TYPOGRAPHIC SYSTEMS
AXIAL SYSTEM

All elements are organized either to the left or the right of a single axis.

RADIAL SYSTEM

All elements extend from a point of focus.
DILATATIONAL SYSTEM

All elements expand from a central point in a circular fashion.

RANDOM SYSTEM

Elements appear to have no specific pattern or relationship.
GRID SYSTEM
A system of vertical and horizontal divisions

TRANSITIONAL SYSTEM
An informal system of layered banding.
MODULAR SYSTEM

A series of non-objective elements that are constructed as standardized units.

BILATERAL SYSTEM

All text is arranged symmetrically on a single axis.
Explore these systems in a process-oriented exploration. We will work with these in two ways. First, a series of compositions constrained to one size and one weight of type. The second is a series of compositions with the option to use object elements and changes in tone.
The same eight-line message is used in all of the compositions in order to focus attention on the variations in the visual organization systems.
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All lines must be used in each composition. However, lines may be broken at will to change a single line into multiple lines, creating changes in grouping and the way in which the line is read.
Leading is variable, which in turn creates changes in position and textures. Variable word spacing and letter spacing creates distinct changes in texture and tone.
LINE BREAKS
Lines may be broken at will to make multiple lines.

LEADING
Leading can be tight/negative or wide and airy.

WORD AND LETTER SPACE
Varying word spacing and letter spacing creates different textures.
OBJECT ELEMENTS
(NON TYPOGRAPHIC INFORMATION)

Just as typography is functional in the communication of a message, object elements enhance the functions of emphasis, organization, and balance. Object elements become functional guides when used with typography and communicate the message differently by highlighting elements of a hierarchical order and directing the viewer’s eye.

In addition these elements can strengthen a message by communicating a sense of organization and direction.
OBJECT ELEMENTS
(NON TYPOGRAPHIC INFORMATION)

RULE SERIES

Contemporary Canadian Photographers
The Vancouver Art Gallery
June 12–15, 2012

Original Composition

Contemporary Canadian Photographers
The Vancouver Art Gallery
June 12–15, 2012

Rules as Organizational Elements

Contemporary Canadian Photographers
The Vancouver Art Gallery
June 12–15, 2012

Rules as Rhythmic Elements

Contemporary Canadian Photographers
The Vancouver Art Gallery
June 12–15, 2012

Rules Emphasizing the Diagonal

Contemporary Canadian Photographers
The Vancouver Art Gallery
June 12–15, 2012

Rules Emphasizing the Hierarchy
OBJECT ELEMENTS
(NON TYPOGRAPHIC INFORMATION)

CIRCLE SERIES

Contemporary Canadian Photographers
The Vancouver Art Gallery
June 12–15, 2012

Circle the creates Emphasis and Hierarchy

Contemporary Canadian Photographers
The Vancouver Art Gallery
June 12–15, 2012

Contemporary Canadian Photographers
The Vancouver Art Gallery
June 12–15, 2012
OBJECT ELEMENTS
(NON TYPOGRAPHIC INFORMATION)

TONE SERIES

Contemporary Canadian Photographers
The Vancouver Art Gallery
June 12–15, 2012

Tone Changes that Create Emphasis and Hierarchy

Contemporary Canadian Photographers
The Vancouver Art Gallery
June 12–15, 2012
AXIAL SYSTEM

The axial system is one of the simplest systems. All elements are organized either to the left or right of a single axis. This is a branching arrangement from an implied main line. The axis can exist anywhere in the format to create a symmetric or asymmetric composition. Examples of axial arrangements in nature include the trunks of trees, flower stems, and many other plants.

Experience working with the axial system reveals that asymmetric arrangements are often more interesting than symmetrical ones. When the axis is placed off center to the left or right the space is divided in a more interesting way, with a shift in the proportion of larger and smaller volumes of space. The use of asymmetry results in a relatively simple visual arrangement with heightened visual interest.
AXIAL SYSTEM

While many axial system compositions benefit from asymmetric placement, this poster employs the symmetry of the centered axis to evoke and celebrate the simplicity of Le Corbusier’s modern architecture. The single-axis typographic arrangement splits the poster and the glossy center square over the face. The photographic image provides asymmetric accent in the hand that lifts the architect’s signature geometric glasses. Two fine white horizontal line that bisects the glossy square and focuses the viewer’s eye on the image.
AXIAL SYSTEM
Emil Ruder
1960
AXIAL SYSTEM
Emil Ruder
1960
AXIAL SYSTEM
Emil Ruder
1960
AXIAL SYSTEM
Odermatt & Tissi
1980
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graphic and interactive communication
department communication arts
program 7:00 pm
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AXIAL SYSTEM
Narrow column widths
AXIAL SYSTEM
Wide
Column widths

7:00 pm
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Graphic and Interactive Communication Department
Communication Arts Program
Langara College School of the Arts
Graphic and Interactive Communication Department
Communication Arts Program

Free public lecture
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February 15, 2012
February 22, 2012
7:00 pm Library Hall
Langara College
School of the Arts

Graphic and Interactive Communication Department

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Free Public Lecture

7:00 pm
Library Hall
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Graphic and Interactive Communication Department

Communication Arts Program
Free Public Lecture

7:00 pm Library Hall

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Public
Communication
Arts
Interactive
Department
Graphic
Program
Library Hall
7:00 PM
Free
Langara College
School
Diagonal Axis
RADIAL SYSTEM
In the radial system all elements are organized to extend from a central point of focus like rays. Examples include the petals of flowers, fireworks, domes in architecture, rays of the sun, spokes of a wheel, starfish, etc. The compositions are dynamic, as the eye is drawn to the focal point of the radial composition. This point can be implied or depicted.

Depending on the orientation of the lines, readability of the message may be diminished as the type leaves the traditional horizontal baseline. Within this system lines of text can be arranged to read in a number of different ways: top to bottom, bottom to top, right side up, or upside down. In order to create a functional message, the lines of text should be arranged in the most comfortable manner possible.

When working with text, the resulting compositions often contain portions of a single circle or many circles. The resulting asymmetry is less satisfying and more visually interesting.
In the Old Truman Brewery poster the radial system is used to communicate that transformation of an industrial warehouse to “a centre for young design talent so sharp it could cut diamonds.” The text is arranged around a centre focus point and a strong horizontal line, and sharp angles of text slice the collaged images in dynamic pinwheel fashion.

The radial system becomes the foil for communicating the dynamic intent that is focused on the building. Lines of text move toward the centre point and then radiate out as a fitting tribute to the design talent housed within and the effect they will have on the community.

RADIAL SYSTEM

The radial system immediately presents a compositional challenge because each line most readily exists as an individual unit with a relationship only with the focal point.
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RADIAL SYSTEM emphasis strategies
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RADIAL SYSTEM
emphasis
strategies
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7:00 pm
Library Hall

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RADIAL SYSTEM emphasis strategies
RADIAL SYSTEM

grouping strategies

COMMUNICATION ARTS PROGRAM

LANGARA COLLEGE SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

LIBRARY HALL

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GRAPHIC AND INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT

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7:00 pm
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RADIAL SYSTEM
rules and hierarchy
RADIAL SYSTEM
rules and hierarchy

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ARTS PROGRAM
COMMUNICATION
LANGARA COLLEGE
SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

7:00 pm Library Hall

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Free Public Lecture

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Communication Department

ARTS PROGRAM COMMUNICATION

LANGARA COLLEGE SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

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DILATATIONAL SYSTEM
In a dilatational system circles dilate or expand from a central point. An example of this system is the waves created when a pebble is dropped into still water. Similar to the radial system, the compositions are dynamic as the eye moves along the arc of the circle or is drawn to the focal point at the centre of the circle.

The simplest forms of the dilatational system are circles that expand in regular or rhythmical increments from the center. Variations of this system can include dilations that are tangent, dilations that are non-concentric, and multiple dilations.
DILATATIONAL SYSTEM
Stein und Ott
www.ott-stein.de
DILATATIONAL SYSTEM structure
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GRAPHIC AND INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT

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COMMUNICATION ARTS PROGRAM

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DILATATIONAL SYSTEM
object elements
DILATATIONAL SYSTEM
DILATATIONAL SYSTEM

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Graphic and Interactive Communication Department
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Communication Arts Program

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RANDOM SYSTEM
The random system consists of elements that are arranged without definite aim, pattern, direction, rule, method or purpose, but it is deceptively simple because the viewer imposes organization on compositions even when it is unintentional. The human eye and brain are keenly programmed to be pattern-seeking, image-seeking, and order-seeking. For centuries humans have found images in the constellations of stars in the sky or in cloud formations.

Work is often begun by scattering elements in the compositional field with free abandon. Inevitably, some of those elements align and the composition feels intentional. Success is more frequent when legibility diminishes with cropping, overlapping, and placing text at odd angles, which are cues of randomness. Surprisingly, random placement often yields a very dynamic and spontaneous result that, although difficult to read, is visually satisfying.
RANDOM SYSTEM
Makoto Saito
1994
RANDOM SYSTEM

David Carson
1997
Langara College
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School of the Arts
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LIBRARY HALL

Free Public Lecture

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RANDOM SYSTEM

object

elements
Langara College

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Graphic And Interactive Communication Department

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Library Hall
GRID SYSTEM
A grid is a system of vertical and horizontal divisions that organize and create relationships between elements. Grid system arrangements are usually formal and are intended to create visual order and economy in production. Grids are frequently used in publication design and web design as they guide information hierarchies and promote visual rhythm and consistency among multiple pages or screens.

The objective in organizing visual communication with the grid system is to develop strong interrelationships between the typographic elements and recurring rhythmical proportions of text blocks, images, and space. Grid systems differ from the axial system in that the visual relationships are not tied to a single axis and usually employ more than a single column.
TRANSITIONAL SYSTEM
The transitional system of visual organization is an informal system of layered and shifted banding. There are not interrelationships along an axis or edge alignments, and elements move freely left and right. This is a far more casual system than the grid system in that strict interrelationship through edge alignment is not desirable. The lines of type are free-flowing and the textures they create assist in ordering the message. Examples of natural transitional arrangements include strata of layered rock or casually stacked wood.

Compositions can be airy and widely leaded or tightly compact, which emphasizes the negative space. This system often results in compositions that echo fine art in that many have the visual feel of a landscape, which is admittedly enhanced by the use of the circle element that becomes an abstract sun or moon.
TRANSITIONAL SYSTEM
David Carson
1996
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Free Public Lecture

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7:00 pm

TRANSITIONAL SYSTEM

movement
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Langara College Library Hall
School of the Arts
February 22, 2012
February 8, 2012
February 15, 2012
7:00 pm
Graphic and Interactive Communication Department

TRANSITIONAL SYSTEM
movement
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TRANSITIONAL SYSTEM
change in direction
Free Public Lecture

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Library Hall

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Graphic And Interactive Communication Depart

TRANSITIONAL SYSTEM
change in direction
TRANSITIONAL SYSTEM movement
MODULAR SYSTEM
The modular system is dependent on standardized nonobjective elements or units that act as a ground to hold and contain text. Compositions are created by the organization and placement of the modular units.

Typographic lines and words have a distinctly individual form that defy standardization and require a module that acts as a ground. Modules can be as simple as a hairline square or rectangle or more complex geometric shapes such as circles, ellipses, triangles, etc.

The idea is to standardize the unit on which the typography rests and then compose the message with the modules. Lines of type can be broken or split into multiple lines at will, which, like grouping, assists in communicating the message.
MODULAR SYSTEM
Philippe Apeloig
2004
MODULAR SYSTEM
Philippe Apeloig
2005
Langara College

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School of the Arts

MODULAR SYSTEM
circle
modules
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circle
modules
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MODULAR SYSTEM square modules
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MODULAR SYSTEM square modules
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MODULAR SYSTEM
rectangle modules

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MODULAR SYSTEM transparency
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MODULAR SYSTEM transparency
MODULAR SYSTEM transparency
BILATERAL SYSTEM
The bilateral system is the most symmetrical of the visual organization systems. It consists of a single axis with lines of text centered on the axis.

As the most symmetrical system, the bilateral system is the most challenging compositionally. This is due to the inherent symmetry that makes these compositions predictable and potentially uninteresting. Placing the axis off center in the format can immediately make the composition more dynamic. A diagonal axis can bring a bit more visual interest to the composition, as does moving a line of text diagonally off of the baseline. The addition of nonobjective elements to the composition can transform the work to one of heightened visual interest.
BILATERAL SYSTEM
Odermatt & Tissi
1992
Katherine McCoy
1990

BILATERAL SYSTEM

Nothing pulls you into the territory between art and science quite so quickly as design. It is the tensions exist between the quantifiable and necessary. Designers thrive in those conditions, moving between land and water. A typical critique at Cranbrook can move in a matter of minutes between being the precise mechanical proposal for actuating the object. The discussion of the object as a validation of material of the week” or from Lyotard to Deleuze, the free flow of ideas, and the leaps from the attempt to maintain a studio platform find his or her own voice as a designer. The and faculty to encounter their own vision process that is at times chaotic.

Watching the process of students absorbing new ideas and interpretations of those ideas into design, is inspiring. In recent years, for example, the department has had the experience of watching wood craftsmen metamorphose into high technologists, and graphic designers consistent. They are bringing a very personal vision to an area that desperately needs it. The messiness of human experience needs a technology to make it livable, and lived in.

Unlike the Bauhaus, Cranbrook never embraced a singular teaching method or philosophy, other than Saarinen’s exhortation to each student to find his or her own way, in the company of other artists and designers who were engaged in the same search. The energy at Cranbrook seems to come from the fact of conclusion. If design is about life, why connot, contradiction, and sublimity of life?

Much of the work done at Cranbrook has been dedicated to changing the status quo. It is polemical, calculated to ruffle designers’ feathers. And
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BILATERAL SYSTEM
symmetry and tone
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