

The Stages and Rhetorical Choices of Creating a Digital Document

Creating a digital document is very similar to creating a document on paper. When creating a paper, we've often been taught to have an outline, a draft, and a finished paper. We have also been told to keep rhetoric in mind, like who our audience is and how and if we are going to persuade them. This is also true for the digital elements of your work. Here are a few stages and questions to keep in mind as you construct your project in a digital medium.

Planning Stage

This stage of developing your project begins when you decide on a thesis for your project. Identical to writing a traditional academic paper, you'll need to consider your claims and what research you can find to back them up. In a digital project, design elements can also help to support your thesis. This stage is when you really consider the content of your project.

Questions to consider during this stage include:

- What platform would best carry your message?
- What are the costs and benefits of that medium?
- What metaphorical representations could you use in your visuals?
- How might the visuals you choose harm or boost your credibility?
- How much of an emotional appeal should your design have? How transparent should you be about your interest in this subject?

Drafting Stage

The drafting stage is all about putting your ideas into action. This is where you will incorporate research you've found that support your claims, and organize your points into the most logical order. This stage is a good place to start tinkering with your digital medium (InDesign, Spark, or Premiere) and getting all of your visual ideas onto the screen. Be sure to arrange all of your design elements with intent in mind and don't be afraid to pull out a piece of paper and draw your design out.

- What keywords would be necessary for someone to find your project?
- How can you connect all these smaller elements into a larger whole?
- How can you visually represent actions or states of being?
- When would you use graphs or charts versus stylized images?
- How could you represent the people, locations and objects present in your message in a visual format? What elements do you want to draw the audience into?

Finishing Stage

The finishing stage is all about sharpening grammar, checking sources and works cited, and making sure you have a strong and impactful conclusion. In a digital document, this consists of adjusting sizes, adding picture captions, or moving a picture frame ever so slightly in one direction. You'll also want to consider how your works cited will be reflected in your digital space.

- What could you do to make the project more interactive?
- How would you represent your own connection to the message?
- How can you incorporate your sources into your visual projects?
- How might the iconic representations or the distance between your elements reflect the ideas and relationships being presented?

Questions provided by Ashton Corsetti, "The Verbal and the Visual" pg. 15.