

UMC GUIDE RECREATION PARKS & LEISURE

University of Missouri-Columbia Extension Division

Interpretive Bulletin Boards

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Many parks use bulletin boards to post announcements and schedules. However, the bulletin board can also deliver an interpretive message. In fact, strategic location of boards may insure that everyone visiting the park will encounter one or more of these. It may represent the interpreter's "one chance" to reach every visitor.

Bulletin boards offer several advantages. They:

- Are relatively inexpensive
- Receive wide exposure
- Are quickly read
- Don't generate litter.

However, bulletin boards are subject to vandalism and they must be frequently updated.

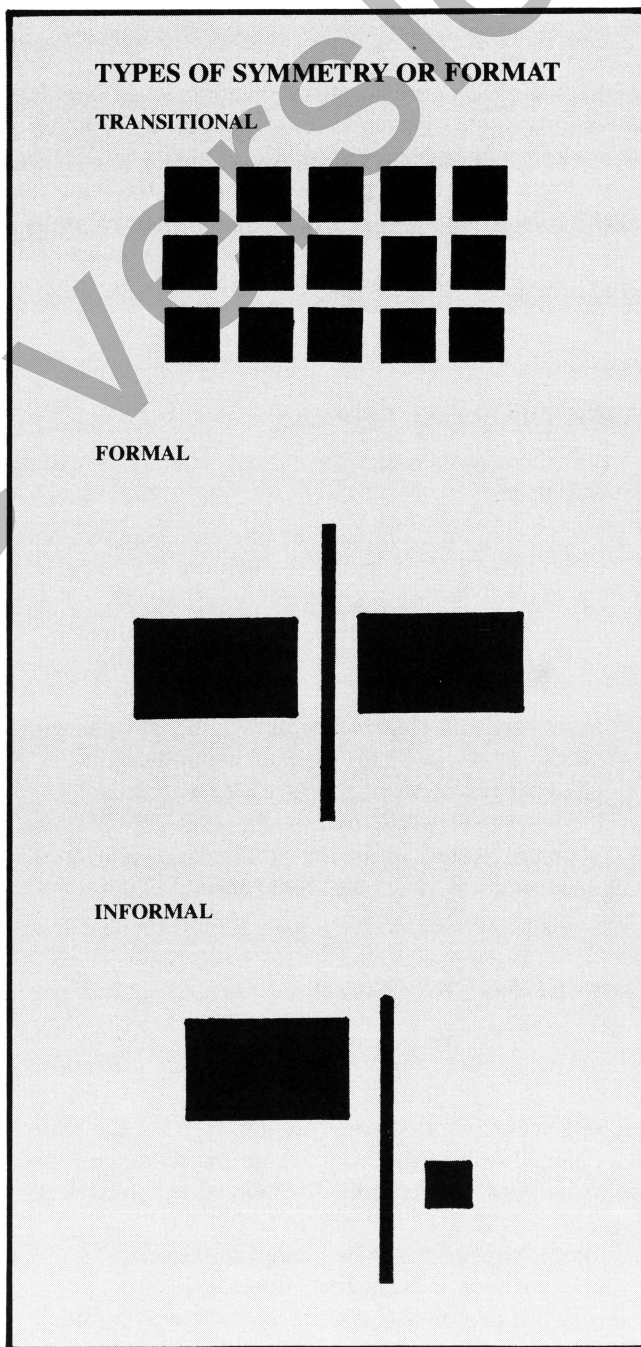
The bulletin board is first seen from a distance and the first impression *must* invite a closer inspection. Form and content are closely related: the form suggests the theme of the message and draws the viewer's attention to the message. The placement of materials on the board also implies a sequence and emphasis to the parts of the message. The form and content must work together.

STEP ONE: THE MESSAGE

The first step is, of course, to *decide on the interpretive message*. State the message in one sentence and write this theme across the top of the page. Under it outline how to relate the message to the audience. Then decide which ideas could best be illustrated with photographs or drawings and which require written materials. Use care in this selection and leave out any word, sentence, or visual that is not essential to interpreting the message.

THE SKETCH

Draw a box in the proportions of the bulletin board and begin to sketch an arrangement for the materials. Four basic shapes are suggested as an aid to planning a



layout (see figure). These shapes help to balance the arrangement and draw the viewer's attention in a certain direction, suggesting sequence and emphasis.

LETTERING

Lettering can be done by hand with felt tip or Leroy pen, with press-on letters, vinyl plastic letters, with stencils. Or it can be typeset by a commercial printer. The style should be easy to read and sized appropriately.

Viewing Distance	Minimum Letter Size
8 feet	1/2"
16 feet	1"
32 feet	2"
64 feet	4"

Spacing of letters also affects readability. Consider the *area* occupied by each letter and space accordingly; don't simply measure equidistance between letter edges. Space letters by eye, not ruler. Do lettering on poster board to simplify the final assembly of the board. Also, do lettering for a photo *before* mounting (on poster board or whatever). Everyone makes mistakes occasionally!

CHECK THE TOTAL EFFECT

After the arrangement is sketched, check the layout for these items:

- Is the layout balanced? Is one side heavier than the other? Change the positions or size of pictures until both sides are about equal.
- Are the essential ideas receiving the most emphasis? Is the viewer's eye led where you want it?
- Are all parts clearly visible? Contrast light with dark, dark with light for background colors.
- Do the elements of the display harmonize?
- Does letter style match the theme? Is there enough space or is the total effect cluttered? Amounts of space and form should balance.

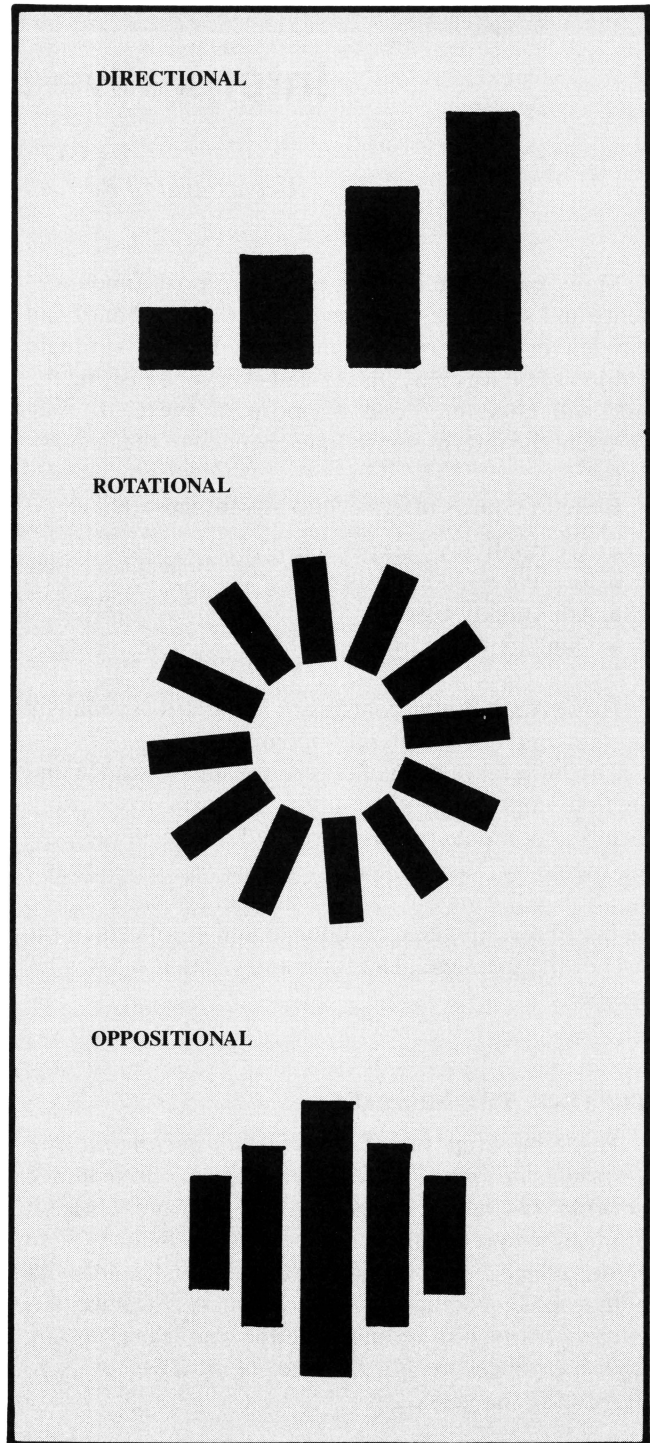
COMPLETING THE BOARD

Mount photographs, illustrations, captions and written texts. Fasten to the board with pins, following the layout design. Situate letters or headings. After all elements are in place, go over the items in the checklist once again. Look at the board from the distance most visitors will first see it. Enlist the help of an "unbiased" observer to evaluate the bulletin board.

- Bulletin boards could be placed in these spots:
- Park entrance • Near rest rooms • Park office
 - Nature center • Entrance to trails • Amphitheater • Campground registration booth

A FINAL NOTE

After completing this "work of art" don't forget it. Check on its condition frequently—and change it regularly. Remove outdated materials *immediately*. The bulletin board may represent the visitor's only image of the park. Make the impression a favorable one.



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