Exhibitions are a Visual Medium

Texas City Museum (Courtesy of Texas City Museum)
Exhibitions are a Visual Medium

Texas Transportation pop-up exhibit (Courtesy of Texas Department of Transportation and Texas Historical Commission)

Exhibitions are a Visual Medium

Sam Rayburn House State Historic Site (Courtesy of MuseWork/Texas Historical Commission)
Exhibitions are a Visual Medium

Donald Schoolhouse Museum, Grapevine, TX; Ancient House Museum of Thetford Life, Thetford, England
Choosing the Right Type of Visual

Step 1: Figure out what it is you’re trying to communicate.

Step 2: Figure out which type of visual will best communicate that.

Step 3: Assess the quality of your options.

Step 4: Choose your visual.
Maps

The Basics

- Need to be reproduced at a scale large enough that people can see what it is you’re interpreting.
- If necessary, it’s okay to reproduce just a segment of a map.

Historical maps are good for giving people a snapshot of what a particular place looked like at a given time.

Texas Bird’s-Eye Views (Courtesy of Amon Carter Museum)
Maps

When historical maps are used together, they can also be used to show growth and change over time.

Texas Bird’s-Eye Views (Courtesy of Amon Carter Museum)
Charts, Graphs and Tables

FIRST STEPS
As the turn of the twentieth century, the United States was still a relatively young country without a long history of prominence in international affairs. President Theodore Roosevelt believed that the best way to expand America's prominence was through greater international trade. To protect America's commercial ships and cargo abroad, Roosevelt sought to create a stronger Navy composed of battleships that could sail anywhere in the world to protect the United States' military and business interests.

THE RACE BEGINS
But as the United States sought to enhance its own position in the international arena, other nations also sought to reinforce and expand their places on the global stage. This led to a fast-paced naval arms race between the United States, Great Britain, Germany and Japan, with each country trying to build faster, more powerful ships than its rivals.

The chart above shows how many ships each country ordered between 1905 and 1914, and the size guns each ship carried.

Images of Documents

Texas State Cemetery
Images of Documents

Asian American Resource Center in Austin, TX

Images of Documents

Battleship TEXAS State Historic Site (Courtesy of Texas Parks & Wildlife)
Photographs: The Basics

(Courtesy of Historic New England)

Photographs: The Basics

(Courtesy of Tech Radar)
Photographs: The Basics

(Courtesy of Briscoe Center for American History)

Photographs: Simple Can Be Strong

(Courtesy of Private Collection of T. B. Willis, via The Portal to Texas History)
Photographs: The “Rule” of Thirds

(Courtesy of Fort Bend Museum via Portal to Texas History)

Photographs: The “Rule” of Thirds

(Courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration)
Photographs: Lines and Movement

(Courtesy of The History Center, Diboll, TX, via The Portal to Texas History)

Photographs: Lines and Movement

(Courtesy of Austin History Center)
Photographs: Lines and Movement

(Courtesy of UNT Libraries Special Collections via The Portal to Texas History)

Photographs: Action Images

(Courtesy of Texas Parks & Wildlife)
Photographs: Action Images

(Courtesy of Texas Parks & Wildlife)

Photographs: Static Images

Mail Call (Courtesy of Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service)
Permissions: Rules of Thumb

- Anything created in the United States prior to 1925 is in the public domain as of January 1, 2020.
- The U.S. Federal Government cannot own copyright.
  - Applies to anything created by federal employees.
  - But, independent contractors/artists hired by the U.S. Federal Government may hold copyright to their work.
- Best bet: if it was created after 1925, get written permission from the owner of the image (the repository that holds it) and the copyright holder (if they’re a separate entity).

Fonts: Serif vs. Sans Serif

Serif
- Serifs have “feet” or “tails” on the letters.
- Examples:
  - Garamond
  - Times New Roman
  - Bookman Old Style

Sans Serif
- Sans serif fonts lack the “feet” or “tails” on the letters.
- Examples:
  - Franklin Gothic
  - Tahoma
  - Arial
Fonts: Serif vs. Sans Serif

Print
- Serif fonts are considered more legible in print.
- In general, use serif fonts for body copy and larger.
- Exception: serif fonts are harder to read at small size. Use sans serif fonts for smaller print (e.g., captions).

Web
- Sans serif fonts are considered more legible on screen.
- Use sans serif fonts at any size.

Fonts: Sizes

- Captions: 20 to 24-point type
- Body copy and Titles: 28 to 42-point type, depending on:
  - color of type
  - spacing between letters (kerning) and between lines (leading)
  - type of font (regular, bold, italic)

Note: the actual print size of a 20-point font will vary depending on the font. For example:
- Garamond at 20 point
- DilleniaUPC at 20 point

When using a font that runs on the smaller side, make sure you compensate for this by using it at a larger size.
Fonts: More Readable

- In general: regular typefaces (not **bold** or *italic*)
- Don’t set text in ALL CAPS
- Serif fonts:
  - Times New Roman
  - New Century Schoolbook
- Sans serif fonts:
  - Helvetica
  - Univers
  - Futura

Source: Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Design

Fonts: Less Readable

- **Script** Because all the letters connect and contain flourishes, script fonts make it harder for the eye to distinguish one letter from the next. This makes these fonts harder to read overall.

- **Eroded** Eroded fonts don’t have smooth edges, which makes it difficult for the eye to recognize the letter forms. Use them sparingly in both print and web applications.

These fonts evoke a particular feeling or mood. There are some cases where they might be your best option. If you choose to use these types of fonts, use them sparingly and at a very large size, and recognize that you are sacrificing readability for some viewers.
Fonts: Less Readable

Texas State Cemetery (Courtesy of State Preservation Board)

Fonts: Overused Fonts

• **Comic Sans**
• **Papyrus**

Looking for an alternative font? I often use [www.dafontfree.net](http://www.dafontfree.net) for free, downloadable fonts that are fully licensed for non-commercial use, (Courtesy of KnowYourMeme.com)
Composition: Balance

Texas State Cemetery (Courtesy of State Preservation Board)

Composition: Colors and Contrast

Time Exposures: Picturing Isleta Pueblo in the 19th Century (Courtesy of Museum of Texas Tech University)
Composition: Image Orientation

At War on Two Seas

Battleship TEXAS State Historic Site (Courtesy of Texas Parks & Wildlife)

Composition: Capacity

Tall Tales of the Wild West (Courtesy of National Ranching Heritage Center)
Composition: Capacity

In 1793, Eli Whitney created the first cotton gin that would separate upland cotton. His invention used a hand crank to turn wheels on a drum with small horns to pull the lint away from the seeds. The gin, whose name was derived from the word "engines," consisted of five parts: the frame, the cylinder, the saw, the sander, and the hopper. While built later, the Eagle Gin closely resembled the Whitney version, but with one main difference. The Eagle Gin replaced the wheels with saws, a design that Whitney would use in his later models. Gens revolutionized the cotton industry in the United States and changed the nation's economic history. By 1830, America was responsible for three-quarters of the world's supply of "lintless" cotton.
Take-Aways

- Choose the right type of visual for your message.
- Look for simple, well-composed, and dynamic images.
- Rely on fonts that are highly readable (and limit use of those that are not).
- Think about balance, contrast, image orientation, and capacity when putting it all together.

Find this week’s resource sheet at:

https://www.thc.texas.gov/local-exhibits

This training was made possible by: