Inclusivity Through Documentation: Using Gestalt Principles and Plain Language to Create Effective Documents

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Overview

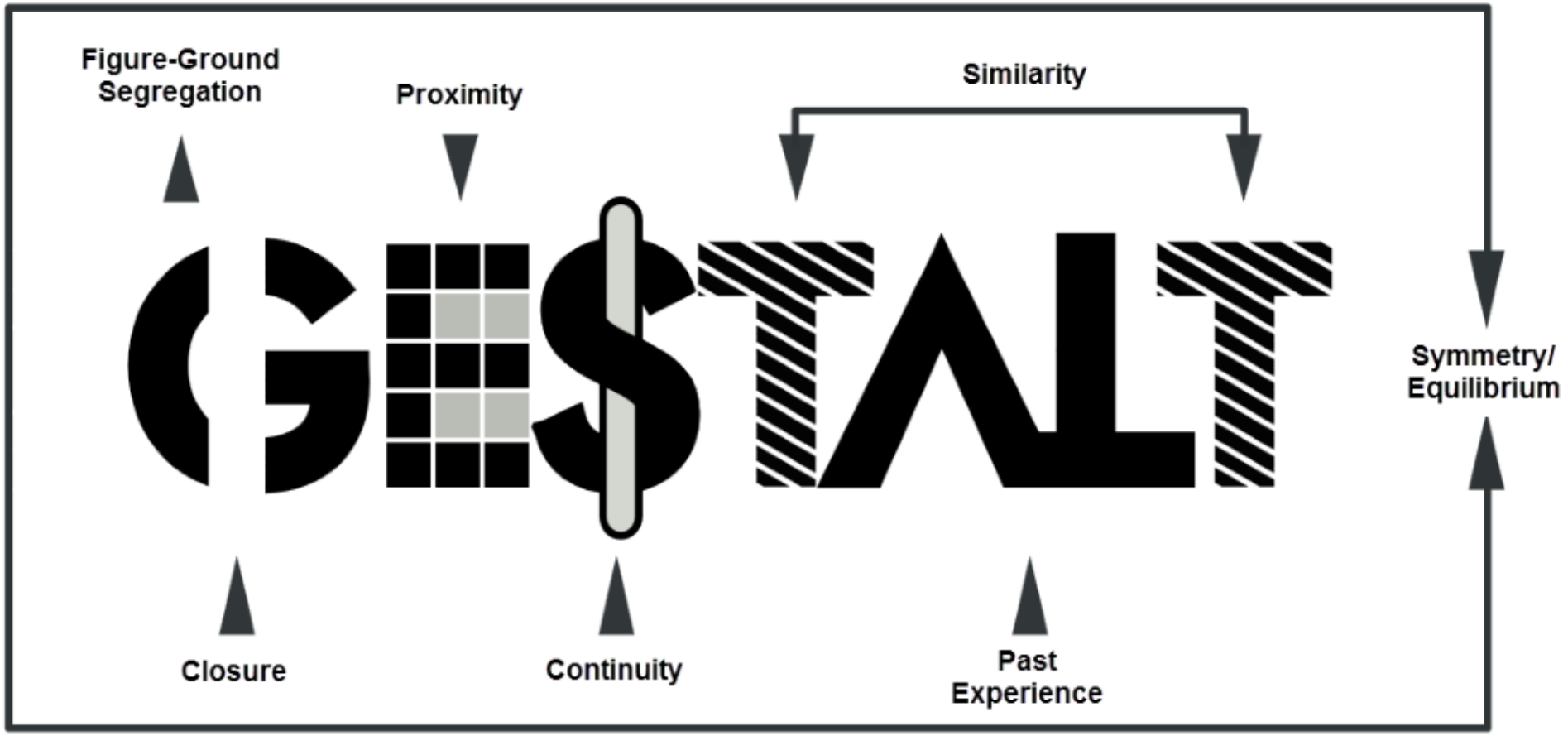
- Instructional Design & Document Design
- What accessibility concepts do you need to keep in mind?
  - Difference between accessibility and accommodation
  - Universal Design
- Design concerns
  - Gestalt theory
  - Image selection
  - Plain language
- Group Activity

Instructional Design & Document Design

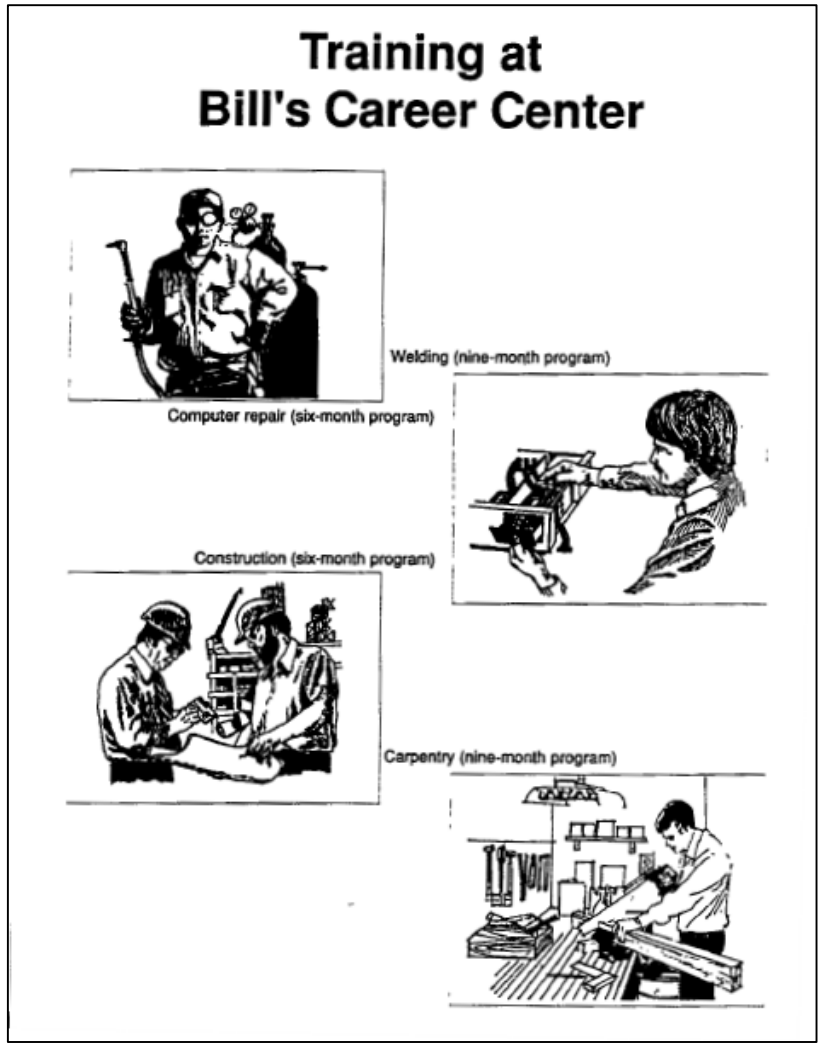
- What is being communicated?
- Who is consuming the information?
  - What do they need to know?
  - What are audience characteristics?
- Where and how will the information be consumed?
- What are the best tools for the job? How can you clearly communicate the information?
- When done, how did it work? How could it be better?

Ethics of Accessibility

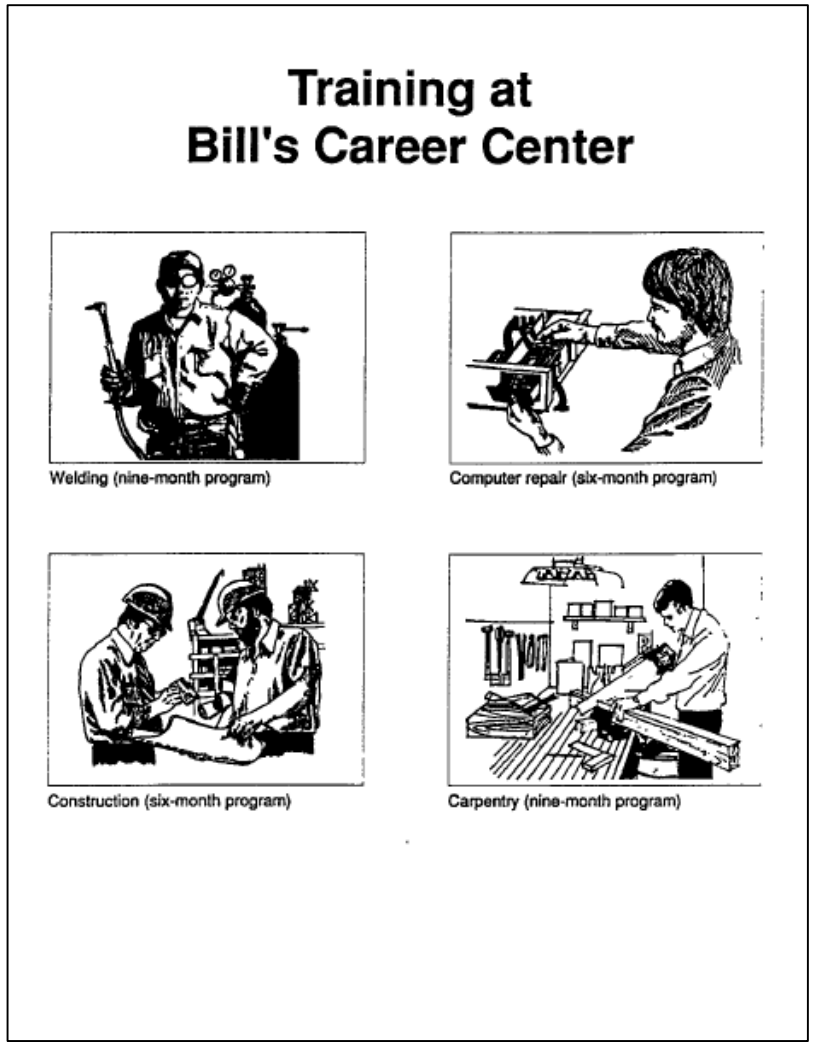
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Universal Design for Learning



This work, "Visual Gestalt," is a derivative of "7 Laws of Gestalt" by Valessio used under CC BY 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons. "Visual Gestalt" is licensed under CC BY 4.0 by Jennifer Turner.



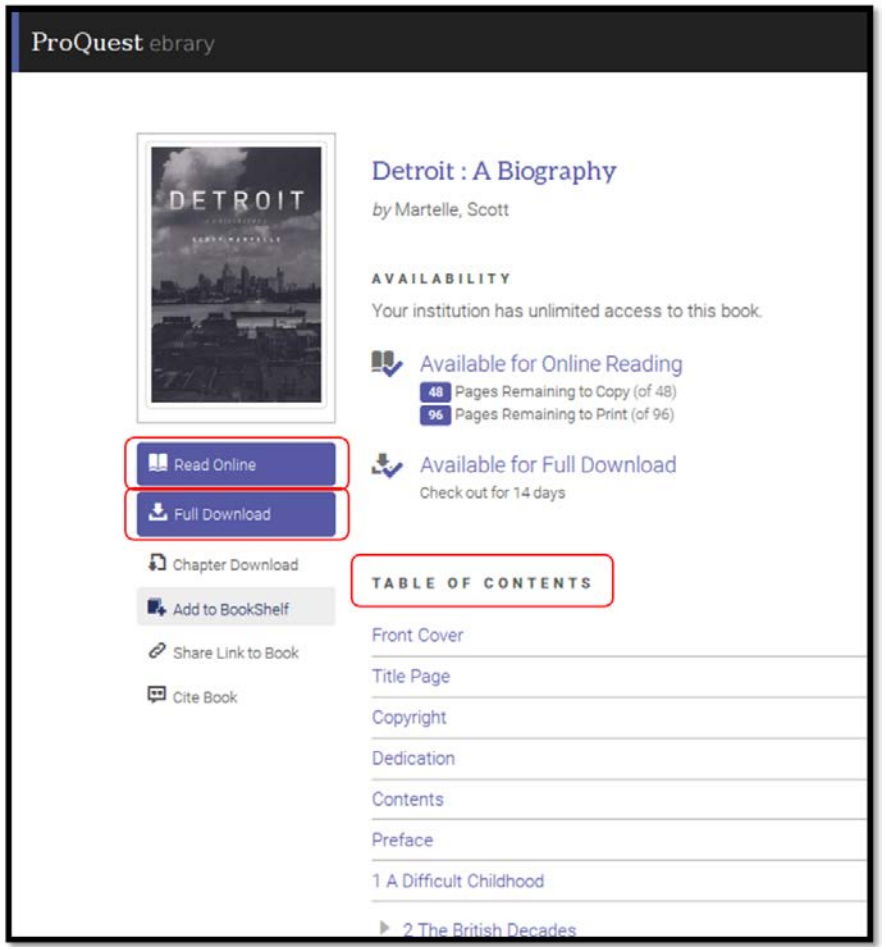
Poor Proximity

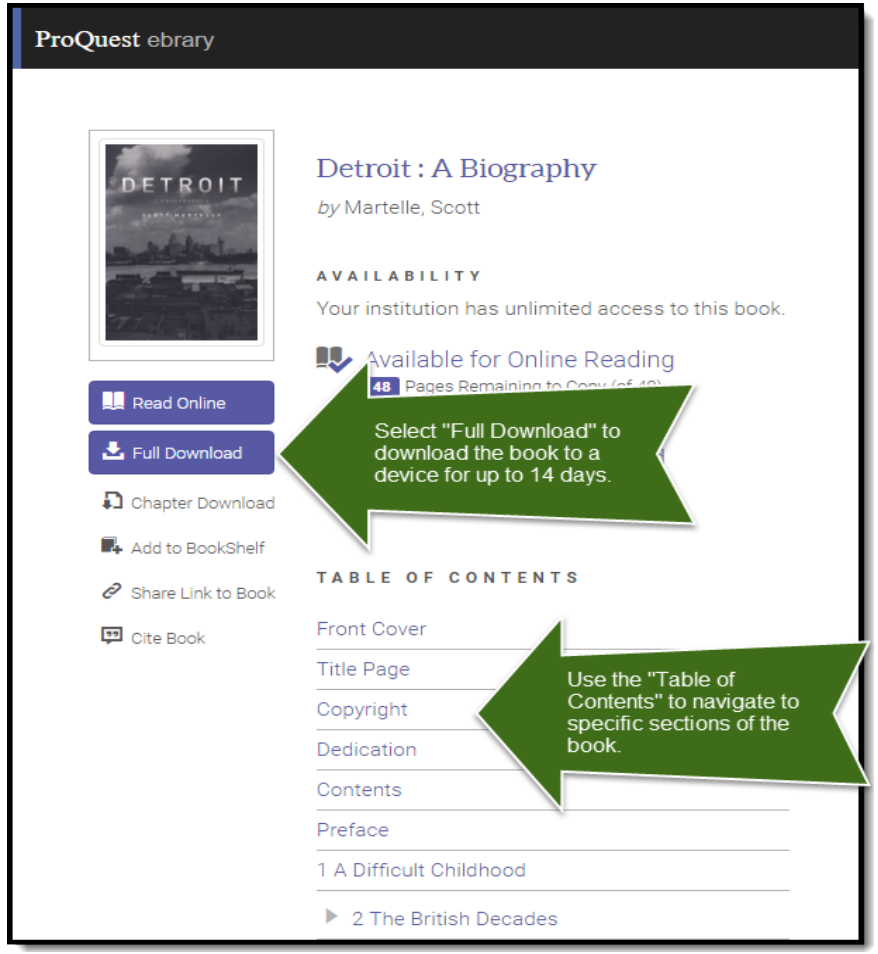


Improved Proximity

Image source: Moore, P., & Fitz, C. (1993). Using gestalt theory to teach document design and graphics. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 2*(4), 389.

Images should be helpful!





Plain Language and Accessibility

- History/Purpose of the Plain Language movement
- Dumbing down? Rhetorical level and audience

- Will users understand the language? Does the document highlight information that is important to **them**?
  - If you don't know enough about your users to be able to answer those questions, find out! Demographic information, diverse focus groups, and surveys can all help you find out more about your patrons.

Plain Language Guidelines : Content

- Present the context before going into the details
- Use descriptive headers and sub-headers
  - Start headings with action verbs
  - Use questions instead of noun phrases
  - Be consistent within heading levels

Get a Library Card
- How do I get a library card?
- What can I do with a library card?

Reserve a Room
- What kinds of rooms are available?

- If using library jargon or acronyms, explain what it means each time it’s used

Plain Language Guidelines - Words

You can use a library card to check out books.

OR

Library cards can be used to check out books.

Sentence structure

- Use short sentences and active voice
- Use subject-verb-object order
- Avoid embedded clauses and parenthetical statements
- Stay positive, avoid “not”
- Use everyday words
- Speak to the reader
- Draw a picture with your words – and possibly also with a picture, chart or table!

Editing Your Documentation

- What is missing? What is unneeded?
- Does it make sense to you? Does it make sense to other people?

- Next step: Testing

Usability Testing

- Testing
  - Start by questioning the purpose of everything in the document
  - Readability software (such as MS Word “speak” feature)
  - Paraphrase testing
  - SEC document
- Reasons for testing
  - Accessibility for people with visual, motor, or cognitive impairments
  - Readability
  - Comprehensibility

http://webaim.org/articles/cognitive/design

“Library Quick Sheet” Before Usability Testing

“Library Quick Sheet” After Usability Testing

MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY MANKATO

2016–2017

Quick Guide to the

LIBRARY

LIBRARY SERVICES

lib.mnsu.edu

Visit

507-389-5931
Hours: 507-389-6201
Research Help: 507-389-5958

Hours

DAYS	HOURS
Monday-Wednesday	7:30 A.M. – 2:00 A.M.*
Research Help	8:30 A.M. – 9:30 P.M.
Thursday	7:30 A.M. – 2:00 A.M.*
Research Help	8:30 A.M. – 9:00 P.M.
Friday	7:30 A.M. – 7:00 P.M.
Research Help	8:30 A.M. – 6:00 P.M.
Saturday	10:00 A.M. – 6:00 P.M.*
Research Help	10:00 A.M. – 12:00 NOON 1:00 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.
Sunday	11:00 A.M. – 2:00 A.M.*
Research Help	1:00 P.M. – 9:00 P.M.

*1st floor only 11:45 P.M. – 2:00 A.M.

Research 24/7

Library resources are avaiable 24/7 on and off campus at lib.mnsu.edu

- Scholarly and popular materials
- Articles, books, videos
- Class and Subject Guides to assist with research in specific disciplines

Get online research help!
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Chat online with a librarian 24/7
Email us!

Your MavCARD is your library card

THINGS TO CHECK OUT	BORROWING PERIOD
Books (General Collection)	21 days (undergrad) 1 semester (grad)
Audio books	21 days (undergrad) 1 semester (grad)
Digital Cameras	7 days
DVDs	7 days
Laptop Computers	7 days

Quiet study areas available on every floor.

Group study rooms. Groups of 2 or more can check out keys at the circulation desk.

Kiyo Suyematsu Music Library
203 Early Center for Performing Arts.
507-389-1325

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Document Redesign Workshop

- What is the core purpose of the document?
- What information is necessary to accomplish this purpose? Is there missing information? Extra information?
- Who is the audience? What do they care about?
- Is this the appropriate format for this information?
- Does the document use sound design principles?
- What changes are needed to improve accessibility and inclusivity?

Discussion

Ranganathan (1931) / Turner (2015)

Five Laws of Library Science

- Books are for use.
- Every reader his/her book.
- Every book its reader.
- Save the time of the reader.
- The library is a growing organism.

Five Laws of Document Design

- Design is for use.
- Every document its design.
- Every design its purpose.
- Save the time of the user.
- Documents are [should be] changeable organisms.