

### **Knowledge Gained**

The project began as an assignment to create 6 poster boards for Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority for their Enniskillen and Heber Down Conservation Areas. The posters were to cover the history, the wildlife and the ecological significance of the area. When the initial project proposal was prepared I had budgeted a small number of hours for each poster. I was told that the project was going to take longer than I had anticipated and that I needed to double the original estimates. I quickly found out that this was accurate and that I was not only creating interpretive boards, but learning about visual design, the areas in great depth and in general how to research and teach myself.

### **Visual design**

Now, at the completion of this project, when I look back upon my original drafts with a much more critical eye. I had attempted to develop a theme, and in the process created an extremely busy and disorganized poster. The pictures had been displayed in no particular order and had a very unprofessional look. At this point I was introduced to the elements of design; Proximity, Alignment, Repetition, and Contrast. I had the repetition down pat from the beginning but had problems with proximity, alignment and contrast. I went back to the "drawing board" and applied what I had learned.

I used color to draw the viewer's eye to different points, and blank space to create boxes that linked text to photos. I utilized repetition in the actual layout of the photos and text to link the posters from each locale to each other, rather than relying on a messy background.

I used solid colored simplistic fonts to make it easier to read from a distance and to help it appear orderly. The pictures were given frames and a shadow so that they stood out from the background of the paper and appeared 3-D.

I also displayed information by means of graphics, and therefore eliminated some of the text. This information could be understood by the viewer even if they did not have the time or interest to read the further information in the text.

### **The Conservation Areas**

The first work submitted was the actual written information gathered for each of the areas. At first glance it would have appeared that the information covered everything needed for the history, wildlife and ecological significance of each area, however taking that information and trying to incorporate it onto an interpretive board is extremely difficult. The history and the ecological information was too sparse to create a poster. As more research was done, I had

gathered more information than could eventually be placed on the boards and some had to be cut.

The wildlife posters expanded to include seasonal information, and scientific names. I had attempted to also include a geographical representation of where each of the species were found native, however it caused the posters to become very busy and difficult to follow.

### **The Experience**

My original estimate to complete this project was completely incorrect, as for each step forward many small steps backward were taken. An example of this would be the gathering of information for each of posters. I had researched, then edited, then determined I did not have enough information, then researched again, then cut it down again, and finally edited one final time. Everything was not as straight forward as in a classroom situation where someone gives you the information. Every detail that I learned was a result of many mistakes and oversights.

Just learning to use the software that CLOCA had requested turned out to be an learning experience I had not anticipated. This process took extra time I had not accounted for in my original estimate.

The process journal was an excellent idea. It took time to complete, but in the end it documented each decision and suggestion and it that much easier to stay on track and keep focused. I actually used it as a checklist to keep track of it of the changes I wanted to make or any ideas to try.

### **Conclusion**

At the start of this course I actually thought it would be a quick, simple, and straightforward project. The project has turned out to be none of these. It has actually been one of the toughest credits I have earned. I believe this is because along the way I have learned elements of visual design, considerable knowledge of both Enniskillen and Heber Down Conservation areas, and how to research and teach myself. This project has been one of the most rewarding courses I have completed.

I have had to overcome many obstacles, such as learning a new software program, visual design and overall organization. Yet, the fact that I managed to rise above these hurdles has made it such a satisfying learning experience.