

Moving into the Digital Age of Communications

By Janet Gianopoulos

When **Kevin Mackin, OFM**, inaugurated Holy Name Province's Office of Development and Public Relations in 1990, he, along with **Cassian Miles, OFM**, and I, who brought experience in public relations, sat down with **Timothy Shreenan, OFM**, to discuss roles and cooperation, and to formulate a provincial communications manual for Holy Name Province.

Cassian and I focused on external news. Through the years, numerous news items, photos and videos were aired, published and carried on wire services. We redesigned and collaborated on *The Anthonian*, a quarterly publication of St. Anthony's Guild, winning a dozen Catholic Press awards. We also co-edited books and produced radio programs aired on three stations in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania.

We brought the Province into cyberspace via e-mail and began sending material to external Web sites and list servers. When **Jim McIntosh, OFM**, at American University, decided to enter the provincial formation program, I served as acting moderator of the Franciscan Internet news list.

Those were exciting times. AOL membership shot from around 200,000 subscribers to millions, seemingly overnight. Comparably, the number of friars with e-mail addresses jumped from fewer than 50 to hundreds.

Following the Province's 1996 Chapter, new Provincial Minister **John Felice, OFM**, consolidated public and provincial communications: He made me the Province's first lay associate in the Communications Office. Other firsts included a weekly faxed provincial newsletter, *HNP Today*, and a new magazine, *HNPeople*. The CO developed a photo library (e.g., photos used in external textbooks) and electronic archives of publications.

Circa 1996, Holy Name Province's first World Wide Web site was born, featuring a home page photo of smiling friars outside a ceremony at St. Francis of Assisi Church in Manhattan.

Richard Biasiotto, OFM, who had been tinkering with HTML coding for a few years, provided the able service of posting provincial newsletters and special messages on the site. One of the first reports was "TWA Flight 800: Fire in the sky, fallout on earth" about the ministry of **Mychal Judge, OFM**, to families of crash victims.

I was later elected secretary of the OFM English-speaking Conference communicators, a group that I know Jocelyn Thomas has recently helped rejuvenate.