

2, 4, 6, GREAT: HANDOUTS THEY'LL APPRECIATE

ANNA JOHNSON – FACULTY LIBRARIAN – MT HOOD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Contact Anna:
Office 503.491.7686
anna.johnson@mhcc.edu

Users can leave your library presentation empty handed or they can go home with a handout. Which scenario best describes your experience with library handouts?

- A: *I've stopped printing handouts altogether; my users only want it if it's on the Web. Why waste the paper?*
- B: *When my presentation ends and my users leave, my handouts are still on the chairs. Why do I bother?*
- C: *My users come to the reference desk asking for extra copies of my handouts. I'm always ordering paper!*

Are you afraid that C is impossible? It's not! Armed with a few basic principles of good document design you can create truly useful handouts by harnessing the information-packing potential of paper. They'll be begging you to make more copies!

This document introduces a simple 5 step workflow to create library handouts using Word, a Web browser, and a copy machine. The document design principles discussed here are inspired in large part by the work of data visualization expert Edward Tufte.

EDWARD TUFTE: DOCUMENT DESIGN GURU

Tufte is the author-designer of four books about the visual display of information, the most recent of which is *Beautiful Evidence* (Graphics Press, 2006). A copy of each book is included with registration for his one-day course "Presenting Data and Information."

www.edwardtufte.com

Renowned for his attacks on PowerPoint, Tufte lectures and writes about the benefits of paper as a content-rich, high-resolution delivery method for presenting information.

CONTENT, NOT CLUTTER: BASIC DOCUMENT DESIGN PRINCIPLES

You don't need to be a graphic artist to understand the basics of good document design. Think about documents you see all the time, like menus and résumés – you never notice the design when it's good, but when it's bad it hurts your eyes!

THREE TUFTE TIDBITS:

"Maximize users' content-reasoning time; minimize their format-figuring-out time."

"Design should be invisible." "Content counts most of all."

Lecture notes from Tufte's course:
"Presenting Data and Information,"
attended in Portland, OR: 16 July 08.

Good document design means not wasting users' time by filling up space with non-essential stuff -- I'm talking to you Clip Art! -- and not abusing users' eyes by drawing thick black boxes and arrows and lines around the "important stuff"- these types of embellishments only draw the eye to the box itself, not to the information inside it.

To check your handout for bad design, hold a printed copy at arms' length, about 3 feet from your eyes. Something will jump out at you - what is it? An image? A box? A line?

This is what Tufte calls the "most optically active point." When looking at your document at arm's length, make sure that what jumps out at you is content, not clutter.

Everything on your handout should impart information – if it's not content, it's clutter.

DESIGN QUIZ: WHICH BOX DELIVERS CONTENT? WHICH DELIVERS CLUTTER?

On the Library homepage,
look for the link that says *Databases*.

- Library homepage
- **Databases** ← **Click here!**

ANSWER: Hold this paper at arm's length to see why the box on the right is lots of clutter and little content.

PAGES v. PAGES: WEB DESIGN OR DOCUMENT DESIGN?

Some librarians stop printing handouts because they can make web pages instead. While there are definite advantages to online handouts, pages designed for the Web and documents designed to be printed are guided by very different design principles.

Let's examine three major distinctions between web design and document design:

PURPOSE:

INTERACTIVE or INFORMATIONAL?

Simply put, a web page is interactive because it provides active links to other content while a printed page is purely informational.

Consider the purpose of your information – can it stand alone, or must users link to other information?

SUGGESTION:

Users should be able to use the handout alone.

EXAMPLE:

At the library's homepage, look for the Find Articles section describes the path to a link so that the printed handout can stand alone.

PERMANENCE:

TEMPORARY or LASTING?

Web sites change or are usurped by newer resources, but a printed handout lasts as long as attendee wants to keep it.

Consider the permanence of your information – will it be outdated quickly, or will the basic concepts remain relevant to future users?

SUGGESTION:

Limit the use of links on printed handouts.

EXAMPLE:

Try a Google search for "handout template" will be more useful in print than giving a list of links to handout templates.

PROCESS:

SCANNING or READING?

Most people don't read web sites from top to bottom; they scan the page, so websites use bullet points and text fragments.

Consider the way the user will process your information – a printed handout should include complete sentences.

SUGGESTION:

Use complete sentences on printed handouts.

EXAMPLE:

Today we will explore the library's electronic and print book collections is more useful in print than Goals: eBooks. Books.

Nielsen, Jacob. "How Users Read on the Web" at <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/9710a.html>

MAKING HANDOUTS: A FIVE STEP PROCESS

Instruction librarians at Mt Hood Community College create a customized handout for each class that visits the library instruction classroom. Over five years (and three instruction coordinators) the process of creating these handouts has evolved.

The following process yields a printed handout that maximizes the high-resolution properties of paper while also allowing users to interact with the document online.

The handout is designed in Microsoft Word because one librarian's handout is often updated by another librarian, and designing in ubiquitous Word (as opposed to a more advanced desktop publishing program) means we can all work on all handouts.

A key component of the process is the conversion of the Word file to a PDF. Adobe PDF has long been an industry-standard file type for preparing documents to print, because this format locks the document's text and graphics in place – your users don't need an editable Word file, they want the handout as the librarian designed it.

PDFs are viewed with Adobe's free Acrobat Reader software, and are also viewable in web browsers, making the PDF an excellent method for posting handouts online.

The final phase of the process involves making photocopies of the handout, usually as an 11x17 booklet. On a copy machine with a Booklet feature, a four-page handout can be copied as a double-sided sheet of 11x17 paper that can be folded in half.

More about Acrobat and the PDF at <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/>

CREATE A WORD DOCUMENT:

- Create a template for consistent “branding” across all of your handouts.
- Design the document in tables to align text with relevant graphics and notes.
- If you’re explaining a concept or a resource, write in complete sentences.
- Activate hyperlinks so they’ll be live links in the online PDF (see below).
- Be discriminating in your use of boxes and arrows; use thin, gray lines.
- Edit the content to fit an even number of pages, preferably 2 or 4.
- Include content-relevant graphics such as screenshots of web resources.
- Use color judiciously; remember that the end product is printed in Black & White.
- Don’t be afraid of narrow margins; ½” margins will work with most printers.

Odd # = empty side of paper, and empty paper = wasted real estate!

FireShot is a free ad-on extension for editing screenshots in Firefox. More at <https://addons.mozilla.org>

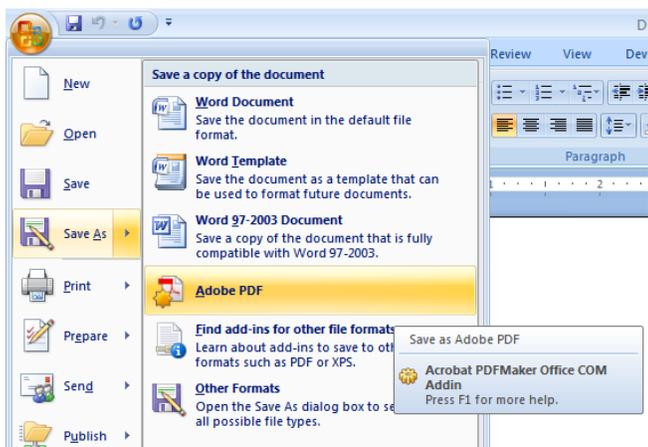
EXAMPLE OF A WORD FILE CREATED USING THESE PRINCIPLES:

		MHCC LIBRARY INSTRUCTION FOR BA285: A. WONG
MHCC LIBRARY HOURS: Monday-Thursday, 7:30AM- 9:00PM Friday, 7:30AM- 5:00PM Saturday, 9:00AM- 3:00PM Sunday, CLOSED	ASK A LIBRARIAN: Chat with us on the library homepage Email us at reference@mhcc.edu Call us at (503) 491-7516 Meet with us at the Reference Desk	FIND US ONLINE 24/7: On the MHCC website: www.mhcc.edu/library On the MyMHCC Portal: my.mhcc.edu/ics > Library
RESEARCH GOALS:		
To search for and locate library resources about historical and 20 th century leaders for your research paper; To access the MHCC Library's citation guides for MLA Style.		
FINDING LIBRARY RESOURCES ABOUT BUSINESS LEADERS:		
The MHCC Library has books about many of the leaders on your lists, especially those in Group A. And when MHCC doesn't have a book you want, you can request free delivery of books from other college libraries. The Library also subscribes to thousands of magazines and newspapers, where you will have better luck finding biographical information about 20 th century leaders.		

Handouts created for MHCC Library instruction are customized for specific classes but share this basic template.

CONVERT THE WORD FILE TO A PDF:

In Word 2007, use the Save As option to create a PDF:



Acrobat PDFMaker is a free add-in for MS Office. More at <http://support.microsoft.com>

Acrobat Reader is free, but the full version (Acrobat Professional) is worth it. Ask your “computer guys” if your institution has a site license.

In older versions of Word, print to PDF by selecting Adobe PDF as a printer.

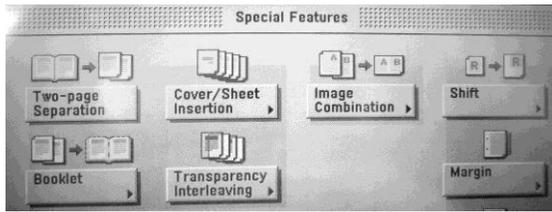
PRINT ONE COPY OF THE PDF:

If your file contains colors, make sure your content is still legible in grayscale.

MAKE PHOTOCOPIES FROM THE PRINTED COPY:

To make 11x17 handouts, look for your copier's Booklet feature.

EXAMPLE OF BOOKLET SETTING ON A CANON COPIER:



If you can't make booklets, make stapled sets of double-sided copies.

POST THE PDF TO YOUR LIBRARY'S WEB SPACE:

Acrobat Reader is a free download, so all users can access PDF files.

Show users how to access the PDF for on-demand (re)printing:

Four faces of 8.5x11 paper (an 11x17 handout) carries as much information as 150 PowerPoint slides - Tufte

Download Adobe Reader for free at <http://get.adobe.com/reader>

MHCC librarians keep two years of instruction handouts online at: https://my.mhcc.edu/ics/Student_Services/Student_Support_Services/Library/Library_Instruction.jnz

Users can open the PDF in any Web browser, to read online or to (re)print:

ABOUT THE PRESENTER:

Anna Johnson is the Library Instruction Coordinator at Mt Hood Community College in Gresham, where she teaches more than 100 course-integrated information literacy classes per year, each with its own customized handout.

A document designer long before she was a librarian, Anna still has her first copy of Aldus PageMaker on 5 1/4" floppy disks (c. 1988). At one time she could recognize 500 typefaces by sight, which made watching movie credits really fun.

The best way to reach Anna is by email at anna.johnson@mhcc.edu

Online NW - 13 February 2009