

Documenting the Design Process: Validation of Professional Development for Dossiers

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As a scholar working in specialized fields and attending content-specific conferences it is easy to overlook the importance of explaining how you get to the design, oral research paper, published abstract, pedagogical presentation, audition, or performance. Not all areas of academia approach research in the same way; it is my responsibility as a professor to justify the design research and validate the process used in order to get to work that is considered commendable within my field of study. I have made creative contributions to my discipline and have presented and published these innovative ventures in artistic and academic settings. Inspired by specific time periods, steampunk subcultures, and creative themes, I have designed garments that have been awarded places in gallery exhibits and on the runway. Inspired by historic costume, character development, and context, I have built costumes for entire casts and presented the design research at juried poster session. Inspired by body modification, architectural clothing, and structural analysis, I have presented oral design research papers at regional and national symposiums about my ongoing work: creating deconstructed garments to expose their sculptural qualities. I have even had the opportunity to share my work with a solo design exhibit at a university's gallery.

Prior to my tenure review, I had not been able to easily document the process of these accomplishments. In order to illustrate my work in the world of fashion and costume I created a collection charts, steps, and timelines to help clarify the design specific competitions, projects, and publications. The methodology used in setting up this collection of information is general to specific.



Figure 1: Project Timeline

To the right, Figure 1 represents a consolidated timeline. The colored blocks within the calendars illustrate each individual scholarship project and the time period it takes for its completion. There are many instances when projects overlap. Certain projects take longer from start to finish but there are more lulls in the process where as other projects have a shorter time frame but are much more intense. The two colors classify the projects into two distinct categories: green for fashion design and research for professional organizations and aqua for costume design and production for theatre. In addition I created a detailed list of all the scholarship projects which are depicted on the calendars. They are itemized chronologically and categorically. The two categories are broken down by the professional organizations and theatres.

There are many different types of established models for the design process all of which have a set of steps where you identify, ideate, implement, and evaluate. For me the process is not linear; each project allows my steps to fluctuate in sequence and importance. Again using the system I developed I can explain the relevance of each step involved to get to the finished work. Below Figure 2 represents the generalized steps in my design process for seven different types of project categories:

1. Oral Design Research Papers
2. Live or Mounted Gallery Exhibit Garment Designs
3. Design Research Exhibits
4. Teaching/Research Group Breakout sessions
5. Design/Art Show
6. Project Runway Auditions
7. Costume Design

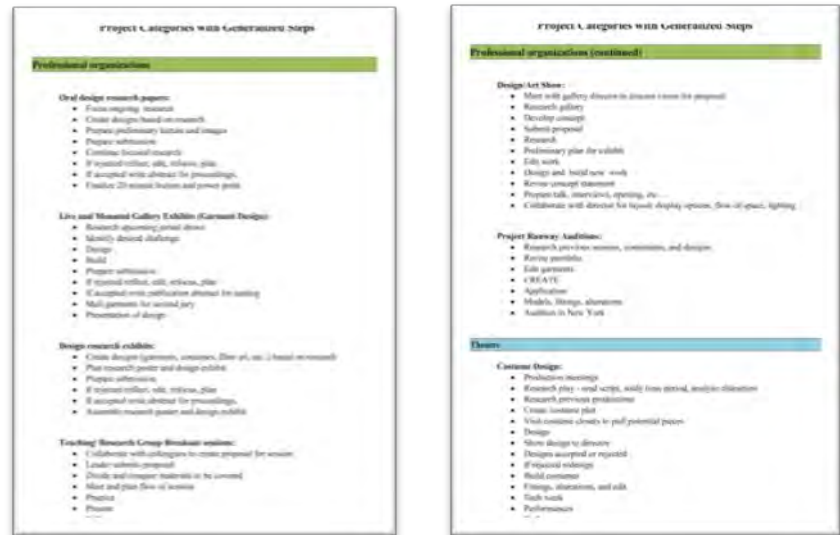


Figure 2: Project categories with generalized steps

The generalized steps are only meant to act as a framework. When each project is individually documented the order of steps may change. All of the projects seen on the timeline calendar have been presented and published in various venues and each design has gone through a similar process, however the inspiration, steps, construction techniques, meaning, and result was truly different .

Every artist has their own design process and as long as you know what yours is you can create, document and validate your professional development successfully.