MADE YOU LOOK!: HOW TO SELECT VISUALS THAT WILL KEEP VISITORS ENGAGED WITH YOUR EXHIBITS

Presenter: Erin McClelland
August 20, 2020
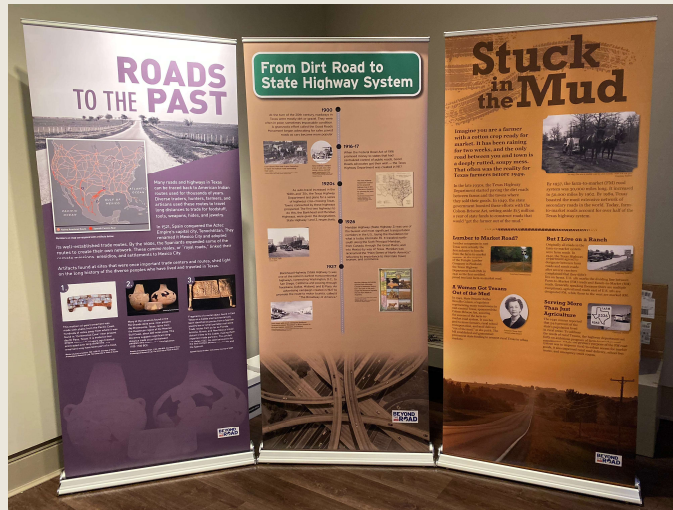
TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
REAL PLACES TELLING REAL STORIES

Smithsonian

Texas Department of Transportation

TAM

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

Visual Variety
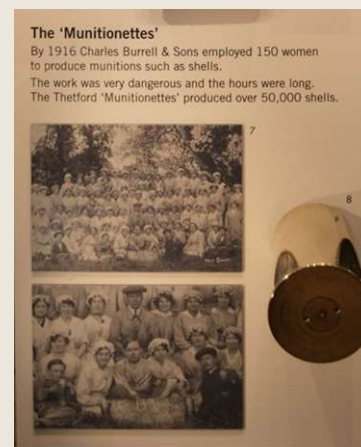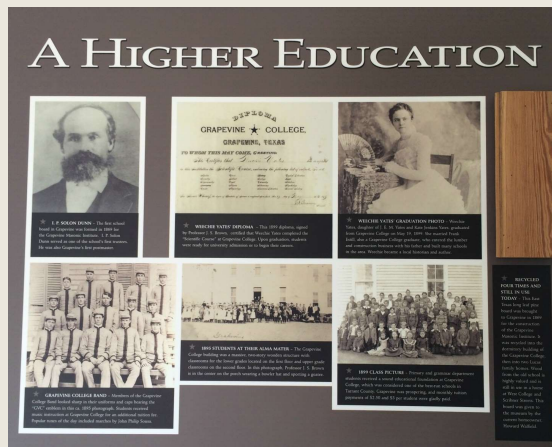
Donald Schoolhouse Museum, Grapevine, TX; Ancient House Museum of Thetford Life, Thetford, England

Visual Variety

(Courtesy of History Associates, Inc.)

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.

Maps

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)*
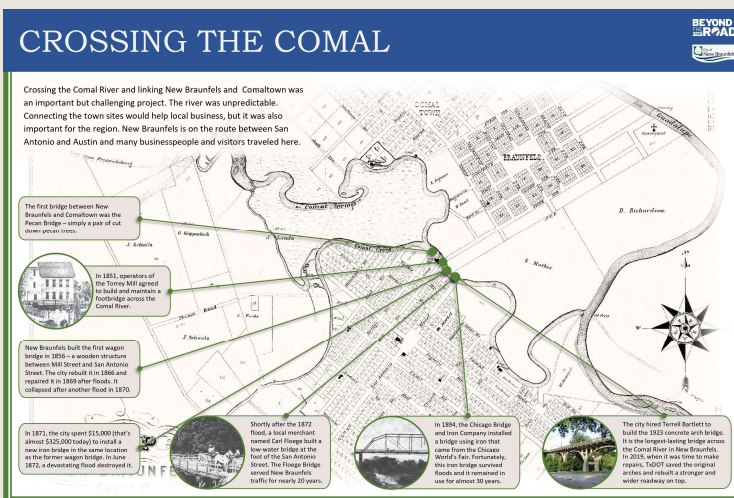
Maps

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)*

Maps

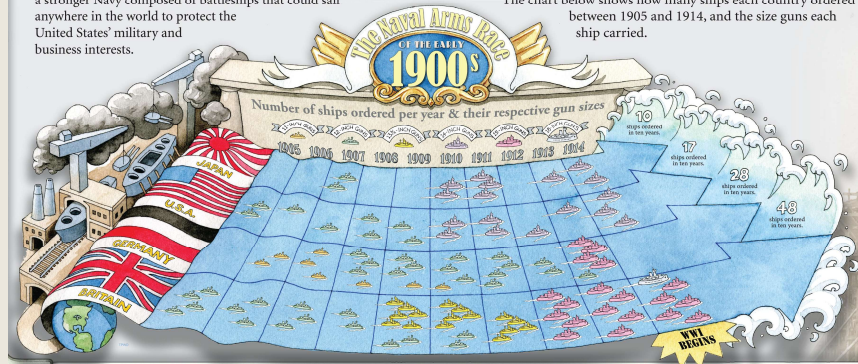Comal River Crossing *(Courtesy of TxDOT)*

Charts, Graphs and Tables

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

Images of Documents

Texas State Cemetery

Images of Documents

During World War II, 100 Chinese military officers, fluent in English, came to America to serve as interpreters for Chinese pilots training for a top-secret mission. The FAB (Foreign Affairs Bureau)-100 were sent to military bases across America, and Kwei "Duke" Tu (on the right) was one of the officers sent to Bergstrom Army Air Field in Austin.

Austin's First Chinese Draftee To Leave Today

Justice of Peace Also Included In Induction Group

Austin's first Chinese registrant will leave with 35 other selectees of Travis county Friday at 2:30 p. m. for the induction center at Fort Sam Houston to begin one year of military training under the nation's selective service law.

He is Chew Ah Leung* 33-year-old cook at Sam Wah cafe, 223 Congress avenue, who holds order No. 483. Chew was born in Canton, China, in 1907, but he has been in the United States since 1924 and has filed declaration of intention to become a citizen.

Another registrant leaving for the induction center Friday is Mace Baxter Thurman, Jr. Justice of the peace, Travis county, for Precinct 3, Place 2. Thurman announced that he will wait until his acceptance is announced before making any statement relative to his civil office here.
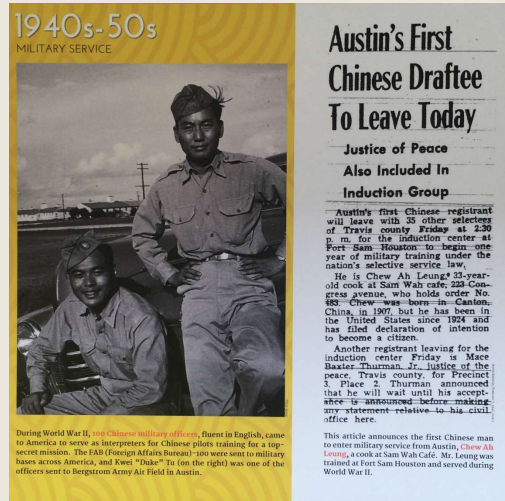
This article announces the first Chinese man to enter military service from Austin, Chew Ah Leung, a cook at Sam Wah Café. Mr. Leung was trained at Fort Sam Houston and served during World War II.

Asian American Resource Center in Austin, TX

Images of Documents
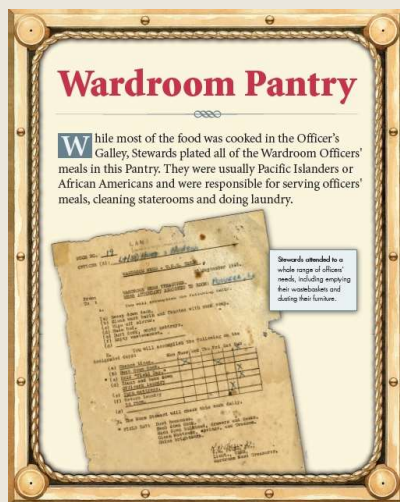
Wardroom Pantry

While most of the food was cooked in the Officer's Galley, Stewards plated all of the Wardroom Officers' meals in this Pantry. They were usually Pacific Islanders or African Americans and were responsible for serving officers' meals, cleaning staterooms and doing laundry.

Stewards attended to a whole range of officers' needs, including emptying their wastebaskets and dusting their furniture.

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

8/20/2020

Photographs: The Basics

(Courtesy of Historic New England)

Photographs: The Basics

(Courtesy of Tech Radar)
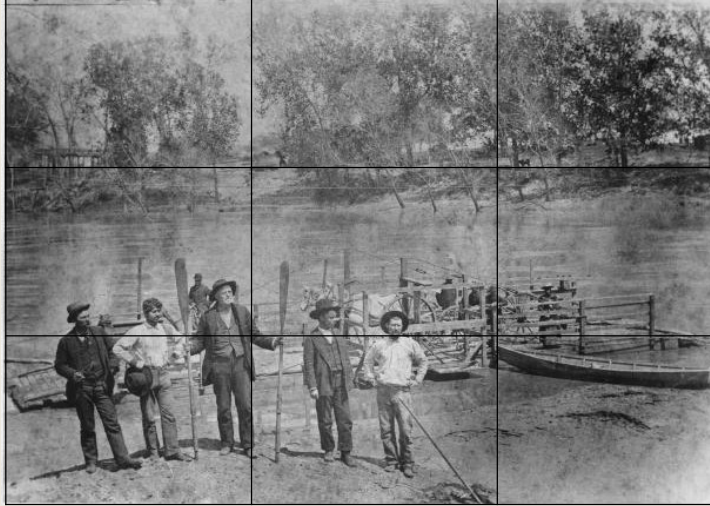
9

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)
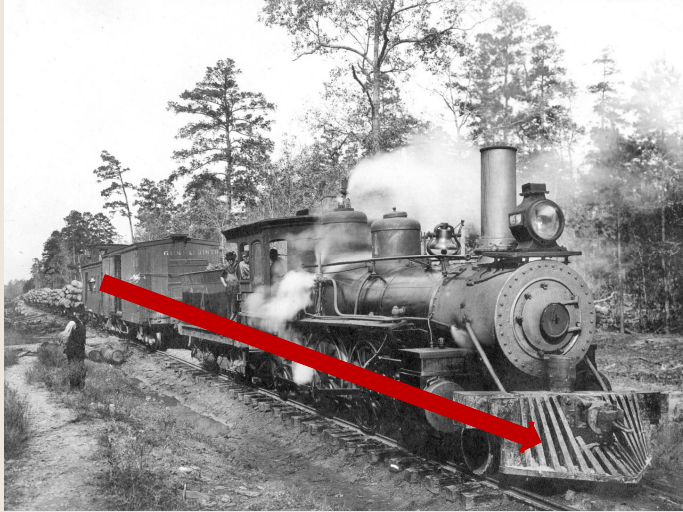
Photographs: The "Rule" of Thirds

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

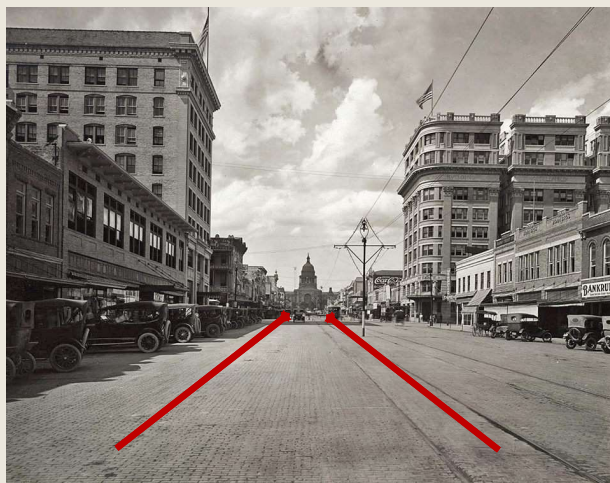# Photographs: The "Rule" of Thirds

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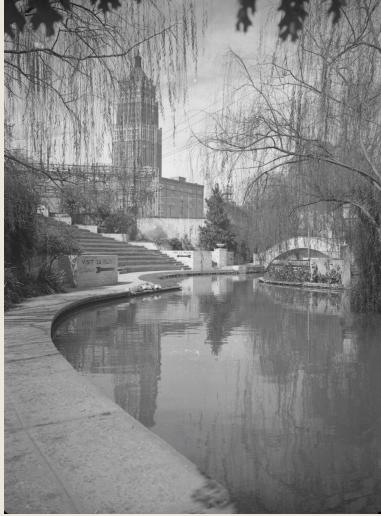
Photographs: Lines and Movement

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

Photographs: Lines and Movement

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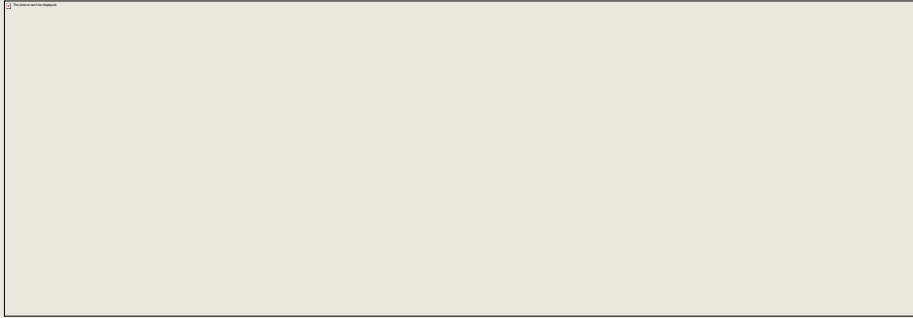
Photographs: Lines and Movement

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

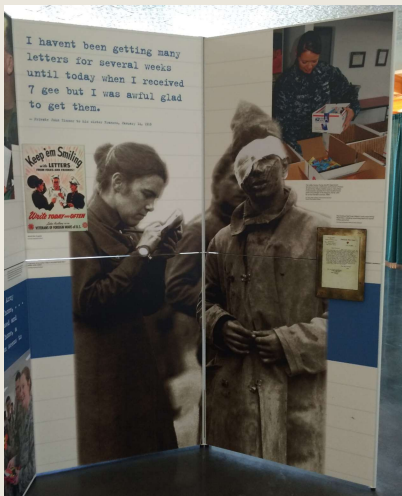# Photographs: Action Images

(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.
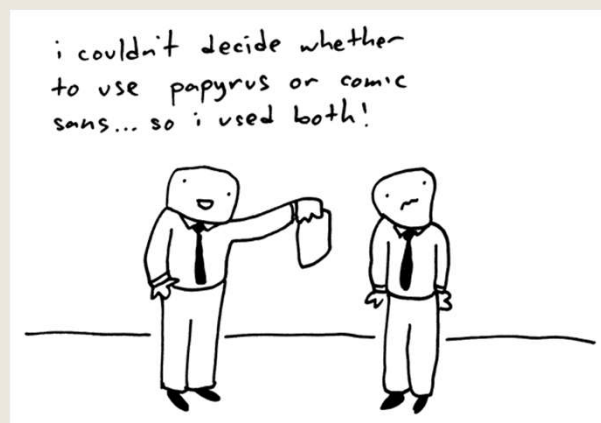
Fonts: Less Readable
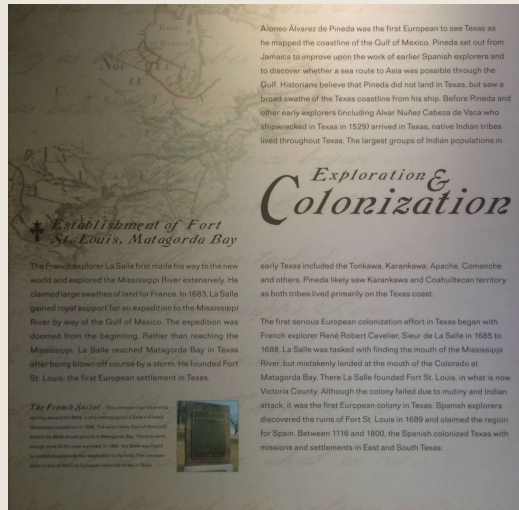
Texas State Cemetery *(Courtesy of State Preservation Board)*
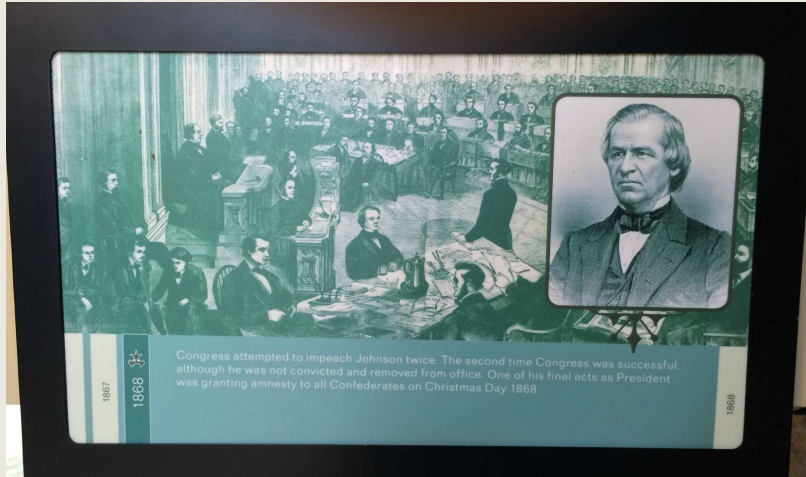
Fonts:
Overused Fonts

- Comic Sans
- Papyrus

Looking for an alternative font? I often use www.dafontfree.net 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)*
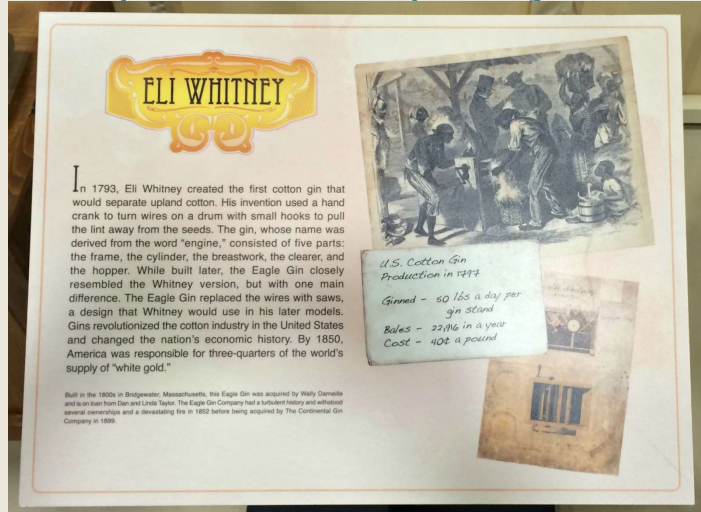
Composition: Image Orientation

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

Bayer Museum of Agriculture

Composition: Capacity

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: