

Memo

To: Dr. Karen Kuralt
From: Stephanie Williams
Date: July 2, 2018
Re: Design Memo for Portfolio Project 1 – Redesigned Resume

Introduction and Purpose

Portfolio Project 1 is my redesigned resume. One of our first weekend projects for this course was to redesign a resume using the techniques we'd learned from the readings/video tutorials. We were given several resumes from which to choose, and I lamented a bit that I'd really like to redesign my own resume instead. So, I decided to do just that for the final portfolio.

The purpose of a resume is to get noticed, to get enough attention to warrant a call for an interview. Generally, therefore, readers will be prospective employers. However, resumes can also be included in professional portfolios and/or digital platforms as a way of providing additional information to prospective clients.

In the past several years, I've submitted a resume for a number of full-time teaching positions. In some cases, I have known members of the search committee (i.e., those who would be screening resumes); in others, I didn't know a single person at the institution. Regardless of the situation, I have not been able to procure a full-time position, or even get the opportunity for a face-to-face interview.¹ (Now, as an aside, I know a major issue is the lack of graduate English hours; hence why I am in this program). I cannot help but presume that my resume lacks that special something to garner further opportunity. Hopefully, I've added that "special something."

¹ I know a major issue is the lack of graduate English hours; hence why I am in this program. Also, I'll take this opportunity to point out that I'll be using footnotes rather than an end-of-text source list because I believe footnotes are more appropriate to the memo format.

Description of the User and Readers/Potential Employers

Because this is my own resume, I wanted to reflect some of my personality in the document while still ensuring that it achieves its purpose. I did this by adding a photo and selecting colors that compliment/coordinate with the photo. I'll discuss this in more detail in the Design Rationale section below.

In my experience submitting resumes for full-time teaching positions, the demographics of the readers can vary widely – ranging in age from late 30s and older, identifying as male or female or other, and representing a vast sampling of ethnicities. The only “common denominator” is education level – primarily, though not exclusively, doctorate-level university professors. These readers need to see two things very quickly: prior teaching experience and highest degree received.

Description of the Context and Design Constraints

The context for this document is that it will be submitted, typically in conjunction with additional materials (e.g., graduate transcripts, reference contacts, and teaching philosophy and/or portfolio samples), in response to public position posting. This means that my document has to stand out from the crowd, has to be the “one” or the “one of a few” that doesn't simply get deposited in File 86. Further, for me to have the opportunity to explain my background and experience makes me an ideal candidate for a full-time teaching position, my document has to survive the initial once-over.

Design Evolution and Rationale

Accompanying this Portfolio Project 1 are several early drafts, or “practice rounds.” For point of reference, I include the Weekend Project Redesign a Resume Assignment Instructions and the original resume I chose for that assignment along with my redesigned version which was submitted in week 1. The process of redesigning Bryan Talley's resume for that assignment (hereinafter, “Talley Resume”), coupled with the feedback I received from classmates, informed my redesign for this Portfolio Project 1.

Further, I include three prior drafts/versions of my own resume – from 2004, 2009, and 2018 (before beginning this program). In these prior versions, you can see a shift from the “one-page resume rule” to information overload. You should also notice changes in order/presentation of sections. This illustrates my attempts over the years to spotlight/start with what I deemed the most important information for the particular position I was seeking (i.e., the 2004 resume was directed toward legal employment).

As I set out to prepare this Portfolio Project 1, I essentially retraced the steps I took in creating the Talley Resume, while considering the peer feedback I received on that project.

I began by re-watching the “How to Design Your Resume for Maximum Impact” video², which details three main tips for resume redesign: (1) use color sparingly; (2) use innovative formatting; and (3) use two complimentary typefaces. This led me to search Google again using the keywords, “36 beautiful resumes,” as instructed by the video.

Next, I reviewed the “Teaching Text Design” article³ and my corresponding notes, paying particular attention to the portions on viewing the page as a grid. I also reviewed the “Putting Your Best Font Forward” article⁴, specifically the portion on line leading and using columns for shorter line length.

Finally, I went back through the Blackboard discussion forum corresponding to the Talley Resume to review any feedback provided on my design by classmates. I’ll now detail the elements more specifically:

Media choice (types of paper, print vs. online, etc.)

I used Microsoft Word to create this Portfolio Project 1 as a print resume. To prepare for submission, I would do one or both of the following: (1) print on high quality, slightly heavier stock paper for a more professional feel; or (2) convert to a PDF file for electronic submission. The unique design of the Portfolio Project 1 would not lend itself very well to be copied/pasted through an online form (that would require pure text, i.e., stripped formatting). In my experience, the majority of the postings I would be responding to would require a PDF file submission.

Size

The Portfolio Project 1 is a one-page resume. I removed excess wording, altered the layout and omitted some information to make this initial offering a one-page document. This was an intentional decision to put the most important information most innovatively to serve the purpose of getting attention and that ever-elusive callback without overwhelming the person already inundated with multiple submissions.

² “How to Design Your Resume for Maximum Impact.” *YouTube*, uploaded by John Heaney, 20 April 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0FLUJJxuxy0>.

³ Kramer, Robert, and Stephen A. Bernhardt. “Teaching Text Design.” *Technical Communication Quarterly*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1996, pp. 35-60.

⁴ Opsteegh, Michael R. “Putting Your Best Font Forward.” *Technical Communication Summit: STC’s 58th Annual Conference*, 15-18 May 2011, San Francisco, CA, Society for Technical Communication.

Use of Color and Graphics (Images)

The video referenced above recommends using two similar but distinct colors sparingly to create a “pop” of color and garner interest. Looking at the resume example results from my “36 beautiful resumes” Google search, I found one⁵ that had that “pop” of color and unique formatting that I believed I could modify to serve my purpose. The resume sample used two colors – shades of red and blue – along with a two-column design and a headshot.

While I liked the colors used there (and they do fit my personality), I knew I wanted to compliment the color in the headshot photo I planned to use, so I started looking for a color to accompany a pinkish/red hue. The video suggests using colorshemesdesigner.com; however, I have used colors.co⁶ before (for my platform/website colors, on which I use the same headshot) so I used it again. Ultimately, I landed on #FF5050 (RGB 255/80/80) for the pinkish/red and #4F81BD (RGB 79/129/189) for a complimentary blue.

The blue is similar to, but not exactly the same shade as the blue I used on the Talley Resume. Peer feedback indicated that the blue was professional but perhaps a little too bright. So, for Portfolio Project 1, I went with a slightly darker hue of blue.

I recently had professional photographs taken for my website, so I simply located the headshot file on my computer and sized it appropriately for the heading of the page (more on this below under Arrangement of Elements); it did not require any cropping/alteration.

Typography

“Teaching Text Design” discusses creating a typeset look through proportional fonts and spacing and creating a feel of consistency through the use of typestyle. The key is to use fonts that “go together” – meaning they have aesthetically complimentary x-heights and kerning and use style definitions (i.e., bold, italic, etc.) to create contrast without using an overwhelming number of differing fonts. The video practically recommends using two fonts – one for major headings and one for content – while applying those style differences to guide the reader. Using the video recommendations, I chose a sans serif font for the major headings (including my name and contact information at the top) and a serif font for the content:

⁵ Share, Jacob. “36 Beautiful Resumes That Work.” JobMob. 04 Mar. 2008.

<https://jobmob.co.il/blog/beautiful-resume-ideas-that-work/>. Specifically, see the resume of “Jonathan Carter” by scrolling a short way down the page. Clicking on the “Jonathan Carter” resume will open page offering a template for “paid members.” I, of course, did not purchase a template because I didn’t want to make mine look exactly the same; I was just looking for ideas/inspiration.

⁶ It’s one of the color scheme web apps that is recommended by Michael Hyatt.

At the top left, my first and last name are in Lucida Sans, point size 22 (in both chosen colors) to stand out and be the first words the reader notices. Top right, is my contact information in Lucida Sans, point size 14, with only the email address in color. I then carried the same font family, point size, and color throughout for the section headings.

All remaining text on the page is in Garamond, point size 12, with slight differences in style or color. Organization names (entry headers) are in bold, and dates are colored; while position/degree title and descriptions are in regular face.

The consistent contrast in typography (face, style, and color) creates a scannable document that allows me to maintain control over how the reader views the information, as recommended in "Teaching Text Design."

Arrangement of Elements

This perhaps was the most fun part of the work. Arranging the various elements – the type, the images, the lines, etc. – on the page is a bit like putting a puzzle together – but one where you don't want everything to fit snug because you want to purposefully use your white space.

"Teaching Text Design" talks about viewing the page as a grid and how shorter line lengths make important content easier to digest. "Putting Your Best Font Forward" reiterates this point and adds that proper/consistent line leading along with short line lengths are best for detailed text. Given these recommendations and the sample resume I was using for inspiration, I decided to implement a two-column structure for the main content of Portfolio Project 1.

Given the importance of the first impression created by a resume, I wanted to ensure all line spacing and column alignments did not get "bumped out of place." So, I used the table feature in Word to maintain control of lines, spacing, etc. Here's how I did that:

Peer feedback on the Talley Resume included that my design was more structured and balanced though at least one person questioned the table enclosures as creating a look that was too boxy. Keeping that in mind here, I used invisible gridlines on all tables.

The header of Portfolio Project 1 is a three-column table with invisible gridlines and $\frac{3}{4}$ -in-line border shading on the two internal borders only. My first and last name are left-center aligned in the first column, while my contact information is right-center aligned in the right column. A professional headshot is centered within the center cell.

I wanted to emulate the balanced look from the Talley Resume while still putting the most important information at the forefront – my teaching experience and my

education. So, I created a two-column table with multiple lines, invisible gridlines and the same border shading on the single internal border. I then matched the content across the two columns – employer to institution, date/title to date/degree, and description to description.

I repeated the same two-column table below and played around a bit with including other work experience, volunteer activities, and publications. However, none of the sections balanced with each other and, as one column, the remaining work experience kept spilling over to the next page. I had resolved to keep the design simple, clean and one-page only (see above). Therefore, I decided that other work experience was likely more important than the other sections (since I'm over 40 and have only been teaching about nine years – that'd leave a big unaccounted-for chunk of time off if I didn't include prior work history). Thus, I carried the prior work experience over the two columns and ended with a colored heading about additional information being available upon request.

After our Google Hangout meeting on Friday (June 29), I make minor edits to the final redesign per your suggestions – namely, adjusting cell padding to create a slightly larger gap between the red line and second column, and shortening the center red line between the bottom columns. I tried out right justifying the righthand column content but did not like the way it looked – it seemed to create chaos rather than balance.

Design Assessment

All in all, I'm glad that I chose to redesign my own resume for this Portfolio Project 1. However, I'm still not certain I'm satisfied with my design. I'm confident that I applied the techniques that we've learned about, and I personally am happy with the result. I believe I have created a document that will serve its purpose – get the attention of a prospective employer, intrigue him/her enough to read the most important content that's been provided, and then reach out to me for a face-to-face interview where I can really "sell myself."

My hesitancy or insecurity is that this particular design probably couldn't be sent to *any* institution with an open teaching position, meaning that some institutions may be smaller, more traditional, less open to design techniques and more likely to see color on a resume as a no-no. Perhaps that's just the old-school part of me talking. If I had more time, I would create several versions of Portfolio Project 1, tailored to institution size and/or location (of course, I pretty much will have to do that any time I apply anywhere).

Based on our conversation regarding this final Portfolio Project 1 lending itself more to an industry resume rather than academia, I do plan, in the very near future, to redesign my CV with your recommendations in mind.