MSU Creative Services is an in-house creative agency within University Communications.  

4 Designers  
75+ Years of Design Combined Experience  

Graphic Design · Illustration · Web and Social Media Graphics · Displays and Banners  

Award-winning work
We are fully integrated with the MSU News Service and MSU’s marketing, visual media, and web communications departments.

$75 Design charge per Hour
MSU Creative Services Designers

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How to communicate with a graphic designer
Tip No. 1

About Designers

- Graphic designers are not typically scientists.
- But they are experts at communicating complicated ideas and concepts to a wide variety of audiences.
- Designers love to solve visual problems.
A NOTABLE EXCEPTION
Tip No. 2
Know what you want

• Questions to answer first: Is the graphic or illustration meant to tell a story? Example: sequential series of illustrations, or stand-alone.

• How will it be used?
  o printed in journal or book
  o Online or digital only
  o Poster or large format
Tip
No. 3
Provide clarity

• Be very clear on your needs.

• It is important to determine the focus of the illustration before getting started.

• BONUS TIP: MSU News Service has writers who can help you translate content for designers.
Tip No. 4

Give it the once over—maybe twice

• Before you meet with the designer, make sure your concept is fully vetted, and the desired end-result is clear to you.

• Understand that significant changes result in significant delays and increased costs.
Different types of illustrations
Types of Illustration:
Hand-drawn

- Hand-drawn graphics are appropriate for certain uses, including books and other publications.
- Hand-drawn graphics take more time to produce.
Types of Illustration: Digital graphics

- Digital graphics can be created more quickly, due to the ability to duplicate and alter existing pieces of the illustration. They also allow for smooth color gradients.
Types of Illustration: Digital diagrams

- Digital graphics can make the functions of complicated systems immediately understandable. In this case, a flat illustration style is used to simplify a system into a diagram.
Tip No. 5
Get Ready

• Provide examples of what you want the designer to illustrate — and the style you are seeking: realistic, figurative or conceptual.

• Let the designer know of any elements that they should avoid.

• Provide source materials such as photos, diagrams, charts or figures.
Glacier Carbon Cycle

• An illustration of carbon cycling within glacial ice was created for a scientific journal and was later modified to be used as a poster for a lecture.
Glacier Carbon Cycle
Source Images

• Photos, figures and captions provided the source for the final illustration.
Eclipse Ballooning Project

• Digital graphics can clearly depict the progression of stages of a research project.
Graphic diagrams

• Diagram showing the vaccine legacy of Maurice Hilleman, for *Mountains & Minds* magazine.
Tip No. 6

Set Expectations

• Lead time is important — especially for complicated illustrations that can take weeks or months, going back and forth with the designer.

• Several rounds of minor changes are to be expected. Try to keep major revisions to a minimum, so you don’t go over budget or miss a publication deadline.
Tip

No. 7

Be involved — and be direct

• A successful project requires the active involvement of the researcher as well as the designer/illustrator.

• Be available for questions or to review draft versions. Be honest early on if you think the direction is off. Early course correction saves time and money.
More ways illustrations can be used for Impact
Event posters

• Illustrations can be used to promote events. Well-executed graphics can bring attention to the academic excellence of a research unit.
Illustrating abstract concepts

• Intriguing abstract designs can capture the essence of exploration and discovery integral to a research unit.
Illustrating abstract concepts

- For promotional pieces such as event posters, a good designer will create a design that will appeal to the audience. A student-targeted design can be more playful.
Lecture posters

• Abstract conceptual images can communicate a highly complicated topic in a simple impactful way to promote an event or program.
Illustrating an announcement

- Bold graphics and colors can help an announcement of a new academic program stand out in a crowded hall.
Illustrating facilities

- Simplified floorplans of research and academic buildings can explain to the public how the structures enhance academic success.
Illustrating facilities

• Combining illustrations and photography can bring a research space to life.
Illustrating numbers

- An example of how a well-designed illustrated chart can showcase basic information in an appealing and informative manner.
Illustrating facts

- A well-designed chart can present facts and figures in an engaging way and make information accessible.
Publication Design + Illustration

• Graphic design can turn a journal into a professional-looking publication, while providing a structure that can be edited and reused.
We’re here to help.

How to get started:

Call Ron at ext. 5128 or email: rlambert@montana.edu
Thank You.
We look forward to working with you.

University Communications
Creative Services
Contact Ron Lambert  ext. 5128
rlambert@montana.edu