

# Makers Literacies Project (MLP)

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## Introduction to the MLP (What Is It? What Are You Doing?)

You will work individually to design and create a three-dimensional “document” using the makerspace at the UTA FabLab. As I have stressed in this course thus far, people must make effective use of graphic and document design and in developing content to communicate persuasively and successfully in online and print documents. These principles also apply to the design of physical objects.

Consider a Coca-Cola bottle (such as in Figure 1). Coke bottles have a distinctive shape that marks them as distinctly **Coke bottles** and which some persons have compared to an idealized feminine figure (in some versions of the design). Coke designs the bottle so that

- Most consumers can easily hold and use it.
- Most consumers can use the bottle without problems, including opening, drinking, storing, and—in the case of plastic—dropping it.
- Coke must design the bottle to abide by health and safety regulations and expectations (i.e., avoiding toxic materials, easily recycled, etc.).
- Consumers will identify the brand immediately by design (color, typeface, and shape).
- The bottle conveys a brand persona consistent with Coke’s current marketing campaigns and identity.



Figure 1: 1993 plastic Coca Cola bottle design (via [Gizmodo](#))

- The bottle communicates information that consumers want or that regulatory authorities (like the FDA) require Coke to include (e.g., calories, volume, nutritional information, etc.).

For another example, consider a Coca-Cola t-shirt (as in Figure 2). This t-shirt must accomplish several design goals:

- Like the bottle, the t-shirt needs to satisfy Coke’s brand identity guidelines (typeface, color, slogan, logo design). After all, you want to avoid saying “Consume Coca-Cola” if you wanted to have an **official** Coke t-shirt.
- A woman’s t-shirt should fit most women comfortably and look complementary.
- The t-shirt needs to satisfy clothing regulations and guidelines for safety and manufacture.

With these examples in mind, you will envision and design a physical object to fabricate at the UTA Fab-Lab that must take into account a specific rhetorical situation:

- **Audience:** Who does the object target as an audience to **own** the item? (Who would buy a Coke bottle? Who would buy a Coke t-shirt?) Who does the message of the item target? (Who reads that t-shirt? Surely the owner **and** everyone else who will meet them.)
- **Purpose:** What purposes does the item have? (Coke intends their bottle design to **help sell** Coke. Consumers want to drink a beverage they like—and may want to specifically drink Coke. Consumers **expect** Cokes to look a particular way. After all, imagine a Dr. Pepper-shaped Coke bottle. Coke uses the t-shirt to satisfy customer demand and to **advertise** Coke. Customers wear the t-shirt because they like Coke, want to wear t-shirts, and want to advertise their brand preference [Coke vs. Pepsi remains a manufactured rivalry, after all].)
- **Occasion:** Why make this object and design **now**? What moment are you **participating** in in making this design? (If Coke sold those kinds of t-shirts, then they would be drawing upon nostalgia and their own brand history. Updated Coke bottle designs occur almost seasonally: consider holiday Coke bottles—now a “tradition.”)

Yes, you can even do a parody design, if you want.



Figure 2: Women's Enjoy Coca-Cola Rolled Sleeve Boyfriend T-Shirt (via [Truffle Shuffle](#))

I recommend the following outline to your process for this assignment. Brainstorm ideas. Go talk to the FabLab staff about your ideas. Check out [their website](#) for the kinds of equipment they have. Create some thumbnail sketches for designs. Weigh the pros and cons of doing these different ideas and settle on one that interests you and that seems feasible. From there, learn how to make that design into actuality at the FabLab, working with staff to learn how to make and refine your designs.

I might recommend a few ideas as starting points:

- Souvenir items (for UTA or elsewhere), perhaps made using 3D printing
- Parody or satirical products or souvenirs
- Product packaging or mockups using 3D printing
- Embroidered shirts, caps, or designs using the embroidery machine
- Commemorative or decorative items using the laser etcher
- T-shirt designs you create using the screen printing apparatus
- Some other idea and design

Ultimately, you will produce a physical object, bringing your graphic and “document” design skills to bear. You will also write a 3-5 page reflection memo that tasks you to coherently reflect on your process, your design decisions, and your experience in general.

## Learning Outcomes (What Is the Point?)

You continue practicing how to write in clear and concise style and can adapt your professional writing to a variety of audiences.

You continue to analyze rhetorical situations in terms of audience (composition, demography, expectations, needs), purposes (students’/organizations’ and readers’), and occasions to develop documents and designs best suited to fulfilling your and readers’ needs.

You continue to apply sound document and graphic design to enhance the readability and success of professional documents.

You continue to apply design praxes to define, analyze, and respond to problems or situations that instigate projects.

You continue to demonstrate time management best-practices by keeping project logs and team meeting minutes.

You will continue to develop, maintain, and follow accurate style guides/manuals in order to ensure consistency of design and writing style on projects and in accordance with organizations’ professional personae.

You will identify the need to invent, design, and fabricate some “thing” in order to express an idea or emotion, or to solve a problem.

You get the chance to see how things are made and how they work.

You may consider existing designs to “hack” or “tinker” with them to see how things are made and how they work. (For example, why does Coke use red? Why that shape of bottle?)

You will need to identify and work effectively within your project restraints, including financial (how much do you want to spend?), temporal (how much time out of class can you invest?), and material (what would work to help you implement your design?).

You will need to brainstorm for a variety of solutions and choose the best one.

You will gain experience in creating and testing prototypes, in revising prototype designs over multiple iterations, and in taking intelligent risks and learning from failures. (That is, you will do much as you do in writing multiple drafts.)

## Project Requirements

Your MLP must include the following components:

- **Makers Literacies Research Component:** The ML program is conducting research to help university students learn about makerspaces and to promote Makers Literacies Competencies. In early February, you will receive a pre-assessment survey from the ML program. **To avoid a 10-point penalty to your overall Participation grade**, you must complete the informed consent section at the beginning of the survey. You may choose to participate in the research or not, but you must choose to avoid the Participation penalty. If you disagree, that concludes your requirement in regards to the Program’s research. If you agree, I ask you to complete the pre-assessment survey and the post-assessment survey (opening May 1). Librarian Martin Wallace will pass the information on which students have completed the informed consent to me by midterm.
- **The actual physical object you design:** You must bring your finished design to the last class on May 3 to show and discuss what you created with the class. You may **keep** your design, if you wish, but include high-resolution photos of your design in your reflection memo.
- **A 3-5 page reflection memo:** You will submit this memo on Blackboard in PDF and Word doc format.
- **Other supplemental documents:** Your style guide should reflect your memo’s formatting, but you should also have a section for design decisions you made for the object itself.



Your memo should be from you, to me, with date and subject lines.

**To:** Dr. Worlow  
**From:** Anne Onymous  
**Date:** May 3, 2018  
**Subject:** Reflection Memo on Parody UTA Souvenir Keychain

Use the following prompts as starting points to help you develop a general outline or organization for the memo.

1. **What?** You might consider questions like:
  - What happened?
  - What did you observe?
  - What issue did you address, or which population did you serve?
2. **So What?** You might consider questions like:
  - Did you learn a new skill or clarify an interest?
  - Did you experience anything surprising to you?
  - How was your experience different from what you expected?
  - What factors influence the way you perceive the project experience?
  - What did you like/dislike about the project?
  - Why did you make the design decisions you did?
  - What did you learn as you went through successive design iterations—as you tried and tested designs—before settling on the final design?
3. **Now What?** You might consider questions like:
  - What learning occurred for you during this project?
  - How can you apply this learning?
  - What would you like to learn more about or related to this project?
  - If you could do this project again, what would you do differently?<sup>1</sup>

Include high-resolution, full-color images of your design in your memo!

### Extra-Credit Opportunity

“Ready-made” designs include those existing designs that makers adapt, recontextualize, or repurpose for their use. You can think of it like a “remix.” For example, you could find a ready-made Nike logo online and edit it to make something different but based on the original design. You may do so on this assignment (though you should address your process in this regard in your reflection and offer citations in your Style Guide).



However, if you **avoid** using a ready-made design for this project and make your own, then I will award you +5 points extra-credit on this assignment’s overall grade (to a maximum grade of 105).

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted in part from Center for Community-Engaged Learning, “Reflection” (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2011).

## Other Requirements/Assignments

To help keep you on track as you work on this project—mostly outside of class over the course of the term—I will be requiring you to submit several progress report memos on Blackboard for daily grades. These memos should indicate you have met different project goals along the way. Progress reports are due by 11:59 PM on the days indicated.

1. **Progress Report due February 22:** Identify your tentative design idea. Are you doing a t-shirt? Are you doing a souvenir? **Declare your working project idea and outline your plan of action for the MLP over the next two weeks.**
2. **Progress Report due March 8:** What progress have you had in designing your object? **Include your current working thumbnail sketch and describe what you have done at the FabLab in learning how to implement your design. Tell me what you are doing over the next couple of weeks.**
3. **Progress Report due March 22:** Describe your work and progress with the FabLab thus far. Describe any problems or challenges you have had and how you have overcome them or are trying to overcome them. **Tell me what you are doing over the next couple of weeks.**
4. **Progress Report due April 5: Show me multiple photos of design prototypes and iterations and a description of your progress thus far. Tell me what you are doing over the next couple of weeks.**

## What to Turn In (Deliverables)

You **must** include the following documents when you submit the final draft on Blackboard. You can submit multiple files on Blackboard for this purpose. If you fail to include one or more of these documents, you will suffer penalties to your grade.

- Prepare an **audience profile** in which you analyze your target audience for the object you design. (-10 if missing)
- Prepare a quick **thumbnail** sketch to brainstorm how to design/layout the design. You can upload a scanned or photographed image of your thumbnail with the final draft. (-5 if missing)
- Develop a **style guide** to go with your MLP. Keep the organization's existing style, if any, in mind. (-10 if missing)
- Record your work progress on the project using **project logs**. (-10 if missing)
- **Show up for the May 3 class with your finished design as a finished object, ready to show it to the class and to discuss your project briefly. (-50 if you fail to do so)**
- Submit these documents (DOC or PDF) along with your **final reflection memo (PDF and Word format)** on Blackboard by the deadline for this assignment.



## MLP Rubric

- **Audience Analysis (10%):** Successful assignments consider their audience in terms of design and text.
- **Grammar/Spelling/Punctuation (10%):** Successful assignments avoid **any** grammar, spelling, punctuation, or capitalization errors.
- **Writing Style (20%):** Successful assignments avoid the writing style problems described in the textbook and in class, especially
  - No Actor in Subject & Passive Voice
  - No Action in Verb
  - Subject/Verb Separation
  - Non-Specific Language
  - Unnecessary Words
  - Negative Language
  - Paragraphs use effective topic sentences, clear organization, and transitions.
- **Overall Design (20%):** Successful assignments use an appropriate and consistent design, including (as appropriate):

Page Layout	Spacing	Body (serif)	Paragraph Chunking
Contrast	Alignment	White Space	Bulleted/Numbered Lists
Headings (sans serif)			

- Avoid awkward or excessive white space and leaving anything that looks out of place, crowded, or otherwise unappealing.
- Use color to lead the eye, not to decorate.
- **Avoid centering.**
- **Headings & Subheadings (10%):** Successful assignments use appropriate heading sizes, fonts, spacing, color, capitalization, and punctuation.
- **MLP Specific (30%):** Successful assignments adhere to the following requirements:
  - Reflection Memo must look like a professional product.
  - Final Design should look finished and professional. Avoid unprofessional touches such as handwritten parts, taped parts, etc.
  - Reflection Memo must include full color images of the Final Design.
  - Reflection Memo should succinctly address the What?, So What?, and Now What? questions outlined above and do so in 3-5 pages (12-point body, single-spaced, no cover page).
- **Deliverables:** You **must** include the following documents when you submit the final draft on Blackboard. You can submit multiple files on Blackboard for this purpose. If you fail to include one or more of these documents, you will suffer penalties to your grade.
  - Prepare an **audience profile** in which you analyze your target audience for the object you design. (-10 if missing)
  - Prepare a quick **thumbnail** sketch to brainstorm how to design/layout the design. You can upload a scanned or photographed image of your thumbnail with the final draft. (-5 if missing)
  - Develop a **style guide** to go with your MLP. Keep the organization's existing style, if any, in mind. (-10 if missing)



- Record your work progress on the project using **project logs**. (-10 if missing)
- **Show up for the May 3 class with your finished design as a finished object, ready to show it to the class and to discuss your project briefly. (-50 if you fail to do so)**
- Submit these documents (DOC or PDF) along with your **final reflection memo (PDF and Word format)** on Blackboard by the deadline for this assignment.