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Print Design Project

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Book Title:

A Concise History of the American Republic, Second Edition: Volume I to 1877

Objective:

To redesign an existing book that incorporated poor design principles and images

Instructional Problem Being Addressed:

- If I were the one diagnosing the issues with the instructional content of the book, it would stem from the lack of imagination and current design criteria used to layout the text.
- This text also lacks any type of summarization at the end of chapters and no assessments or additional resources for the reader to use in conjunction with this text.
- Even though this book was produced in the 1980's, there is little thought given to experience of the student reading other than providing facts of American History during a specific time period.
- Each chapter has numerous sub sections within the chapter but the reader only has the table of contents to assist in referencing the pages.

Intended Audience:

High school audience taking history class (estimated age of student being between (14-17)

Purpose of the Instructional Material:

To inform students of American history in a learning environment that would induce retention of specific facts and an ability to articulate what he/she has learned through projects/papers. It would also prepare students for future classes that expand upon the information contained within this text. Due to the period of time covered in text, the student would only receive highlights of specific periods in American History from its beginning until 1877. Text position, choice of colors and ease of reading are vitally important to this redesign.

Rationale for Design Choices:

The main reason I chose to redesign this textbook was because it lacked basic formatting. I wanted to show that with an introduction of color, intelligent placement of images, standardizing body text and a creating a theme; I could entice the reader to become more interested in the content being presented thus enhancing the learning experience.

Sample Pages:

- Table of Contents
- Chapter Title Page (sections in this case)
- Instructional Page
- Chapter of Section Summary (does not currently exist)
- Index

CRITERIA

CLARITY

(likely to be comprehended clearly)

If I can't read it than why would I want to read it? I usually have a simple rule when it comes to reading textbooks and that is: If I get easily distracted when reading a book, than something can be improved in its design. My main goal was to keep the student stimulated through repetitive design elements, fun colors and interesting graphics. By taking away the "grey" pages of the old book, it was my hope to increase the comprehension by a measurable sum.

COLOR

(appropriate, supports media and content purpose)

Everybody has their favorite color and mine happens to be green and blue. My bias shows up in my redesign but there are other reasons why the color I chose plays a significant role with the design. I decided to use tertiary colors because of the larger color palette but stayed close enough to the primary color so as to have a sense of familiarity to the reader. Another very effective use of colors is to adjust it shades and tints. The immediate positive results have to do with not confusing the user with too many pure colors, also giving the reader an ability to connect parts of the information being covered even if it is not on the same page, and finally allowing a smooth flow to be used throughout a single section or entire book.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- **Contrast** – in all my years of design, nothing has been more effective to creating stunning layouts than the use of contrast. People tend to think that means making things bold, which is not entirely wrong. It is my belief that contrast is the effective use of positive and negative space. Notice how I did not say black and white space. With colors and unformatted page spaces becoming more popular with the advances in layout software, thinking in such archaic terms of black and white will only limit a designer's options for creating effective designs. You can see a perfect example of this in my redesign by contrasting shades of color and blocks of space in the layout.
- **Repetition** – it is funny to watch a beginner work with designing software because the options seem as endless as the rules they follow when creating documents and I was no exception during my first days as a designer. The biggest challenge we face is to overuse different fonts and make every page have its own personality. Remember, our job as designers is to make an effective use of space so that we stimulate the reader to actually look at the pages with content on them and learn something. I usually limit my fonts for any project to three varieties. Normally I have a true serif and sans serif with a transitional font that seems to float somewhere in the middle. I than use variations of all those fonts throughout my designs. Proper headers and footers are instrumental to having a successful textbook as it assists the reader in locating and relocating information. Any learner will have to revisit certain pages in a book and if I can help them by using repetition of design, I will.
- **Alignment** – remember the days when you would color something and never leave the boundaries of the lines? Well that same behavior seems to carry over to designers who don't have formal training. Alignment of objects, texts and images don't need to be created by drawing boxes. The shape any of these elements can determine to look of a

page in a book. Simple alignment issues can cause serious irritations to the reader. A simple miscue in lining up a title to the body text can seem like an itch you can't scratch. Anytime you put two design elements next to or on the same page you create specific lines that are assumed and this creates a style that should be thematic if it is going to be used throughout the book. A page of design needs to breathe just like a living creature. If it seems clustered than the reader can react in a negative way and maybe miss some important parts that were necessary to effective retention of the material.

- **Proximity** – If I told you that **living far away** was tough for our relationship, imagine what **living too close** to one another would feel like. Just as in relationships that people experience, rules for boundaries and proximity must be established in design. As a designer, having a critical eye for space is an attribute that many employers seek out. Proximity gives order to a design and establishes a mood that gives the reader a preview of the type of content being expressed so intellectual connections can be established. It was simple for me to apply a grouping pattern throughout my redesign so areas of importance could be highlighted without actually using a highlighter to call out to the reader. If you take a closer look at business cards that are in your wallet, the good ones will have an order to them that shows relevance to the information being provided.

LAYOUT DESIGN

(effectiveness)

The fact of the matter for any textbook is to put all the important information needed for the student to learn in an easy to use and comprehend layout. Basic design principles, such as spacing and flow are critical to keeping the attention of the learner. If you don't understand your audience (in this case high school students), the chances for ineffective design solutions increases dramatically. Even though I did not have time to analyze my audience, my prior knowledge along with viewing current textbooks, gave me enough critical data to complete the redesign of the history book.

LEGIBILITY FOR USE

(size, clarity, etc.)

The book originally had a difficult time maintaining any layout consistency so my first goal was to "clean up" the design. Picking a legible font such as Times New Roman for the body text was important because it is widely considered a legible font for long reads and the reader is familiar with the font. I had to introduce negative and positive space as well to let the book breathe. How can you expect a student to go through 400 pages if each page is choked with excessive text and little to no imagery or color? The other two fonts that I used interchangeably were Verdana and Constantia, a true serif and sans serif font. The Index was also disorganized but by simply adding white space, structure and large letters to set off each part, I was able to provide more clarity for people looking up locations for specific terms and words.

MOTIVATION

(likely to stimulate/ maintain interest)

I am a strong believer that color can stimulate learning and our readings back up my assumption about its effectiveness. Instead of using shades of grey, I thought it would better serve my audience to establish a playful color wheel that could be utilized throughout the book. By using a "cool" color scheme it was possible to saturate entire pages with color while maintaining the importance of the text because cool colors are mainly background filler and do not overpower

the eyes of the reader. By not overcrowding pages and using white space effectively, my readers should stay interested longer and not suffer eye fatigue. Also, the breaking down of sections and further breaking them into smaller sections, I don't depress learning because the length of pages to be read during one setting is reduced which allows the reader to retain more information in their LTM and WM.

NAVIGATIONAL HELPS

(table of contents, glossary, index, buttons, menu, etc.)

The first thing someone using this book will do is look at the table of contents. The older version was poorly organized and cluttered making the book disinteresting. My first goal was to introduce energetic color schemes and creating sections (parts) that allowed for quicker navigation to appropriate areas in the book. There was also a lack of useful headers, footers and page numbering. As a solution, I created a consistent theme to all three navigational features that gave the reader up to date information no matter what page they were currently reading.

COGNITIVE LEARNING AIDS

(overview, cues, summary, chapter review, etc.)

There were two main areas in which learning aids could be applied effectively in my redesign. The first was in the beginning of each section, where I labeled clearly the sub-sections with appropriate page numbers to follow more easily and color coded it to reference to table of contents. Secondly, I created a chapter review/summary that will close of each sub-section but still allow the reader an opportunity to apply what he/she has read with questions. I also added an online resources section to assist the reader in learning more by using the internet.

TECHNICAL QUALITY AND USABILITY

(easy to read, free of flaws, easy to use, etc)

Since the biggest problem was usability, I feel my redesign tackled those issues by using the design principles. A lot of textbooks now have online resources developed by the publishing company where the designer and author(s) of the book work together in choosing what could be put online or on a CD for the students to enhance learning. There is a simple design process that was used in the redesign that I chose to use called the Z layout. A readers eye tends to look over a page of text in the shape of a Z so putting important information along that path creates and easier to read and more effective textbook.

REALISM AND ACCURACY

(represents real item effectively)

The end product is a textbook so it should look and feel like a textbook. What does that mean and how do you carry out that process? Well, the first step is in the research of the material and gathering content (including images). The second step is collaborating with a team of professionals to decide the goals and objectives of making a history textbook. I could keep going on about a process but looking over the Systems Approach Model for instructional design lays out a good blueprint of the steps that are typical in such an endeavor. For me, I decided to use examples from current textbooks and memory recall from when I was a student taking a similar course. There is no reason to reinvent the wheel for this redesign but updates from a design point of view were mandatory in order to get the student to believe its importance strictly from a visual standpoint.

REFERENCES

(complete and up-to-date)

An issue that would result in having this textbook updated is in its content being correct or out of date. Typically authors will release different editions with updates so this does not become an issue. However, books that have already been printed and are still being used should have a standardized shelf life before being pulled from academia circles. My redesign is a perfect example of a book that needed to be brought back in for updates. Not only is it visually unappealing, it lacks any historical updates that have been uncovered since its original publishing date.

READING and VOCABULARY LEVEL

(aligns with audience description, content appropriate for level)

Even though the content was provided from the original text, it is still important to review any information to gauge its effectiveness with the current audience. What might have worked a generation ago, might now be so outdated that it actually depresses learning. If I rewrote the book at a graduate level and then gave it to a 15 year old, what should I expect as an outcome? History books tend to use verbiage that dates to the time of the historical event and though it is nice to pronounce, what does it do to the learner if he/she has to look up a word every 15 minutes. This book is not different and I might find it wise to send it back for editing.

SPECIAL FEATURES

(list and describe any special features of the media)

There were no special areas in the book to test retention, offer summaries or additional resources. A book does not have to simply be full of text that includes headers, sub headers and body text. Links to other resources, enhanced graphics and a multimedia feel to the design are key to the reader retaining the material inside the pages of the book. The attention span of my audience is already limited due to many factors so competing for their time is already difficult enough.

VISUALS

(relevant to objectives and content, follows design guidelines, verbal information aligns, etc.)

The original textbook was in black and white, which may have been because of financial restrictions but introducing color into the updated version was necessary in my mind. My audience is not used to viewing anything in grey tones anymore, even the newspapers are color so why force them to be miserable reading something they probably don't have an interest in looking at anyway. Even though my sample pages limit the amount of images and visuals, I hope you get an idea of how they will play a role throughout the textbook. It was also important for me to have a style that held form during the entire book. From the cover, to the index, the reader should feel that it all connects together in design and content.

BIAS AND/OR CULTURE

(free of objectionable bias, appropriate for many cultures)

This was a tricky issue because the book is specific to the audience and not necessarily laid out or written in a culturally sensitive way. I kept away from designing anything with gender biases such as color selection or placement of text. Since I don't have the ability or technical knowhow to look over all the content, it would be unreasonable to think I could update the content to be more culturally sensitive. The largest influence I have in reaching these goals is in the imagery selected to represent the text throughout the book.

