

Preparing your Infographics

What are infographics?

An infographic (or information graphic) is the visual representation of information, data or knowledge to convey complex information quickly, succinctly and clearly.

- Uses various visual elements (signs, charts, graphs, maps, diagrams, plans) to help presentation of text-based content.
- A format by which you can present a rich and detailed technical information concisely, allowing easier comprehension and digestion of this information.

What is the purpose of using infographics?

- To clearly communicate the results of your research;
- To present large quantities of data concisely and in an easy to understand way;
- To highlight the primary data and in particular to draw attention to relations and patterns which will reveal important social information.

The basic material of an infographic is the **core data** being presented in visual form.

You might choose graphs, charts, diagrams to convey numeric information. This can be supplemented with plans, stratigraphic sections, maps and photographs annotated, and using visuals such as lines, boxes, arrows, symbols or pictograms to highlight key information.

You should think about including a legend (a key to define the visual elements in plain English), also a scale and labels.

Different types of infographic

Statistical information

Information graphics intended to communicate complex statistical information quickly and clearly include charts, diagrams, graphs, and tables. For example you might want to illustrate demographic patterns (e.g. differential treatment according to age/sex), or wealth/status/gender differentials for example illustrated by patternings in distribution of grave goods. The graphics most commonly used to illustrate this type of information include horizontal bar charts, vertical column charts, and round or oval pie charts, which can be easily created in excel.

Diagrams can be used to show how a system works: these include organizational charts that shows lines of authority, or a systems flowchart that shows sequential movement (for example think about the appropriation of symbols and objects to advertise hybrid identities).

These graphics can/should be supplemented by images (photos, line drawings, plans etc.) to illustrate related data.

Timelines

Chronologies and changes over time are of particular interest to archaeologists dealing with shifts in funerary practices, beliefs and customs. A good way to convey how things change through time is a timeline: the presentation of a chronological sequence of events along a drawn line that enables a viewer to understand temporal relationships quickly. You might alternatively think of including a tabular chronology.

These devices can be supplemented by more detailed written information in chronologically organised paragraphs.

Space and Place

Another important thing to think about is where things happen – this can be geographical/regional location or more precisely pinpointing where things are placed within a particular tomb (and at different scales in between). Geography based infographics include maps (location maps for archaeologists), site plans, tomb plans, etc. Geographic infographics include symbols, icons, diagrams, graphs, tables, arrows and bullets (for example to show movement of goods, people etc). It is important here to mark north (to geographically contextualise your infographic) and scale.

How to create your infographic

We will be using a poster format: aim for size A1. The best format to use is PowerPoint.

The point of the exercise is to facilitate your viewer's understanding of complex data, not to complicate something that is simple. To achieve this, you need to have a clear understanding of your goal and your audience. Think about:

1. Why?
2. How?
3. Does it Work?

Why?

Why do you want to create your infographic? What is it for? What is your goal? What do you want to demonstrate about demographics, gender, identity, wealth, status or commemoration within the funerary arena? What is your core dataset (a single burial, a cemetery, comparisons between cemeteries from a specific region/time period)? Are you focusing on the physical human remains, grave goods, funerary monuments?

You need to answer these questions to allow you to collect the relevant data, be it quantitative, sequential, categorical, analytical etc.

How?

Once you know what you want to communicate and why you can start thinking about the best type(s) of infographic to communicate this: how will you organise and present your data. Information graphics should highlight differential patternings your data, and should help you to communicate your results clearly. You should choose the most effective visual metaphor.

Does it work?

Have you chosen the most effective medium to convey your message? Thinking about this is critical: does your end result fit your intended aim? Don't be afraid to revise and experiment with different types of graphic until you are happy with the result.

Presentation

How you lay out your information is an important aspect of the presentation. Choice of colour, font and images are important.

Typography (choice of font): always go for sans serif fonts and think about appropriate font size for an A1 poster. Modifying the size of fonts can help you to organise data according to importance.

Colour: choice and combination of colour, reducing the saturation for information you deem to be less important and increasing it for the most relevant data,

Don't be afraid to remove information if it does not contribute to the information you are trying to communicate: eliminate anything that doesn't help you to present your data clearly and succinctly (e.g. irrelevant grids, redundant data, and unnecessary labels). This can produce surprisingly improved results. Be careful not to lose relevant information though!