

Principles of Graphic Design

Pat Morin
COMP 2405

Principles Graphic Design

- Basic graphic design principles can be summarized in one word:
- CRAP:
 - Contrast
 - Repetition
 - Alignment
 - Proximity
- Focus (here) is on text

Contrast

- Contrast: When two elements are not *exactly the same*, they should be *very different*
 - Otherwise it just looks like a mistake
- With text, contrast can be achieved through
 - Font size: small, medium, **large**
 - Font family: serif, sans-serif, *curative*, monospace, σψμβολ
 - Font weight: light, normal, **bold**
 - Font style: oblique, normal, *italic*
 - Font decoration: none, underline, shadow,
- We can also use text and/or background color

Contrast (Cont'd)

- Contrast can be used to separate different parts of a document (e.g., navigation vs. content)
- Contrast can be used to aid the user in navigation (e.g., section headings)
- In the best case, weak contrast is not noticeable
- In the worst case, it just looks bad
 - User's Name: Patrick Morin
 - User's Location: 5177 Herzberg Building

Repetition

- Styles and visual elements should be repeated across a page and across a web site
- Leads to a cohesive and consistent web site
- Repetition can be achieved with
 - Text (font) properties: Use these the same way throughout
 - Color: Consistent use of color throughout the site/document
 - Background: Background images/colors
 - Page and section layout: Similar elements should be laid out the same way
 - Images: Graphics can be repeated and/or styled similarly
 - Alignment: Consistent use of alignment

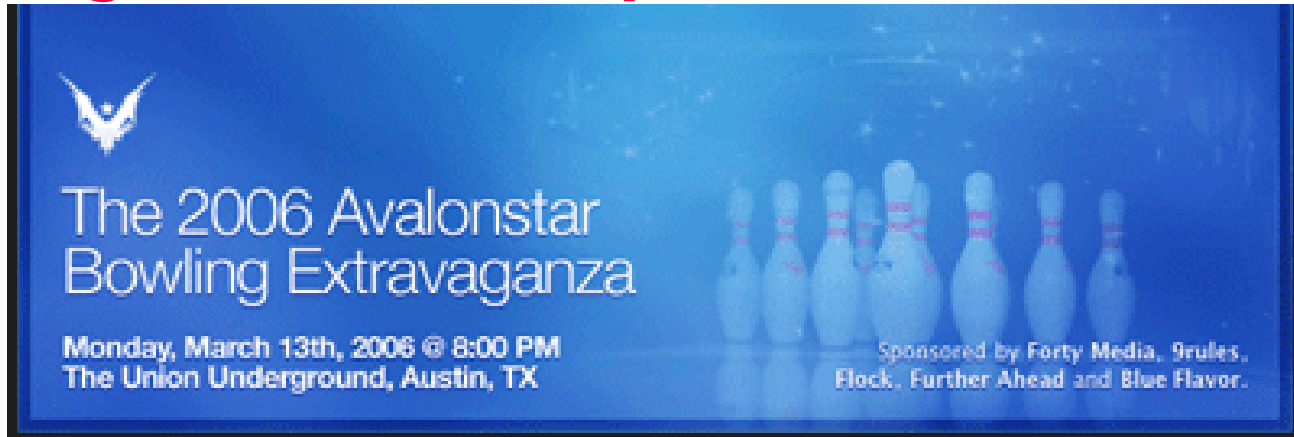
Repetition (Cont'd)

- Repetition lets a user know that they are still on the same web site
- Repetition allows a visitor to learn the page (or section) layout only once
- Another form of repetition: Web design patterns

Alignment

- Our minds like to imagine straight line grids when look at things
- We like to see things line up
- We can't stand to see things that almost – but don't quite – line up
- We also like to see equal distances
 - This is a technique called symmetric spacing
- Things that are not aligned get treated differently
 - Navigation bar text vs. body text

Alignment - Example



Proximity

- Proximity (closeness of objects) can be used to group related items together
 - Section heading close to section text
 - Figure caption close to figure
- Distance can be used to visually separate unrelated items
 - Extra space before section heading separates it from previous section
 - Extra space before and after figures separate them from text and other figures

CRAP Summary

- Contrast
 - When things are different make them very different
 - Can be used to guide the reader's focus
- Repetition
 - Repetition creates a sense of cohesion and consistency
- Alignment
 - Alignment is critical for good looking web pages
 - Small alignment problems can make a whole page look bad
- Proximity
 - Closeness and distance can be used to group related items and separate unrelated items, respectively