



PURPOSE: WHAT'S YOURS?

As William Morris once said, "If you want a golden rule that will fit everything, this is it: Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful." Though Morris spoke of houses, we also want our library patrons to feel at home in our libraries. The question is, how do we get them into the library?

Successful signage can play a critical role in gaining the attention of the public, informing them of the fantastic programs we offer, and having them walk through our doors curious and ready to be inspired.

The true purpose of a sign is to convey information. The problem is that most signs look like every other sign and create "bulletin board syndrome." Fifty pieces of paper become a blur. People take no notice. Studies show that the visual attention span of the average person is about 10 quick seconds, and this number continues to dwindle as we, as a culture, become more visually stimulated by technology.

Therefore, we need to grab the public's attention and interest immediately. Your signage must have an instant torpedo effect with basic information and a succinct theme.

HEY!!!! STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD (LITERALLY)

Most signage is a flat, 8 ½ x 11 piece of paper with way too much information. Today, we are going to learn how to change that. We are going to simplify our information and make it literally stand out off the wall. It doesn't take much more time, and the investment in materials is negligible.

VISUALIZE: THINK OF INFORMATION AS AN OBJECT

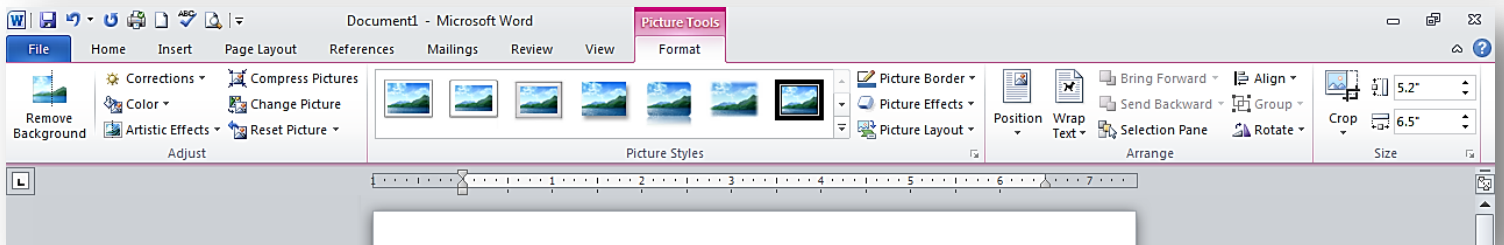
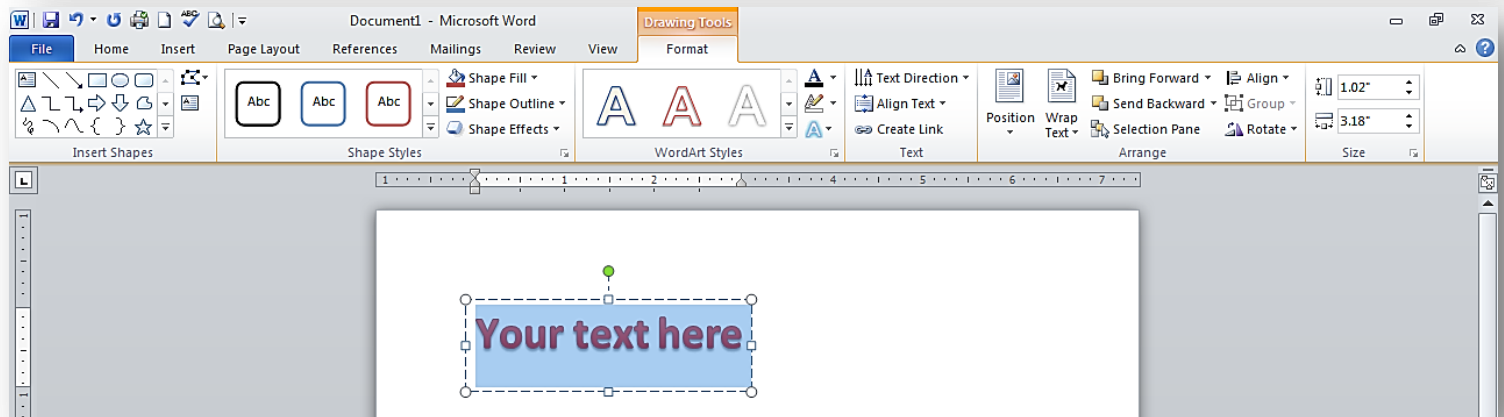
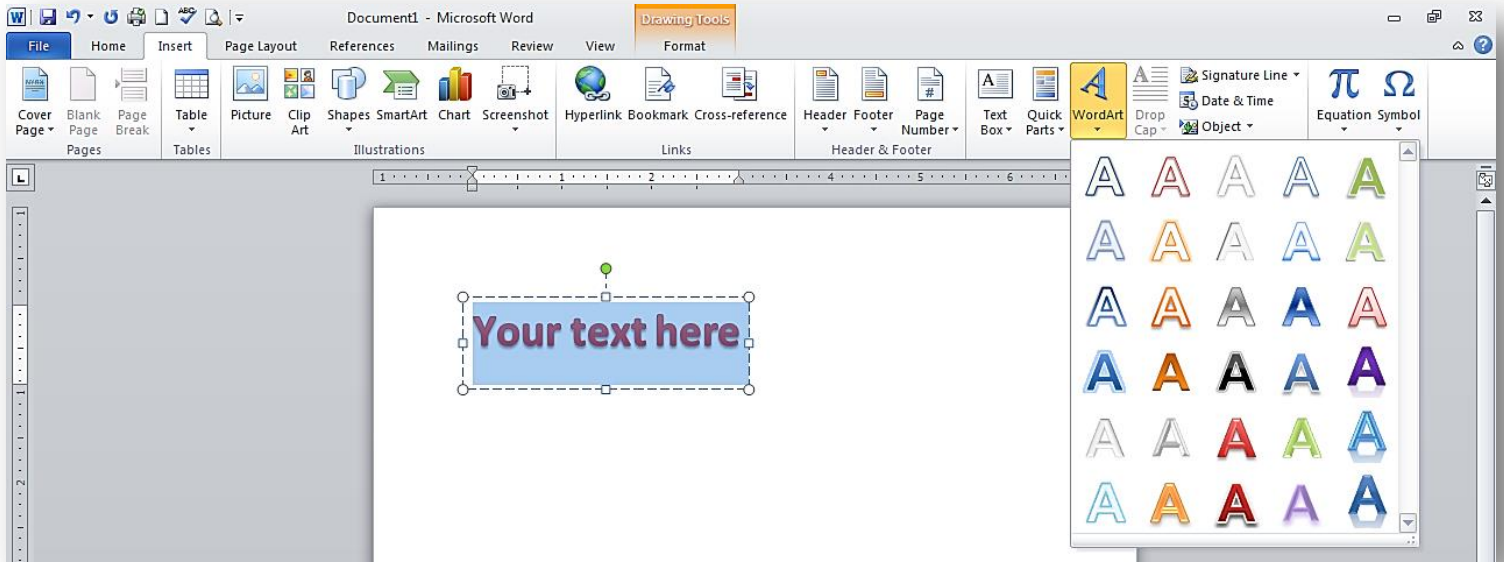
You must change the way you think about signage. We all learn differently, but today we have to think visually. Transform the words you want to convey into an object. Put yourself in the shoes of the public. Imagine them pondering your library's hours. What image might trigger "time" for them? Perhaps a clock? What is key to Story Hour? A storybook, of course! Have some new technology? Show what you have by offering a 3D version of it, made from paper and foamcore. Just remember, we need to SIMPLIFY. If there are three or four or twelve objects that you associate with the topic, you don't need to use them all. Less is more. Use the most universally accepted image. Quiz your coworkers: *What do you think of when I say _____?* You may be surprised by the answers.

IMAGINATION IS YOUR ONLY LIMITATION

There is no limit to our imagination. Only our budgets. We can create anything we want to, go as far as we desire, go big or go home. Just remember Fire Code. We are working with paper materials after all!

WORD. NO FANCY DESIGN PROGRAM REQUIRED

What do you mean you don't have Photoshop or InDesign or some other highfalutin, high priced design program!?! No problem! You can use any version of Microsoft Word out there.



FONTS: DON'T BE AFRAID TO USE THEM

Fonts are not the enemy! Many signs are stuck in Default Calibri-Font-land. We want these signs to stand out! Show your creativity! Download free fonts from the internet from sites like www.dafont.com. Go Steampunk or Retro. Just make sure the letters can be easily read.

Once you design your sign, print off a draft. Stand back ten feet and see if you can still read it. If not, change the font or increase the font size.

Another trick you can use to make signs more readable and give your signage more attention-grabbing power is putting spaces in between each letter. Here's an example:

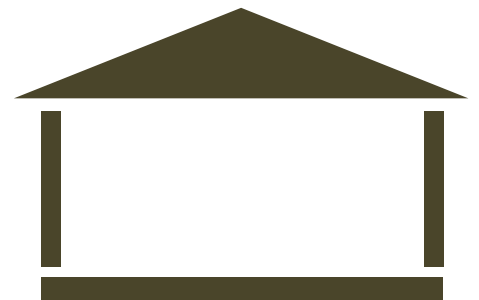
PIONEER LIBRARY SYSTEM

vs.

P I O N E E R L I B R A R Y S Y S T E M

ARCHITECTURE REQUIRES A STRONG FOUNDATION

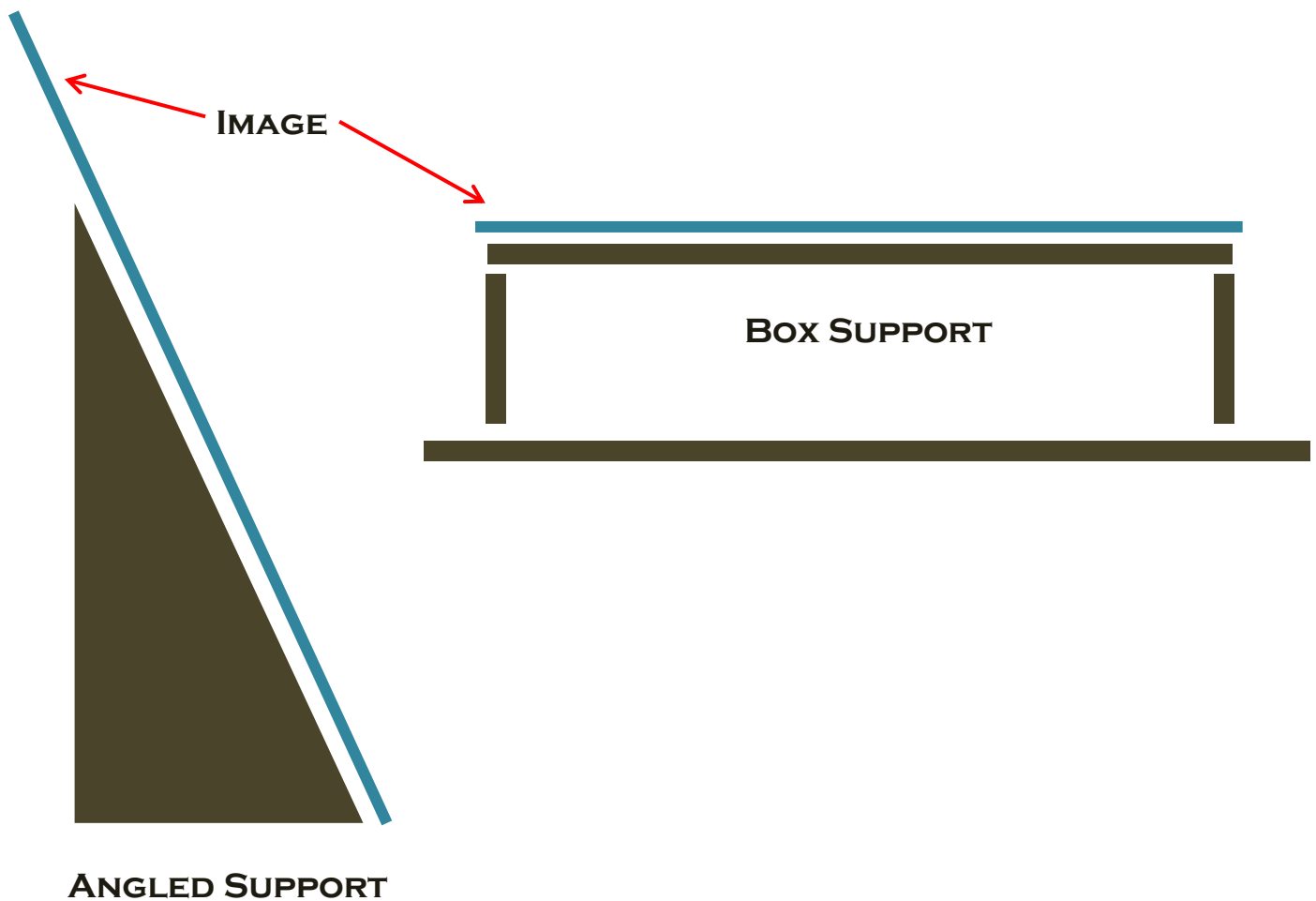
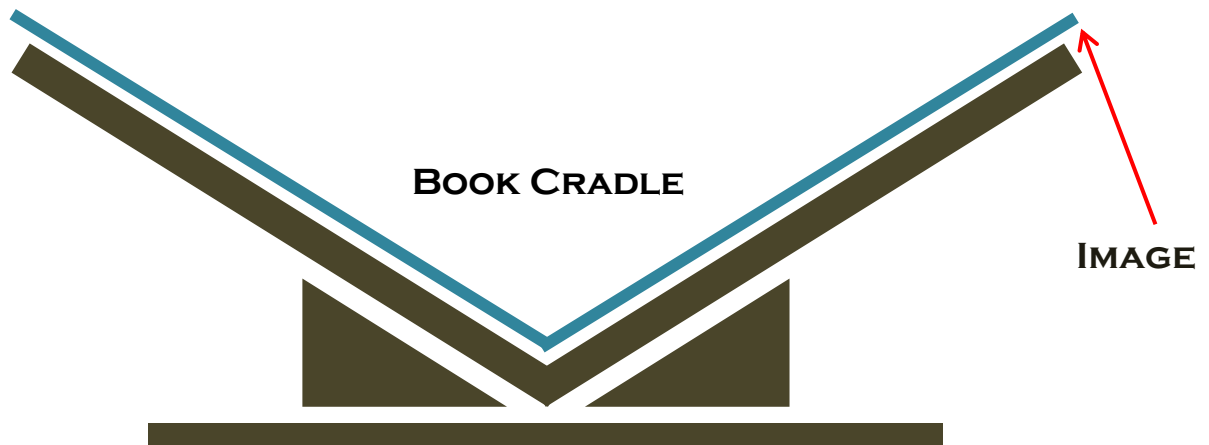
When contemplating your three dimensional signage, think about how your home is built. Unless you live in a really cool hobbit house or the mushroom house in Perinton, you most likely have a home that is made up of basic shapes and angles: squares, rectangles and triangles. There are vertical supports, a horizontal foundation, and some combination of angles on the roof.



A house cannot stand without walls and proper construction, and you must also use the correct materials to build strong and long lasting supports. Use the heavier WHITE AND IVORY CARDSTOCK when printing your images, as standard copier paper tends to 'cockle,' or wrinkle and warp. BLACK FOAMCORE is preferable to white for its strength, aesthetic, and ease of use. POLYVINYLACETATE (PVA) ADHESIVE is preferable to Elmer's glue. You can buy this at your average craft store. PVA is stronger, has a faster tack, dries clear, and isn't as runny as Elmer's. DOUBLE-SIDED TAPE ensures your projects come together. 3M's 1/4" double-sided tape is the very best for these projects, but you can also use your average over-the-counter double-sided tape. Unless you're in a real pinch, please, oh please, do not make folded over loops to stick your images onto the foamcore. It makes the signage lumpy and unprofessional.

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL PROGRAMMING

Here are some of the shapes you will use in your three dimensional signage. Remember, we are looking at these shapes from the side. This is how they would be glued together:



PLAN: KNOW YOUR PATH BEFORE STARTING THE JOURNEY

First, ask yourself, *whose attention am I trying to capture?* The answer should rarely be ‘everyone.’ Determine your target audience, what their average age is, and what will grab their attention. Visualize your signage hanging on the wall. *What do you want to make?* Sketch it out. Look at your lighting; *will there be a glare or dark shadows?* If so, change the angle. *How high will it be hung?* Determine the angle you need so that the viewer can see the signage at its best (and age appropriate) height. Think about the shape and size of your image. *Would the book cradle, angled support, or box support work the best for displaying the image?*

Think about the weight of the final signage. You don’t want it to be so big that the wall cannot support it. Think about how you will attach the signage to the wall. If you are attaching it with glue or small tacks, remember that all attachments have their limits, and it’s no fun to find your beautiful sign on the floor the next morning. Unfortunately, this is often a live-and-learn concept that is gained through experience. Play with your scrap pieces and see what works and what doesn’t. I guarantee that an 8 ½ x 11 piece of foamcore with a book cradle attached will NOT remain attached to the wall for very long if adhered with standard double-sided tape. Use glue or T-pins for larger, heavier projects.

TOOLS IN YOUR THREE DIMENSIONAL ARSENAL

FOAMCORE: 32 x 40 sheets, 3/16" thick. Buy a box of 25 sheets from The Art Store at Southtown Plaza in Henrietta for \$120. It will last you for years unless you are really ambitious on a large scale. Cooperate with other PLS Libraries and split the cost. Five libraries dividing the carton evenly (five sheets each) is a great start at \$24 per library.

CARDSTOCK: Staples is a great source for under \$10, or bring a 40% off coupon to Michaels for a real bargain. Keep the color light, like white or ivory, because you will be printing in color. Images will not pop! if printed on darker paper.

COLOR PRINTER: Don't have one? Outsource a few images for under a dollar at Staples, Kinkos, or UPS-type places.

DOUBLE-SIDED TAPE: 3M 1/4" #415 double-sided tape is dreamy to work with. It is a bit costly at about \$8 per 36 ft. roll, but it's worth every penny. Get it from www.talasonline.com. Please get it. You won't regret it. If you end up riddled with regret, I'll buy it from you.

SCALPEL AND BLADES: Scalpels are preferred to X-acto knives in the realm of foamcore. Scalpels have thinner, sharper blades and do not tear up the foamcore like the X-acto knives. Look for a #4 handle for under \$4. You'll also need a box of #25 blades (100/box) for about \$25. Both of these can also be found at www.talasonline.com. *Always* use a sharp blade to protect both you and the signage. If the paper is tearing or the foam of the foamcore is buckling, your blade is too dull.

CUTTING MAT: Any cutting mat will do from a craft store. It's nice to have one that is at least 18" x 24" to accommodate the larger signage. If push comes to shove, cut on a piece of wood or a 1" stack of flat newspaper. These will both dull your blade much faster than a cutting mat, however.

SCISSORS: Any old scissors are fine, as long as they are sharp and not covered with tape or glue or your child's popsicle juice.

RULER: While an 18" metal ruler is the very best, a standard 12" metal straightedge will do. Please make sure the ruler is metal because the scalpels are very sharp and will slide right into plastic.

MEASURE TWICE. CUT ONCE.

Before you cut anything, look again where you are going to put the signage. Did you measure correctly? Will it fit? Do you have the appropriate materials in stock? Did the image print properly? I repeat, did you measure correctly?

STAY SHARP (AND KEEP YOUR SCALPEL SHARP, TOO)

Are both your mind and your scalpel sharp? Stay alert and please watch your fingers. They are really important. Just a digression: the absolute best way to get blood out of your clothing is to spit on it. Rub it into the stain while it's wet. The enzymes in your saliva, and only *your* saliva, will break down the blood, and you can wash it right out with water. But you won't need that advice... right?

IMAGE IS EVERYTHING

Forget the white space around the image. Forget all the busy-ness that is happening around the focus of your image. Trim right up to the edge of the image. It looks much more professional, and we want to keep our viewers' eyes on the prize.

DETAILS: A SHARPIE IS YOUR FRIEND. A HOT MESS IS NOT.

You're about to construct some fantastic signage. Let's make it shine. Trim fuzzy paper edges and keep them clean. That white cardstock you printed on has white edges, so take a matching colored Sharpie and drag it around the edge of your image to make the white disappear. The brightest color in your signage will be the one that captures your viewers' attention, and we don't want that to be the white line of the cardstock. It might be a thin line, but leaving the edge of the cardstock white is like handing it a blow horn.

SCRAP! THROW NOTHING AWAY

Remember how I said that a carton of foamcore would last you for years? That's because I recommend saving every single scrap of foamcore unless it is smaller than your finger. Even the tiniest piece can become a small triangular support or be used to bump the image off the wall. Just keep a box for scraps. It's extremely economical. And have fun!