Communicating Through Infographics

Example: Creating an Infographic

Using the steps outlined in the webinar, this handout walks through the process of telling a story through infographics. The example will start the story – you can determine the critical plot and ending.

Case Example Background:

This example will use data from the Oakland Public Library.

Plan the Project:

Times are tough in California public libraries. Cuts in state funding occurred in 2009-10 and again in 2010-11. We need to inform our public of the challenges we face, while championing out victories and highlighting star services.

Research:

Primary data will be pulled from the IMLS Public Libraries in the United States Survey (http://www.imls.gov/research/public_libraries_in_the_united_states_survey.aspx). The latest data available is from 2010.

Tell a Story:

Let's not mention the 2012 World Series winners, instead how about those Athletics's (94-68) - 1st in the AL West! And, while the Raiders' season isn't going as well as we'd like, fans never forget the glory days. Speaking of optimists, Warriors fans are counting on a .500+ season. In a nutshell, Oakland pride is alive and well in the sports arena.

Our libraries are more than stadiums housing spectators. Libraries support the active participation of thousands. We offer more than just spectator sport. Yep, "we got game."

Data to Supplement the Story:

We'll look at stadium attendance, being careful to compare data in the same year (2010) as our library statistics. Fun facts can be collected to add entertainment interest to the story.

Design:

Using the "We got game" idea for the infographic, the following brainstorming ideas were generated in a staff meeting:
- Color scheme can match team colors

- Playing fields can provide the background
- Star players
- Wordle of Dewey 796 subjects
- MVP services
- Rookie of the Year – eBooks

Of course, there were many more, but you get the idea.

Let's get started!

Select data:
Attendance figures are a compelling statistics showing the popularity of our library. In 2010, there were 3,568,006 visits to our library based on the IMLS Public Libraries in the United States Survey. During that same year, attendance at Oakland Raiders' home football games was 371,448 according to ESPN's NFL Attendance Statistics (http://espn.go.com/nfl/attendance/_/year/2010). Since we are using 2010 data for library visits, we should use the same time period in comparing football stadium attendance.

Doing some simple math we find 1 football stadium visit for every 9.6 library visits. That's almost 10:1 odds in favor of the library.

Choose branding/color scheme:
We want to include the library logo to associate the infographic with our institution. We might use team colors, including our own (web site design) to add color detail to the infographic. Here's our logo, captured from the home page of our website. We will also try to match the color.

Collect visuals that match the story:
As a creative canvas, easel.ly is a great starting point. They offer several objects, including people. Experimenting with the built-in objects of easel.ly, I'm able to quickly turn these numbers into a visual presentation.

These objects might be useful assets for building my infographic.
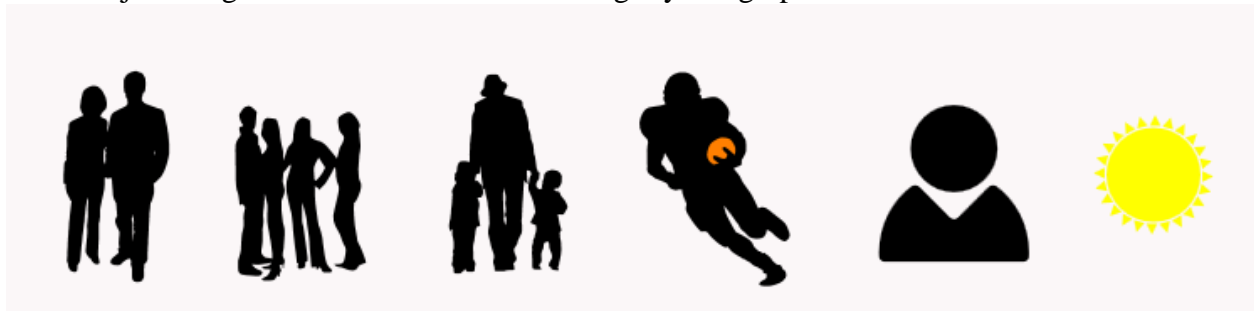
Selecting a background to match the playing field and adding the objects to reflect the data I hope to illustrate, I've created a first draft idea to share with my colleagues.

How could I make this information more compelling? One idea – can I change the "counting people" on the right to represent the standard library icon and a football helmet? Those aren't available in the tool, but I can upload images (as I did with the library logo). More hunting to find a couple icons.

Doing a quick Google search for "football helmet icon" I find a free clip art image that will work from http://www.iconspedia.com/icon/football-helmet-icon-19730.html. And, I find the 2009 version of national library symbol at ALA - http://www.ala.org/tools/libfactsheets/alalibraryfactsheet30#laptop. I think these will be far more effective in highlighting library visits versus football game visits.

Truth be told, I found it easier to work with the library image in Photoshop, creating a composite of 10 symbols, before pulling them into easel.ly. As a bonus, I can even be more accurate, cutting the last symbol to represent only 6/10th. Now, the image truly mirrors the data.

Fom this   to

And, version 2.0 of the first part of my infographic is born:

We Got Game!

OAKLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY

Library: 3,568,006

Raiders: 371,448

Nearly 10x more visits to the Oakland Public Library

9.6 visits - Library
1 visit - Raiders home game

Data sources:
IMLS Public Libraries in the United States Survey, 2010 - imls.gov/research/public_libraries_in_the_united_states_survey.aspx
ESPN's NFL Attendance Statistics, 2010 - http://espn.go.com/nfl/attendance/_/year_2010
Images:
Football helmet icon - iconspedia.com/icon/football-helmet-icon-19730.html
ALA Library Symbol - ala.org/tools/libfactsheets
Layout tool: easel.ly

IMPORTANT:
All sources for data and images need to be cited at the bottom of your infographic. Even if you include an article or blog entry with your infographic, it is likely to be shared outside this context.

Ok – now it's your turn. Write the next chapter in this infographic story.

Have fun, be creative, represent data accurately, and cite your sources.