ideas about real vampirism as we always have. It's my hope that in the process of doing so we don't all burn-out, throw up our hands, and essentially clamp-off the community to our own sphere of personal friends and associates, forsaking any future contacts. If we isolate ourselves too much we're going to

witness an increase in web sites and social networks that interpret “real vampirism” as whatever the person with the loudest voice claims it to be at the moment – in the age of Twilight/New Moon and TrueBlood I’m not sure that outcome will be desirable.

<Sylvere> I don’t think we can define agendas too rigidly. Life happens and plans go awry as a result. Additionally, interest in vampires tends to be cyclical. Eventually, the current frenzy will die down and we will be relatively invisible again. However, I’d like to see us embrace the media a little more now and in the future. We’d planned to publish translations of articles and record roundtables for posting on YouTube or as podcasts. This has yet to happen and I’d like to see these projects move forward.

<Sylvere> By embracing the media now, we will be in a position to use the media to promote those efforts. The next time the pendulum swings toward us and we become more visible, *we* will be requested to do media more often and, thus, have a greater influence *on* media. Don’t get me wrong; I don’t think we will ever fully control the media beast, but we might be able to coax it in the direction we’d like it to go -- or at least away from

<Sylvere> where we *don’t* want it to go. We will also be in a position to supply quality sources of information for newcomers. Right now, a Google search will turn up a few quality websites and dozens of crappy ones. By using the media to make our names familiar, people are more likely to be drawn to our sites over others, thereby increasing the likelihood that they will be introduced to quality information.

<Sylvere> The greatest hindrance to cohesiveness within the vampire community, online or offline, is the lack of desire for cohesiveness. We don’t *want* unity or anything that remotely resembles it. We don’t want to follow and many of us don’t want to lead. And those people are the ones who rail against the idea of any sort of leadership, even by people they acknowledge as possessing leadership qualities.

<Sylvere> The designation of “leader” has become synonymous in our community with “despot” or “arrogant asshole” with good reason. Everyone wants to be right, to be the Reverend Grand High Holy Head Poobah Uber Lord McDarkity Vampire Princess of the Starship Jackass, and no one wants to hear something that doesn’t gel with his or her own personal views of vampirism because HEAVEN FORFEND! xie might have to reevaluate xir own reality paradigm. We hesitate to call BS on anyone else’s views for similar reasons, even when those views are ludicrous and completely without foundation (e.g. astral symbionts, vampire virus, etc.)

<Sylvere> However, the VVC is in a prime

spot to lead by example if enough of our members are willing to set aside petty differences to work on a project that will, ultimately, benefit all of us. We have proved that we can do so by creating our FAQ; now it's time to move on to larger and, potentially, more controversial subjects.

<NyteMuse> I don't agree with community goals or agendas. I advocate PERSONAL goals and agendas.

<ColeVonCat> I basically agree with what Merticus said.

* NyteMuse agrees with Sylvere

<Ravena> The greatest hindrance to growth and cohesiveness is all the sniping and bullshit and drama that goes on. Using public or pseudo private forums to bitch about this or that vamp (while avoiding saying anything to their face, or at least to their chat window when they are present). I've seen people tear up a person they have never even met or spoken to in any capacity whatsoever. They are just going by "what they heard", and anyone reasonably perceptive knows...

<Ravena> There's still also the "you can't sit at our lunch table" mentality that is present in some groups or areas. Until everyone can play in the same sandbox without getting ridiculous, I don't think any real growth or cohesiveness is possible. Instead, it's just fodder for the folks over at encyclopedia dramatica. I'm not really convinced that acceptance from the general public is a goal we should care about. It's been focused on for several years to no avail.

* NyteMuse agrees hugely with Ravena

<EricBloodstorm> Agree

<Corvis> Are we speaking of national group meetings in person? Like Twilight, Kheperu Open House?

<Corvis> No one is demanding to be leader... or emperor.

<NyteMuse> The number of people who bash Michelle and have never read one of her books or seen one of her media appearances... astounding.

<SphinxCatVP> The internet + semi-anonymity... Ya'll can guess where that goes from there.

<SphinxCatVP> Not everyone has the ethics to act online as they would in person, and it's a shame.

<EricBloodstorm> Very true Sphinx.

<GypsyHSM> Okay more of HSM (House Scarlet Moon) has showed up and he has the opinion that life often imitates art and that we'll continue to have the negative pendulum swing with each movie or TV series.

<ColeVonCat> My goal remains getting scientific research going in vampirism, low-chi, chakra damage, or whatever they call it.

<ColeVonCat> I don't care so much about social goals... I want scientific progress.

<Corvis> Umm, I go by the motto, "don't lie online or people will find you out." It's such a waste. Childish. Be honest.

<Ravena> I'm myself online and offline... which is either reassuring or really scary lol.

<NyteMuse> Ravena, what sort of things do you think could be done to minimize the lunch table clique issues?

<Ravena> Don't support it in chat rooms and forums you host, for one.

<SableTwilight> Cole I'm with you on wanting to see scientific progress or at least peer reviewed material on our community. Though I also would like to see stronger networks built between communities.

<GypsyHSM> Well, it's hard for me to go to a REAL EVENT and meet a UNICORN-kin and them tell me that I don't need blood, just white light - so they can't sit at my lunch table, I'll puke on them.

<Merticus> On the AVA forum we've created a folder for posts/threads that take a turn for the negative or personal attacks. If you don't allow such generally it begins to catch on that your site won't tolerate certain behaviors (even if you are late to the game).

<SphinxCatVP> In some situations, there's often only 1 or 2 people calling the BS flag on things that need to be tossed out, and nobody else backs them up - especially not moderators or admins of the forum or site section. This tends to hinder efforts to, ah, leave the hip waders in the closet...

<Ravena> I'll agree with Sphinx on that one.

<Ravena> Having been someone who has called BS a number of times lol

* NyteMuse agrees SO much with Sphinx

<Corvis> BS is BS even when we are dealing with abstract ideas.

<Merticus> I've never understood why people are timid at speaking up...

<Ravena> I bet people wish I was timid haha

<NyteMuse> I left quite a few boards because when I tried to politely call BS on some folk, I got no backup and ended up getting overwhelmed by the OP's sycophants.

<SableTwilight> I suspect it might be fear of having their own beliefs challenged, Merticus.

<SableTwilight> One person challenging another's perception opens themselves up to their own being scrutinized... and if they are on shaky or uncertain ground to begin with...

<NyteMuse> Um... aren't most of us sort of on shaky ground with a lot of these claims?

<Merticus> Sable: Yes, likely why 95% of the people on forums are quiet as it is... they aren't comfortable contributing their thoughts or lack an original thought by their estimation.

<SableTwilight> Exactly NyteMuse

<Ravena> I was so annoyed with it I even wrote an article on it.

<Ravena> That stuff inspired my "enabling" article.

<GypsyHSM> I admit that I have tried to help the community, unite the locals, host a court and for that - local pagans tried to kill our cats. So I

am not so carrying about baby bats and HSM doesn't have an outreach program now. So are we of any help?

<Ravena> Pagans killing cats?

<Ravena> Uh, isn't that like... *thinks*

<SphynxCatVP> Things like that are why I try to limit myself to online presence... I love my cats...

<Ravena> No genuine pagan would kill a cat.

<GypsyHSM> Yes, calling my occult shoppe saying things - there are as many weekend pagans as wannabe vamps here.

<Corvis> But why stay silent when thoughts may be important?

<Ravena> They are not confident enough or they aren't smart enough.

<SphynxCatVP> Because a lot of people don't want to get their heads bitten off for saying the wrong thing.

<NyteMuse> Sometimes I feel like a more diplomatic approach is called for and should be utilized... often, actually.

<SableTwilight> People don't like be told they are ignorant or foolish Corvis.

<ColeVonCat> I know, people don't want their ideas challenged even on anonymous internet forums... it's weird.

<Ravena> It's the net, they can sew their heads back on :)

<Corvis> Wrong is staying quiet when they have something vital to say.

<SableTwilight> Indeed Corvis, however that still does not always protect one's self esteem.

<Corvis> Stoic heart need the writer have.

<ColeVonCat> If your self-esteem is so fragile, you don't belong on the internet.

<Corvis> It is tough, but stand by what you think.

<Corvis> Cole, Agreed.

<Ravena> Like good old Eleanor said "no one can make you feel inferior without your consent"

<NyteMuse> There's a big difference between "UR doin it wrong" and the Socratic approach of asking clarifying questions until the contradictions become evident.

<ColeVonCat> Although I couldn't agree more about the "diplomatic" approach

<Sylvere> A lot of people can't debate worth crap either. It's one thing to challenge an *idea* another to criticize a *person*. A lot of the admins on certain sites/groups can't tell the difference.

<Sylvere> They just lump it all under "flaming" and ban it.

<NyteMuse> Amen to that, Sylvere.

<Ravena> I'm with you on that one Sylvere.

<Ravena> I think they have issues in the first place if they let someone on the net (or off the net) make them feel inferior.

<SableTwilight> Also, realize that different locals have different dynamics in approaching a subject... talking with some one in one location might come off as rude, pushy or tactless in another.

<Sylvere> If the admins are unwilling to permit intellectual discourse, even if it means calling BS on someone's idea, then who's going to feel secure enough to challenge ideas?

* NyteMuse agrees with Sable
<SphynxCatVP> Exactly!
<Merticus> Yes, without naming names, that's a major problem on some of the more prominent fledgling forums and it leaves a bitter and negative view of the community in the eyes of many newcomers.
<ColeVonCat> That's when you leave the site.
<NyteMuse> Add to that the issues with communicating in a text-based medium, without the luxury of inflection and body language...
<Ravena> I'm only on 3 forums.
<Ravena> VVC, Lost Haven's, and Oubliette.
<ColeVonCat> I mean, you have to choose your battles.
<ColeVonCat> No one can keep up with ALL the forums out there.
<NyteMuse> Except Merticus.
<ColeVonCat> Except maybe Merticus.
<Merticus> I lost track of how many forums I'm on... takes about 3-4 hours to log into them all though (ie: log in and back out) lol
<Ravena> That's why I only have three of them.
* ColeVonCat laughs
<Sylvere> I'm a *member* of quite a few sites. I actually *read* a scant handful of them with any regularity.
<NyteMuse> Yeah, same boat as Sylvere.
<ColeVonCat> Me too.
<Merticus> There is a distinct lack of "debate" on community issues for fear it'll turn into a flame war or outright censorship by some admins.
<Sylvere> That's why the RVCA allows flaming.
<Sylvere> If it gets abusive, the mods and I will shut it down, but we permit flames so that it's harder to say we're censoring anything.
<ColeVonCat> There's a fine line. You need good mods/admin to have really good debate that allows multiple sides to be expressed without turning into flaming.
<NyteMuse> Merticus, there is something to be said for leading by example...
<NyteMuse> Not VVC necessarily, but what if some of the major IRC channels and forums purposely started some debates on some issues and showed that it can be done?
<NyteMuse> Could encourage some of the quieter folk to feel better about doing it themselves...
<NyteMuse> Sort of like seeding the clouds,
<Merticus> Well at one point we were going to hold monthly chats open to the community but like so many "good intentions" it was largely forgotten about.
<Corvis> People being how they are, and the nature of text, cannot always know (OR take the time) to think through things before getting upset.
<NyteMuse> I could sacrifice a night a month for a chat, but I don't think I'm BNV enough to get a draw
<GypsyHSM> Dave's on the phone - he says he would do the interviews at HK

if someone gives him the interview sheet (list of questions).

* Sylvere pouts...will never get to go to House Kheperu Gathering

<Merticus> Gypsy: Interviews at the HK Gathering would need to be arranged by Michelle and the House there.

<Merticus> Well some of us have extensive e-mails lists we can use to encourage people to come to chats, etc. But honestly I need someone else to take the initiative to schedule and start one because I'm beyond swamped.

<Sylvere> Would we do the chats on IRC or Skype or what?

<NyteMuse> I'll write myself a note to schedule some.

<Sylvere> We know we can't get too many people on Skype w/o feedback.

<NyteMuse> But one can only do text chat on that unless one calls in on a cellphone or landline.

<NyteMuse> Which doesn't really put it above IRC.

<NyteMuse> Seems like text chats are easier to handle high-volume...voice-chats would get noisy fast without an agenda or moderator control.

<Ravena> Yahoo has a voice conference; it's worked for LH (Lost Haven) before.

<Sylvere> I could do a monthly chat/class/seminar.

<Sylvere> It would have to either be on IRC or Yahoo conference.

<EricBloodstorm> Are we going to have a problem with too many people for the resource we use?

<Corvis> Yahoo is easier for some of us.

<Merticus> I'd suggest to start with a IRC chat and avoid the voice conflicts... save that for our "one-day it will happen" roundtables and other projects.

<Ravena> Well, we can informally voice chat whenever we wish really.

<Ravena> We can arrange it amongst ourselves

<Ravena> Goddess knows we could all use the getting to know each other a bit more thing.

<Ravena> Nothing official for voice chats, just a small group of people shooting the breeze really.

<Sylvere> We could alternate Yahoo and IRC for the chats.

<Merticus> Yes, whatever is arranged I'll be happy to mail out to my groups/forum lists.

* NyteMuse agrees with Merticus

<SphynxCatVP> It's easier to deal with lots of people on IRC than lots of people by voice.

<Sylvere> And with IRC, we don't have to add people to a contact list before they can be invited to the chat.

<Merticus> Yes, IRC mass-community discussions are quite easy to manage... other programs generally aren't. If we're talking 50+ people connecting.

<SphynxCatVP> Having done work-related voice chats, I can safely say it gets... really REALLY confusing...when you have more than a half-

dozen people.

<Merticus> **e. Other topics you'd like to bring up for discussion?**

<Ravena> Nothing I can think of at the moment Merticus

<Sylvere> I got nothing.

<Sylvere> I love the Sunday coffee chats Sanguinarius hosts in SL (Second Life).

<Sylvere> As a social thing, it would be fun to have more people from the VVC show up.

<SphynxCatVP> Oh definitely!

<NyteMuse> Sorry... don't get up that early on the weekend.

<Sylvere> We could host a VVC community chat later in the day. I'm sure Sanguinarius wouldn't mind.

<Merticus> **IV. Business Reminders**

<Merticus> Refer to the forum for all current discussions.

<Merticus> Thank you all for coming!

<Merticus> <<<<<<END MEETING LOG>>>>>>>>