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LIS2850 | Fall 2019 | Lesson Plan

SUBJECT/TOPIC:

Utilizing good visual design for instruction in higher education.

This lesson will teach a solid overview of graphic design and how to create well designed supplements to lectures. The main audience will be for faculty and librarians, but also open to staff members if they are interested. This lesson can be seen as a voluntary workshop for interested faculty and staff. Ideally, it will be a small class in a computer lab. It will encourage the learners to be creative and have fun with Powerpoint, handouts, and other materials used in class or at work.

RATIONAL:

Technology has evolved so that anyone has the ability to create well-designed materials for instruction. However, you can still see reputable websites in need of a major face lift or poorly designed slides at a professional presentation. Understandably, not everyone has a designer's eye, but this lesson will teach you what good design is so you can pick out these unsavory designs and recognize how you would do it differently.

Another important factor in the rational for this training is accessibility. This lesson will help to define accessibility and allow the instructor to recognize how to comply to these standards in their visual materials. This training will not teach you how to use technologies such as Powerpoint, only how to implement good design into resources you already are familiar with.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Understand the importance of graphic design in teaching and in libraries

Define and utilize accessibility

Use key concepts in graphic design to create teaching materials

LECTURE *15-20 minutes*

What is graphic design?

Graphic design or visual design is the art & skill of combining text and graphics in a pleasing manner. Graphic design is created by mostly everyone, not just designers. Slide presentations, a syllabus, reports, articles, and more all implement principles of design. Most people (especially the intended audience) have used graphic design, whether they knew it or not. Graphic design can be as simple as a street sign or as complicated as an illustrated book cover.

Why is graphic design important for instruction and libraries?

Well designed slides, handouts, and other learning objects will help promote productive learning. If a presentation has an effective visual design, it "can help bridge the gap between face-to-face and mediated communication by providing visual information and cues to augment text" (Sims, O'Leary, Cook, & Butland, 2002). Educational research has suggested that having visual designs in your lessons can lead to "a greater degree of learning" (Stokes, 2002). This idea of learning or interpreting through images and visuals is often referred to as visual literacy. Education still largely depends on texts, but there is a lot of research to back up the idea the visuals play an important role in learning.

In libraries, visuals can be used for eye-catching signage and marketing materials to help promote the library. Visuals such as charts, illustrated tutorials, or simple facts can be useful tools for instruction or display in the library. A nicely designed website can also help with accessibility and to improve traffic.

To better understand how to design better materials, it's important to understand the elements and principles of design.

Elements of Design

Line, Shape, Direction, Size, Texture, Color, and Typography are the most common element of graphic design. Line, shape, direction, size, and texture are the most simple elements to implement and are self explanatory (see slide for visuals).

Color and typography are the most important and versatile elements of visual design. The four characteristics of color are Hue, Value, Saturation and Temperature (see slides for visuals, further explanations). There are several different Color Schemes as well. It's not important to know the names of these, but important to recognize colors that go well together. Most schemes are based on the color wheel. There are several websites, often called color generators, that can create schemes for you. It's important to be simplistic in your choices - usually 1-3 colors is sufficient, otherwise the colors can make your materials too busy.

Typography is the use of the fonts. Some major things to consider are legibility of the font, sans serif vs. serif fonts, using 1-3 fonts maximum in one piece, and using safe fonts in

Powerpoint presentations or other digitally shared materials (see slides for visuals, further explanations).

Note: Sans serif fonts are the fonts without serifs extending from the ends of the letterforms. Arial is a sans serif font, Times New Roman is a serif font. Serif fonts are typically easier to read when there is a lot of text.

Principles of Graphic Design:

Balance

Placement of objects on the page can create weight to achieve balance (Hughes, 2019). *see slide for example and further information*

Alignment

Helps to create order and organization in an image. Objects aligned have a visual connection to each other (Hughes,2019). *see slide for example and further information*

Repetition

Repetition can be expressed through fonts, lines, colors, or sizes. It helps to unify objects and the design (Hughes, 2019). *see slide for example and further information*

Contrast

The juxtaposition of two different elements (Light/Dark, Large/Small). This can be used to highlight an element in your design (Hughes, 2019). *see slide for example and further information*

Rule of Thirds

Using a grid and dividing your page into thirds, placing objects off-center create more interest (Smith, 2019). *see slide for example and further information*

Space

Helps to avoid clutter. Negative and positive spaces are important in design (Hughes, 2019). *see slide for example and further information*

What is accessibility?

Accessibility is the practice of making your visual materials usable for everyone, including those with disabilities. This is most prominent on the web, where web designers must comply

to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). However, it is also very important in instruction, when using Powerpoints, handouts, and other visual materials. Below of some of the guidelines you should follow when creating instructional materials.

Any images or other non-text content should be have a descriptor or caption, especially on the web, but this can be done on Powerpoint presentations also.

Videos should have captions.

Color should have accessible contrast. The safest is to use black text on white, but you can get more colorful if you want. Be sure to check the accessibility of your colors on a contrast checker.

Fonts should be legible and large enough to read.

Be wary of using any flashy videos or animations that may induce seizures or be generally unpleasant. (W3C Web Accessibility Initiative, 2019)

ACTIVITY *15-20 minutes*

Ideally, classroom will be a computer lab or students will be asked to bring their laptops which have Powerpoint installed. If this is the case, the activity will be an exercise in redesigning a poorly designed Powerpoint slide that will be sent to them. If the class is large, there can be several different Powerpoints sent at random, however, this activity will work better with a smaller class size. The students will take about 15 minutes to redesign the Powerpoint slide. Once everyone is finished, the class will take a look at each students slide and critique it by using some terms and principles discussed.

If the class is too large or not able to have computers, two activities can be considered. One activity could be more of discussion in which bad designs are shown on the screen and students discuss what they would change to make the design better for instruction. The other option is for silent questions. Each student is given a piece of paper to write a question down that they might not feel comfortable asking out loud. The papers and folded and selected at random by the instructor or other students to answer.

ASSESSMENT *10 minutes*

The assessment is a discussion on some visual designs where the students will answer questions about poorly designed items.

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