Futures Designed.

Module 3

Popular Software for Digital Design: Industry Standards and Affordable Alternatives

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Frederick University

Introduction

In the fast-evolving digital design world, various tools and software play a key role in determining a project's success. This presentation explores popular software used in the industry, including both premium and affordable alternatives. We will discuss the Usage of each, key features, pros and cons, and situations where one tool is preferred over another.

Industry-Standard Software

Adobe Creative Suite (Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, After Effects)

Photoshop: Image editing and raster-based design.

Key Features: Layer-based editing, advanced image manipulation, and filters.

Industry-Standard Software

Adobe Creative Suite (Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, After Effects)

Illustrator: Vector graphics, logos, and illustrations.

Key Features: Scalable vector graphics, typography tools, and icon creation.

Industry-Standard Software

Adobe Creative Suite (Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, After Effects)

InDesign: Print layouts, brochures, and digital publications.

Key Features: Layout design, text and image management, and print-ready PDFs.

Industry-Standard Software

Adobe Creative Suite (Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, After Effects)

After Effects: Motion graphics, video editing, and visual effects.

Key Features: Motion graphics, video editing, and visual effects.

Industry-Standard Software

Adobe Creative Suite (Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, After Effects)

Pros:

- Comprehensive toolset for professionals.
- Seamless integration between Adobe apps.
- Industry-standard for many design sectors.

Cons:

- The expensive subscription model.
- Steep learning curve for beginners.

Industry-Standard Software

Figma

UI/UX design, web and app prototyping.

Key Features: Real-time collaboration, vector networks, and cloud-based workflow.

Industry-Standard Software

Figma

Pros:

- Ideal for team-based projects with live collaboration.
- Cross-platform accessibility via web browser.

Cons:

- Limited features for complex graphic or motion design.
- Web-based tools may require a strong internet connection.

Industry-Standard Software

Sketch

UI/UX design, wireframes, and prototypes.

Key Features: Intuitive interface, symbol libraries, and vector-based design.

Industry-Standard Software

Sketch

Pros:

- Easy to use for UI/UX projects.
- Integrates with many third-party plugins.

Cons:

- Mac-only software, limiting cross-platform use.
- Collaboration features are not as strong as Figma's.

Industry-Standard Software

Canva

Simple graphic design for social media posts, marketing materials, and presentations.

Key Features: Pre-designed templates, drag-and-drop functionality, and cloud storage.

Industry-Standard Software

Canva

Pros:

- User-friendly interface is ideal for non-designers.
- Affordable and offers a free version.

Cons:

- Limited advanced features for professional designers.
- Cannot handle complex vector or motion graphics.

Open-Source and Affordable Alternatives

GIMP (GNU Image Manipulation Program)

Image editing and basic graphic design.

Key Features: Layer-based editing, photo retouching, and customisable interface.

Open-Source and Affordable Alternatives

GIMP (GNU Image Manipulation Program)

Pros:

- Free and open-source.
- Can perform many tasks similar to Photoshop.

Cons:

- Lacks some advanced features of Photoshop.
- The interface is less polished and can be intimidating for beginners.

Open-Source and Affordable Alternatives

Inkscape

Vector-based design for illustrations, logos, and graphics.

Key Features: Freehand drawing tools, node editing, and SVG support.

Open-Source and Affordable Alternatives

Inkscape

Pros:

- Free and open-source.
- Suitable for most vector-based tasks.

Cons:

- Slower performance compared to Illustrator.
- Less intuitive interface.

Open-Source and Affordable Alternatives

Gravit Designer

Vector graphics for illustrations, logos, and web design.

Key Features: Vector editing tools, text and layer support, cloud storage.

Open-Source and Affordable Alternatives

Gravit Designer

Pros:

- The free version has basic features.
- Cross-platform, works on web browsers.

Cons:

- Limited advanced features compared to Illustrator or Figma.
- Some features are only available in the Pro version.

Open-Source and Affordable Alternatives

Affinity Designer

Vector and raster design for illustrations, UI design, and logos.

Key Features: High-performance vector and raster editing. No subscription is required.

Open-Source and Affordable Alternatives

Affinity Designer

Pros:

- It is a one-time purchase with no subscription fees.
- Similar features to Illustrator, with better performance in some areas.

Cons:

- No direct collaboration tools like Figma.
- Smaller community compared to Adobe.

Common Features Across Design Software

- Layer Editing: Photoshop, GIMP, and Affinity Designer use layers for targeted edits.
- Vector Editing: Illustrator, Sketch, Inkscape, and Affinity Designer feature scalable vector tools.
- Cloud Collaboration: Figma and Canva offer cloud storage and real-time teamwork.
- Templates: Canva and Gravit Designer provide pre-designed templates for quick use.

Tool Comparison: Choosing the Right One

1. Adobe Creative Suite vs. GIMP/Inkscape

   Scenario: Professional designer working on a high-budget campaign for a global brand.

Tool Comparison: Choosing the Right One

1. Adobe Creative Suite vs. GIMP/Inkscape

Preferred Tool: Adobe Creative Suite.

Why: Adobe's advanced features, professional polish, and integration across multiple apps (Photoshop, Illustrator, After Effects) make it the industry standard for high-end design.

When to Use GIMP/Inkscape: For freelance designers or smaller projects with budget constraints, GIMP and Inkscape offer sufficient capabilities for image editing and vector design, though they lack Adobe's advanced features.

Tool Comparison: Choosing the Right One

2 Figma vs. Sketch

Scenario: A UI/UX team working on a web or mobile app with team members across multiple regions.

Tool Comparison: Choosing the Right One

2 Figma vs. Sketch

Preferred Tool: Figma.

Why: Figma's cloud-based, real-time collaboration features allow seamless teamwork, making it ideal for geographically dispersed teams.

When to Use Sketch: Sketch is better for single-designer projects or teams using Mac OS. It offers a slightly more streamlined UI/UX design experience but lacks Figma's cross-platform capabilities.

Tool Comparison: Choosing the Right One

3 Canva vs. Adobe Illustrator

Scenario: A small business owner without design experience needs quick and simple social media graphics.

Tool Comparison: Choosing the Right One

3 Canva vs. Adobe Illustrator

Why: Canva's drag-and-drop interface and pre-built templates allow non-designers to create attractive visuals quickly.

When to Use Illustrator: For professional designers creating complex, scalable vector illustrations (e.g., logos), Illustrator's advanced vector-editing capabilities are preferred.

Tool Comparison: Choosing the Right One

4 Affinity Designer vs. Adobe Illustrator

Scenario: A freelance designer working on branding and logo creation needs a one-time purchase tool without ongoing subscription costs.

Tool Comparison: Choosing the Right One

4 Affinity Designer vs. Adobe Illustrator

Why: Affinity Designer offers nearly all the features of Illustrator but with a one-time purchase model, making it more affordable in the long term.

When to Use Illustrator: Illustrator is preferred when frequent updates, seamless integration with Adobe tools, and industry-standard features are required.

Selecting the Ideal Design Tool

Choosing the right design tool depends heavily on the project's requirements, budget, and collaboration needs. Industry-standard software like Adobe Creative Suite offers advanced features for professional designers but can be expensive and complex. Alternatives such as Canva, GIMP, and Figma offer affordable, accessible options for specific tasks and user groups. Comprehending the capabilities and limitations of tools allows designers to choose the most suitable one for their requirements, resulting in more streamlined workflows and improved design results.

Conclusion

The digital design software industry has significantly transformed over the past 15 years. In the early 2000s, key players like Adobe dominated design software, with products often confined to desktop applications and high-cost licenses.

Conclusion

Over time, several factors contributed to a shift in the industry:

1. Cloud-Based Solutions and Collaboration:

One of the biggest changes in recent years is the move towards cloud-based design software, allowing for real-time collaboration among teams. Tools like Figma have revolutionised the way designers work, making remote collaboration seamless and efficient. Fifteen years ago, such real-time collaborative design wasn't feasible.

Conclusion

Over time, several factors contributed to a shift in the industry:

2. Emergence of Open-Source and Freemium Models:

Previously, digital design software was often expensive, limiting access to professionals or larger companies. Today, free or open-source alternatives like GIMP and Inkscape, alongside affordable tools like Canva, have made design more accessible to individuals, small businesses, and freelance designers.

Conclusion

Over time, several factors contributed to a shift in the industry:

3. AI and Automation in Design:

Another major shift has been integrating AI tools into design software, automating repetitive tasks and introducing new creative possibilities. Fifteen years ago, AI was in its infancy, and automation was not widely available in design tools. Today, platforms like RunwayML or Adobe's AI-powered features enhance workflows by accelerating colour correction or layout generation tasks.

Conclusion

With these rapid changes, staying updated with the latest tools and trends is crucial for maintaining competitiveness in the design industry. New tools not only improve efficiency but also offer creative solutions that weren't previously possible. Being aware of new software or app options helps designers:

Conclusion

- Improve Workflow:

New tools often provide more streamlined workflows, automating tasks that used to be manual and time-consuming.

- Expand Creative

Horizons: Innovations like AI and augmented reality offer entirely new ways to approach design, allowing for more interactive and immersive campaigns.

- Stay Competitive:

As the design industry continues to evolve, those who stay updated with the latest tools and techniques will have a competitive advantage over those who do not.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the digital design landscape is constantly evolving, and keeping up with these changes is essential for staying relevant and efficient in today's fast-paced industry.

About

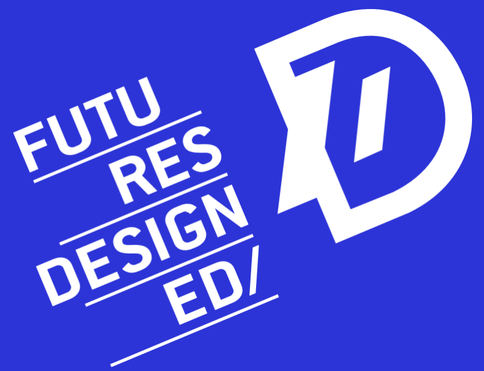
The project aims to develop & integrate Art & Design micro-credential courses into existing HE programs focusing on skills deemed necessary for the Green Transition, SDGs and the New European Bauhaus.

Logo & usage

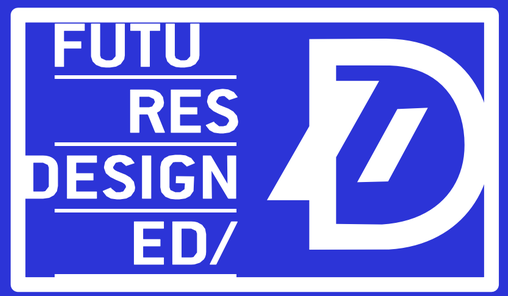
It is important that the Futures Designed logo always gets used correctly and that the appearance of it remains consistent.

FUTU
RES
DESIGN
ED/

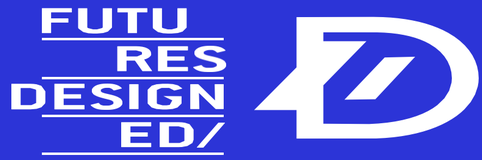
It should therefore not be misinterpreted or modified in any way. Here are some examples that should be avoided:



DO NOT DISTORT THE LOGO



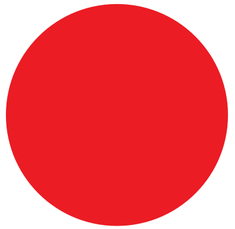
DO NOT FRAME THE LOGO



DO NOT STRETCH THE LOGO

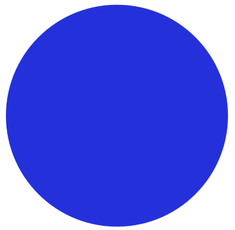
Color

These colors should be used for all general communications such as advertising, marketing tools to ensure that a consistent design scheme is maintained.



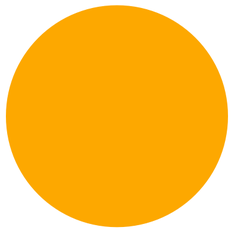
C 1
M 99
Y 97
K 0

HEX EB1C24



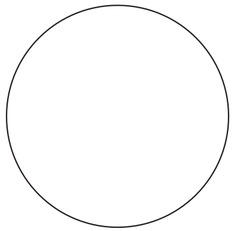
C 87
M 79
Y 0
K 0

HEX 2431DB



C 0
M 39
Y 100
K 0

HEX FDA800



C 0
M 0
Y 0
K 0

HEX FFFFFF

Typography

ABCDE F 12345

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O
P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o
p r s t u v w x y z

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Roboto is the primary font for main body text. Characters used for headlines should be in **bold**, however main body text can consist of both **bold** and regular typefaces.

H2 headline	72 pt	**Bold**
B2 body	62 pt	Regular
H2 headline	56 pt	**Bold**
B2 body	46 pt	Regular
H3 headline	40 pt	**Bold**
B3 body	30 pt	Regular

Avoid Italic typefaces and underlined text.

DO NOT WRITE LONG TEXTS IN CAPITAL LET-TERS, AS THEY IS MORE DIFFICULT TO READ.

Important information should be printed in large letters (at least size 16-18) and clear font.
Use contrasting colours, avoid long passages written in a cursive or handwritten font. Avoid writing a text on visual material and photos. Avoid long paragraphs and leave some space between them.

Text text text text text text text text text text text.

Text text text text text.

To make a PDF file accessible, follow these rules:

Use proper document structure:

Include headings, lists, and logical reading order using tags.

Add alternative text (Alt Text):

Provide descriptions for images, charts, and graphs.

Ensure text is selectable:

Avoid using scanned images of text; use actual text instead.

Use meaningful links:

Provide descriptive link text (e.g., “Click here” is not sufficient).

Check color contrast:

Ensure sufficient contrast between text and background for readability.

Add bookmarks:

Include navigational bookmarks for easy document navigation.

Check language settings:

Set the correct document language in properties.

Enable screen reader compatibility:

Verify that the PDF is tagged properly for screen reader.

Test with accessibility tools:

Use tools like Adobe Acrobat's accessibility checker to ensure compliance.

Following these rules ensures that the PDF is usable for individuals with disabilities.

Making a PowerPoint (PPT) file accessible is similar to a PDF, but there are a few additional and specific considerations. Here are the key rules:

Use slide layouts:

Use built-in slide layouts to ensure the correct reading order and structure for screen readers.

Provide alternative text (Alt Text):

Add alt text for all images, charts, graphs, and shapes to describe their content.

Ensure logical reading order:

Make sure content is read in the correct order by screen readers. Use the "Selection Pane" to check and adjust the order.

Use accessible fonts:

Choose simple, readable fonts (e.g., Arial, Calibri), and avoid excessive use of decorative fonts.

Ensure sufficient color contrast:

Make sure there's high contrast between text and background for better readability.

Use descriptive hyperlinks:

Provide clear, descriptive link text, rather than generic phrases like “Click here.”

Add closed captions and subtitles:

For multimedia (videos or audio), include closed captions or a transcript.

Avoid overuse of animations:

Use minimal and simple animations, as complex effects can be distracting or inaccessible.

By following these rules, a PPT file can be made accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Check table accessibility:

Avoid complex tables; keep them simple with column headers.

Test with accessibility checker:

Use PowerPoint’s built-in accessibility checker to find and fix issues.

Aligning text to the left margin only. Stick to the maximum contrast between the text and the background. The background and text must be in one color. Avoid shiny surfaces.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetuer adipiscing elit, sed diam

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetuer adipiscing elit, sed diam

Clear font. Choose standard fonts with easily distinguishable upper and lower case characters and even letter stroke thickness.

Roboto

Open Sans

flknsLkanq

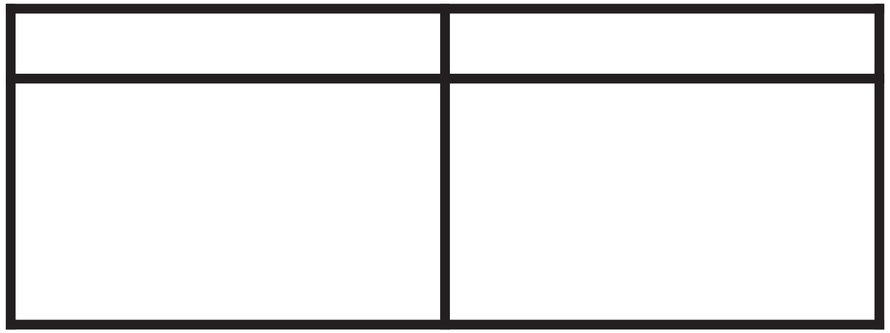
CINTARY

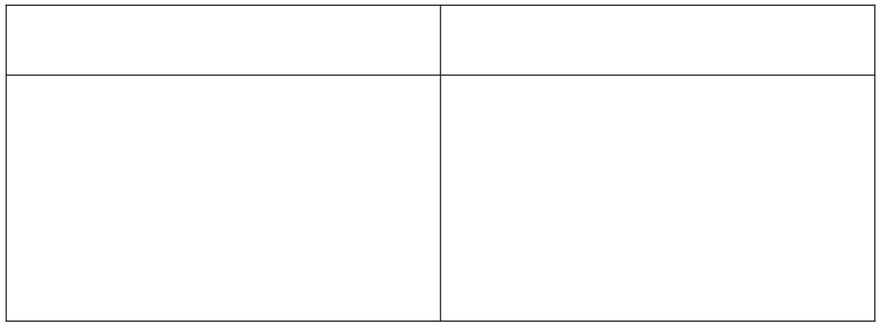
Dahlia

Times New Roman

(letter stroke thickness is not even)

Tables should have visible bold borders:





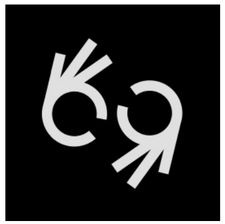
Aligning text to the left margin only. Stick to the maximum contrast between the text and the background. The background and text must be in one color. Avoid shiny surfaces.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetuer adipiscing elit, sed diam

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetuer adipiscing elit, sed diam

You can use some accessibility icons like "Audio description and closed captioning", "Sign language interpretation" and others suitable for video lectures or information. Other icons can be found here:

https://kaunas2022.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Signs.zip



Sign language interpreting / electronic audio guide system

Audio description and subtitling available

Text with Easy Read translation