

VISUAL COMMUNICATION

WEEK 1

Introduction to Visual Communication via Digital Desktop Publishing and the course overview

Learning Outcomes



- At end of this week lesson the students should briefly:
 1. Show an understanding of visual communication and Desktop publishing
 2. Explain the how media are used in the creation of visual imaging
 3. Critique and apply the principles and elements of graphic design in publication and digital design
 4. Critique and effectively communicate using typography, graphics, and photography in print and digital publications.
 5. Critique and Design with colour in print and digital publications.

Introduction

This course introduces students to the process of using a computer and specialized software to create visual documents for print or digital media. Visual Communication via Desktop publishing (DTP) is the process of using a computer and specialized software to create and layout documents for print or digital media. This can include books, brochures, magazines, newspapers, and other types of publications in print and digital media. Digital DTP software provides tools for creating and editing text, graphics, and other elements, as well as for controlling page layout and typography. The output can be sent directly to a printer or saved in a digital format, such as a PDF, for distribution and viewing on electronic devices.

The core text books you will be reading are:

1. Visual Communication: Images with Messages, Lester, Paul Martin 8th Edition, Lex Publishing, 2020
2. Digital Desktop Publishing, Lake, Susan E .L., and Bean, Karen, Thomson/ South-Western, 2008

Below is an overview of our course:

WEEK 1 Introduction to Visual Communication via Digital Desktop Publishing and the course overview

WEEK 2 Design Elements and Principles

WEEK 3 Typography Principles

WEEK 4 Advanced Typography Principles

WEEK 5 Communicating with colour

WEEK 6 Mid-term quiz (Objective or Multiple choice)

WEEK7 Designing with Images (Photography and drawings)

WEEK8 Layout and Business Publications

WEEK 9 Cartoons, video and film

WEEK 10 Creating Publications using Ms. Publisher

WEEK11 Creating Publications using Adobe InDesign, Illustrator and Photoshop

WEEK 12 Publication Printing techniques

WEEK 13 Publication Binding Techniques

WEEK 14 MAIN EXAM - 60% (Multiple choice and practical projects, subjective or Essay)

What is communication?

The root of the word “communication” in Latin is *communicare*, which means to share, or to make common (Weekley, 1967). Communication is defined as the process of understanding and sharing meaning (Pearson & Nelson, 2000). Communication is the process of exchanging information, ideas, thoughts, or feelings between individuals or groups. It involves both sending and receiving messages through various channels such as speech, writing, gestures, body language, or technology. Effective communication requires encoding messages in a way that the intended audience can understand, transmitting them through appropriate channels, and decoding them accurately by the receiver. Communication is essential for human interaction, social relationships, collaboration, decision-making, problem-solving, and the functioning of organizations and societies as a whole. It plays a crucial role in conveying thoughts, emotions,

intentions, and information, fostering understanding, building relationships, and achieving mutual goals.

Eight Essential Components of Communication

According to University of Minnesota (2015), in order to better understand the communication process, we can break it down into a series of eight essential components, and each of these eight components serves an integral function in the overall process:

1. Source: The source imagines, creates, and sends the message.
2. Message: “The message is the stimulus or meaning produced by the source for the receiver or audience.” (McLean, 2005)
3. Channel: “The channel is the way in which a message or messages travel between source and receiver.” (McLean, 2005) For example, think of your television.
4. Receiver: “The receiver receives the message from the source, analyzing and interpreting the message in ways both intended and unintended by the source.” (McLean, 2005) To better understand this component, think of a receiver on a football team.
5. Feedback: When you respond to the source, intentionally or unintentionally (verbal or nonverbal), you are giving feedback. Feedback is composed of messages the receiver sends back to the source. As the amount of feedback increases, the accuracy of communication also increases (Leavitt & Mueller, 1951).
6. Environment: “The environment is the atmosphere, physical and psychological, where you send and receive messages.” (McLean, 2005) The environment can include the tables, chairs, lighting, and sound equipment that are in the room.
7. Context: “The context of the communication interaction involves the setting, scene, and expectations of the individuals involved.” (McLean, 2005) A professional communication context may involve business suits (environmental

cues) that directly or indirectly influence expectations of language and behavior among the participants.

8. Interference: Interference, also called noise, can come from any source. “Interference is anything that blocks or changes the source’s intended meaning of the message.”(McLean, 2005) For example, if you drove a car to work or school, chances are you were surrounded by noise. Car horns, billboards, or perhaps the radio in your car interrupted your thoughts, or your conversation with a passenger.

Defining Visual Communication

Imagine that you are on vacation in a foreign city, and you get lost while driving. If you were at home, you could stop and ask someone for directions. But here, you don't speak the language very well, so asking directions will not do much good. Instead, you can rely on a printed or virtual map, using landmarks, marked routes, and familiar signs, which successfully lead you, back to your hotel. In this scenario, you have found your way back almost entirely through visual communication (Study.com, 2003).

Visual communication is the shared or transmission of information and ideas using symbols and imagery. It is one of three main types of communication, along with verbal communication (speaking) and non-verbal communication (tone, body language, etc.). Visual communication is believed to be the type that people rely on most, and it includes signs, graphic designs, films, typography, and countless other examples (Study.com, 2003). According to Dutta (2024), Visual communication refers to the transmission of information and ideas through visual elements such as images, graphics, diagrams, charts, animations, videos, and other visual aids. It is a form of communication that relies primarily on visual cues rather than written or verbal language. Visual communication is used in various contexts, including advertising, marketing, education, entertainment, business presentations, instructional materials, and information design.

Key aspects of visual communication include:

1. **Clarity:** Visual communication aims to convey information clearly and effectively to the intended audience. This often involves simplifying complex concepts, organizing information logically, and using visual cues to enhance understanding.
2. **Engagement:** Visual elements have the potential to capture the audience's attention and engage them more effectively than text alone. Well-designed visuals can evoke emotions, stimulate curiosity, and encourage active participation.
3. **Visualization of Data:** Visual communication is often used to represent data and information in a visual format, making it easier to interpret and analyze. This includes creating charts, graphs, infographics, and other visual representations of quantitative and qualitative data.
4. **Brand Identity:** Visual communication plays a crucial role in establishing and reinforcing brand identity. Consistent use of visual elements such as logos, colors, typography, and imagery helps to create a recognizable and cohesive brand image.
5. **Storytelling:** Visuals are powerful tools for storytelling, enabling narratives to be conveyed through images, illustrations, and sequential visual sequences. Visual storytelling can be used to evoke emotions, convey messages, and communicate complex ideas in a compelling manner.
6. **Accessibility:** Effective visual communication takes into account the diverse needs and preferences of the audience, including those with visual impairments or disabilities. Designing for accessibility ensures that visual content is perceivable, understandable, and usable by all users.
7. **Interactivity:** With advancements in technology, visual communication can incorporate interactive elements such as animations, videos, and multimedia presentations. Interactive visuals enable users to explore content, manipulate data, and engage with information in a more dynamic and immersive way.
8. **Cross-Cultural Communication:** Visual communication transcends language barriers and can be understood by people from different cultural backgrounds. Universal visual symbols and icons are often used to convey meanings that are easily recognizable across cultures (Dutta, 2024).

Communicating with Images

According to Study.com (2003), given how broad a category visual communication is, it is somewhat difficult to trace its history. Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that it is the oldest form of communication. For example, in regions around the world, there are cave paintings from thousands of years ago, some dating back as far as 40,000 years. **Cave paintings** are a primitive form of communication that were drawn or etched into cave walls and ceilings. Though their exact purpose is not clear, these paintings include representations of, among other things, animals, landscapes, and sacred spaces, and act as a kind of prehistoric documentation.

As societies became more advanced, travel brought people that spoke different languages into contact with each other. In order to communicate, people developed pictograms around the 4th millennium BC as a way to communicate. **Pictograms** are images that represent physical objects and were used to share ideas or ask questions. For example, if I was in a foreign country and wanted to buy a tree, I could use a pictogram of a money sign and a tree to indicate my interest (Study.com, 2003).

This works because, over time, there developed certain characteristics that people associated with different objects. A tree, for instance, has a trunk, branches, and different kinds of leaves. This sign would be universally recognized because the characteristics and meaning of the symbol are, at a basic level, shared around the world.

When people began printing with woodblocks around the year 600, the ability to communicate visually blew wide open. The printed word and other symbols allowed for ideas and information to be reproduced, shared, and preserved in a non-verbal way. Once these documents were translated into other languages, they were capable of traveling around the world (Study.com, 2003).

According to Simiyu (2017), graphic design is communication expressed visually through a **problem-solving process** with the use of type and image. In Graphic Design you will majorly be involved in creating and systematic planning to solve a problem or achieve certain objectives, with the use of images, symbols or even words.

In most instances, the graphic design field has often been referred to as Visual Communication or Communication Design due to the skill set involved. At its most basic level, **visual communication design** (formerly graphic design) is a creative process that combines the visual arts and technology to communicate ideas. It begins with a message that, in the hands of a talented designer, is transformed into visual communication that transcends mere words and pictures. By controlling color, type, movement, symbols, and images, the visual communication designer creates and manages the production of visuals designed to inform, educate, persuade, and even entertain a specific audience.

What is Desktop Publishing?

Desktop publishing (DTP) is the process of using a computer and specialized software to create and layout documents for print or digital media. This can include books, brochures, magazines, newspapers, and other types of publications. DTP software provides tools for creating and editing text, graphics, and other elements, as well as for controlling page layout and typography. The output can be sent directly to a printer or saved in a digital format, such as a PDF, for distribution and viewing on electronic devices. The term "desktop publishing" is used to distinguish it from traditional typesetting, which was done by hand or using specialized equipment.

What is desktop publishing used for?

According to Ray (2017), Desktop Publishing packages are often used to produce physical media such as newspapers, magazines, marketing materials, point of sale displays, product packaging designs, business cards, and outdoor signs. In the digital space, they are used to create things like web pages, GUI (Graphical User Interfaces) and e-books. These days, companies use DTP packages over old-fashioned word processing software like Microsoft Word because they offer:

1. Enhanced appearance for all produced documents
2. Increased productivity
3. Easy customization of all kinds of projects

4. Minimized production costs
5. A way to manage presentation as well as content

The advantages of DTP

1) Handles far more graphical elements than a word processor

Word processing software certainly has its place. But Desktop Publishing software has taken over from it in almost any project where different fonts, pictures, layout and graphics are going to be involved.

2) Frame-based

A sizeable part of the advantages of Desktop Publishing packages, even the basic Microsoft Publisher, is that they are frame-based. This means that frames of text or images can be moved over, around and on top of one another and rescaled with ease.

3) Easy import

Text and graphics can also be easily imported from outside sources. You can bring together disparate elements such as:

- Images from a scanner
- Frames shot by a digital video camera
- Text written in a word processor
- Graphics created using your favourite drawing software

4) WYSIWYG

WYSIWYG stands What You See Is What You Get. This acronym refers to the fact that, with DTP software, what you see on the screen will be what the final document looks like in printed form.

5) Automatic restructuring

Many DTP software packages can be set to automatically restructure other elements around a frame which has been moved. Marketing materials such as brochures, flyers and catalogues, in

particular, hugely benefit from the use of DTP tools in their creation. Because these tools offer an easy way to adjust the spacing, colours and contrast of a document, its appeal can be edited or altered to meet the preferences of any given audience.

6) Work in columns, frames and pages

Unlike most word processors, you can also easily create columns as well as frames and pages. Text will automatically snake (the technical term for flow) from one column to the next, again making DTP ideal for creating newspapers and magazines.

Kerning is the technical term for editing the space between letters. Different fonts and even different pairs of letters require different spacing for comfortable reading. The best DTP software allows easy individual control over kerning so that larger headings and titles, as well as other text elements, can be perfectly aligned and adjusted for impact and readability (Ray, 2017).

The disadvantages of DTP

1) Expensive tools

One of the main disadvantages of Desktop Publishing is the relative expense of the tools themselves. Many companies balk at the costs of purchasing specialist software such as QuarkXPress or Adobe InDesign, Photoshop, Frame Maker or Illustrator. Outsourcing to professionals is frequently the way that a company will choose to overcome this problem.

2) Lack of large scalability

Another disadvantage of DTP is that it sometimes struggles with very large-scale, highly complex projects. That's because these projects frequently require paying attention to more than just the presentation and content of a project – the two areas which DTP software handles so well – in order to cover:

- The overall structure of a project, including things like section levels and connections between related documents in multiple projects
- Reusing content in other projects
- Keeping the different types of output a project requires consistent
- Online and offline storage and distribution

In recent years though, many of the market-leading DTP tools have started to include these features in what they offer.

Summary



Communication is the process of transferring one's knowledge, thoughts, feelings, or ideas to another person. Humans are undoubtedly social beings and need to live in communities in society to survive. The communication process involves understanding, sharing, and meaning, and it consists of eight essential elements: source, message, channel, receiver, feedback, environment, context, and interference. Visuals have the ability to convey emotions and experiences in a way that words alone cannot. Visual communication is used by artists, designers and storytellers to express feelings, moods and narratives. It is the process of conveying information and ideas through visual elements such as images, symbols, typography and colours. It is a powerful means of communication that transcends language barriers and engages viewers in a visually compelling manner. Desktop publishing (DTP) is the process of using a computer and specialized software to create and layout documents for print or digital media. This can include books, brochures, magazines, newspapers, and other types of publications. DTP software provides tools for creating and editing text, graphics, and other elements, as well as for controlling page layout and typography. The output can be sent directly to a printer or saved in a digital format, such as a PDF, for distribution and viewing on electronic devices. The term "desktop publishing" is used to distinguish it from traditional typesetting, which was done by hand or using specialized equipment.

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<https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/1-2-what-is-communication/> Business Communication for Success Copyright © 2015 by University of Minnesota is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

Further Reading



What kind of **job roles** are there in visual communication?

From the masterful strokes of a graphic designer crafting visually stunning designs to the digital wizardry of an animator breathing life into characters, visual communication is a realm of endless possibilities. It is where UX/UI designers create immersive digital experiences, web designers build interactive online landscapes, and branding specialists shape the very essence of a company's identity. Visual Communication opens up a wide variety of avenues, where creativity knows no bounds and every image tells a captivating story.

Here are some examples of job roles across different avenues of visual communication:

Graphic Designer:

Graphic designers create visual concepts using computer software or by hand, and they develop layouts and designs for various print and digital mediums. For example, a graphic designer might create a visually stunning logo for a brand.

Art Director:

Art directors are responsible for the visual style and imagery in various forms of media, including print, digital, and film. They oversee the artistic direction of projects and collaborate with other creative professionals. For instance, an art director may work on a film production, ensuring that the visual elements align with the director's vision.

UX/UI Designer:

UX/UI designers focus on creating user-friendly and visually appealing interfaces for digital products, such as websites and mobile applications. They consider user experience, interaction design, and visual aesthetics. As an example, a UX/UI designer might design a sleek and intuitive mobile app interface for a banking application.

Film Maker:

Film makers oversee and manage the entire process of creating a film, from concept development to production and post-production. They bring stories to life on the screen through their creative vision, directing actors, managing the technical aspects, and shaping the final cut of the film.

Commercial Artist:

Commercial art is a form of art created for commercial purposes, primarily advertising. It is used to inform, promote, and sell goods and services by using visual images to communicate a message. Commercial artists create art used to sell products, like logos, packaging, and advertisements. They help visually promote the product or company by creating visually appealing designs that attract the target audience. Commercial artists use a variety of mediums, including digital and traditional art forms, to create their work. Their work can be seen in magazines, newspapers, billboards, product packaging, and other forms of advertising.

Animator:

Animators bring static visuals to life through motion and storytelling. They use various techniques, including traditional hand-drawn animation and computer-generated imagery (CGI), to create animated sequences for films, video games, and multimedia projects. As an example, an animator may create lifelike characters and captivating visual effects for an animated feature film.

Branding Specialist:

Branding specialists develop and maintain brand identities for organizations, ensuring consistency across all visual elements. They work on logo design, brand guidelines, and marketing materials. For instance, a branding specialist might create a comprehensive visual identity for a new startup, including logo, colour palette, typography, and brand messaging.

Source: Saikrishnaa, D. (2022). CAREER IN VISUAL COMMUNICATION DESIGN <https://www.iiad.edu.in/the-circle/career-in-visual-communication-design/> Indian Institute of Art and Design.