graduating thinkers with curious minds

Hardware/Software Recommendations

Years 2013 & 2014

(revised 06/06/13)
Overview

The BGSU School of Art, Division of Graphic Design (BGSUGD) is an intense, studio-based program taught within the context of a traditional art school model. This “traditional” approach—while built around the historical underpinnings of an art foundation structure (First-Year Program)—does not preclude majors from utilizing computers in their learning experiences; in fact, for over twenty years, quite the opposite has held true. The School of Art, as a whole, encourages all students and faculty to explore this progressive, and at times, vital medium, and to incorporate its use whenever and wherever appropriate. As a consequence, all School of Art majors have access to Microsoft® Windows-based and Apple Macintosh® computer labs outfitted with the latest and most common software applications. These labs are routinely upgraded on multi-year cycles, or as required, to ensure that our students are gaining access to the latest and most powerful equipment available.

BGSUGD Computer Labs Access

BGSUGD maintains two separate Macintosh labs, one located within the Fine Arts Center building and the other in the Wolfe Center for the Arts. These labs provide teaching spaces for classroom instruction, as well as allow individual students the opportunity to utilize. When classes are not being held in our primary lab (FAC 1030, i.e. the “CAVE Lab”), and if the lab has open use hours (when class is not in session) and it is being monitored, student access is unlimited. This lab typically operates seven days a week: M–F from 8am–11pm or later; weekends from 11am–9pm or later (upcoming hours dependant on available funding). Since our primary lab has historically met the demands of the entire School of Art population during non-class meeting times, our secondary lab (WCA 243, Wolfe Center for the Arts) operates solely as a teaching lab, with access limited to class meeting times only.

Self-Purchasing Guidance

Currently there is no mandated laptop program in place for BGSUGD majors (nor School of Art majors in general). That stated, if a prospective or current Graphic Design major wishes to consider purchasing hardware and/or software, to be used as a supplement or substitute to the open computer labs in the Fine Arts Center building (School of Art) and across campus, and they wish to use the computer primarily and specifically in their Graphic Design courses, certain minimum requirements must be met, to ensure parity with the University-provided and -maintained computer labs, and most importantly, to ensure that hardware and/or software performance remains at an acceptable level for proper productivity in and out of the classroom.

Thus, the Division is voluntarily offering hardware and software specifications and advice for independent review purposes only. While the Division takes extreme care to keep this information up-to-date and in-line with the overall requirements of its curriculum and faculty, it assumes no liability or responsibility for final purchase decisions, the maintenance of such purchases, or the direct or indirect result of such purchases on individual performance in any BGSU course or degree program. The Division hopes that the information provided herein is helpful to you in making an informed hardware/software purchasing decision. If you have any questions or comments concerning anything outlined in this document, please talk with your advisor or your instructor.

Best regards,

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The Division highly recommends Apple Macintosh computers, since the vast majority of the professional graphic design industry works on Mac’s. The expectation upon graduation is that students know the Apple Macintosh operating system and the software that runs on it, inside-out. In addition, both of our BGSUGD labs are outfitted with state-of-the-art Macintosh workstations, and all of our faculty work on them every day (true, Windows-based computers can run most of the graphic-design oriented software applications taught in our program, but please note that all program instruction will be Mac-based only).

Students are encouraged to purchase an Apple laptop over a desktop unit. Logically, the portability factor far outweighs the slight increase in purchase cost. Students routinely use their laptops in the classroom, rather than having to temporarily relocate to our main lab. In addition, there is now adequate screen resolution and computing power across the entire MacBook Pro lines to make the laptop choice an appropriate one (see “Minimally Recommended” and “Recommended,” below).

There are far too many vendor choices and possible configurations to recommend a specific Windows-based laptop configuration, but, if you are considering a Windows-based laptop, a good rule of thumb is to match or exceed the specifications of the recommended Apple laptops, below. There are numerous online and brick-and-mortar stores that sell Apple computers, but its is highly recommended that you instead purchase them from an online educational re-seller or the official Apple.com BGSU online store. The pricing discounts are typically 10–15% off retail pricing.

(All specs as of June 2013, store.apple.com; purchasing an AppleCare 3-Year Protection Plan is strongly recommended)

15-inch: 2.4, 2.7 or 2.8 GHz Retina display MacBook Pro (RECOMMENDED)
Specs: 2880 x 1800 screen resolution; 4GB RAM (configurable up to 16GB), strong graphics processor, very high native screen resolution that allows for numerous palettes and large application windows, plenty of ports, large internal, hard drive, fast wi-fi, long battery life.

15" 2.3 or 2.6 GHz MacBook Pro (MINIMALLY RECOMMENDED)
Specs: configurable up to 1680 x 1050 screen resolution, “antiglare” display recommended (“gloss” offers too much reflection); 1440 x 900 native resolution; 4GB RAM (configurable up to 8GB), strong graphics processor; high native screen resolution that allows for several palettes and application windows; plenty of ports; large internal hard drive; fast wi-fi; long battery life.

13" MacBook Pro (NOT RECOMMENDED)
The 13-inch models screen size and native resolution is too small for working with modern applications that have numerous palettes. Thus, the Division cannot recommend this laptop.

11" & 13" MacBook Air (NOT RECOMMENDED)
Although beautiful and ultra-thin, the Division cannot yet recommend this laptop line due to its 11- and 13-inch screen sizes, lower screen resolutions, lower processing power, limited expansion, relatively small hard drives (64–256GB flash storage), and shorter battery life (5–7 hours).
Recommended Additional Hardware

There are numerous external devices and internal upgrades that can be added to most computer systems. None are more important than upgrading your computer’s memory (RAM) and purchasing an external hard drive for back-up (all hard drives fail eventually) and additional storage. The Division highly recommends that students consider both purchases, to accompany their main computer purchase.

There are plenty of online and brick-and-mortar stores that sell these products, but its is highly recommended that you instead purchase software from an online educational re-seller or the BGSU’s bookstore. The pricing discounts can be substantial.

Memory Upgrade (RECOMMENDED)

Extra RAM (computer memory) is always a cheap way to boost speed and performance, and can be obtained, affordably, from sources other than Apple (whose pricing on RAM is consistently above market rate). High quality, Apple-approved RAM can be obtained from these trusted sources:

- **OWC (Other World Computing)**
  www.macsales.com

- **Crucial**
  www.crucial.com

- **MacMall**
  www.macmall.com

- **MacWarehouse / CDW**
  www.macwarehouse.com

**NOTE:** Although cheap and easy to transport, Memory Sticks are NOT considered safe or reliable storage devices, and should never be used to as primary storage for original files.

External HD storage (RECOMMENDED)

The Division highly recommends that all students owning a laptop or desktop computer purchase an external storage hard drive, in order to back up all personal files, in the chance that one’s internal CPU hard drive fails (external hard drives can also supplement storage limits on your internal hard drive). Options and storage sizes are now inexpensive and plentiful, and all major manufacturers offer drives that can be formatted to run on either Mac’s or PC’s. External drives with multiple port options are highly recommended: USB 2.0/3.0 and Firewire 400/800 are the two most common port types, with super-fast throughput eSATA and Thunderbolt drives becoming increasingly common and more competitively priced. (NOTE: your computer must have an eSATA or Thunderbolt port in order to use these newer ports). Solid State Drives (SSD) are still relatively expensive, but are extremely fast and have no moving parts, so they are also much less prone to failure compared to traditional optical hard drives. A few quality drive manufacturers follow:

- **OWC (Other World Computing)**
  www.macsales.com

- **G-Technology**
  www.g-technology.com

- **LaCie**
  www.lacie.com/us/index.htm

- **Western Digital**
  www.wdc.com
Recommended Software

There are only a few, but vitally important, software applications that graphic designers utilize each and every day in their studios. These software applications cover the two main areas of graphic design: print and web. Adobe Systems is currently the Division’s software vendor of choice for page layout, image manipulation and illustration application solutions. All classroom instruction revolves around using these applications. Alternate applications are not recommended by the Division at this time. Most hiring companies specifically demand that exiting graphic design graduates have a general proficiency and competency using the Adobe Creative Suite. The Division constantly monitors application preferences in the workplace and makes adjustments accordingly, in order to graduate the most prepared students possible.

There are plenty of online and brick-and-mortar stores that sell these products, but its is highly recommended that you instead purchase software from an online educational re-seller or the BGSU’s bookstore. The pricing discounts can be substantial (10–90% off retail pricing).


ADOBE® CREATIVE SUITE® (CS) 6 Extra RAM
DESIGN STANDARD (MIN. RECOMMENDED)
Photoshop®
Illustrator®
InDesign®
Acrobat® X Pro
Bridge
Media Encoder

ADOBE® CREATIVE SUITE® (CS) 6 DESIGN & WEB PREMIUM (RECOMMENDED)
This suite builds upon Design Standard by including additional software (in bold) that includes web and new media-based software and tools that are beginning to be more fully taught and utilized in the BGSUGD program. This suite of software applications includes the following:

Photoshop Extended
Illustrator
InDesign
Dreamweaver
Fireworks®
Acrobat Pro
Bridge
Media Encoder

SOFTWARE AVAILABLE 06/2013
ADOBE CREATIVE CLOUD, CC (MIN. RECOMMENDED)
Photoshop®
Illustrator®
InDesign®
Acrobat® X Pro
Bridge
Media Encoder

ADOBE® CREATIVE SUITE® (CS) 6 DESIGN & WEB PREMIUM (RECOMMENDED)
Photoshop Extended
Illustrator
InDesign
Dreamweaver
Fireworks®
Acrobat Pro
Bridge
Media Encoder

This software is cloud based and is utilized online through a monthly fee, however, students receive a substantial discount. Please go to adobe.com/products/creativecloud for more information.
Recommended Typefaces

Most computer companies bundle typefaces with computers. Some are required to run the operating system, others are just thrown in for various reasons, and some even come with software applications. Regardless, the Division has a strict typeface usage policy that becomes less restrictive as students progress through the program. The following typefaces are approved through one’s Sophomore and Junior years, respectively. Purchasing at least the “Foundation Typeface Library” typefaces is recommended as it will meet most design needs for at least the first three years of the program. **NOTE: All of these fonts are installed on all computers in both Division labs, but cannot be transferred (copied) to another, or personal computer, due to strict software licensing terms. Further, the Division does not tolerate, and will report to the proper authorities, all cases of software piracy of any kind.**

There are numerous online typeface foundries that sell the below typeface families (each listed typeface has multiple styles and weights included, such as bold, italic, etc.), Adobe being the largest. Look for OpenType (OTF) versions over PostScript or TrueType, as OpenType versions work cross-platform and are more comprehensive in character style and weight offerings.

**Foundation Library (RECOMMENDED)**
- ITC New Baskerville Std
- Bodoni Std
- Adobe Caslon Pro
- Centaur MT Std
- ITC Franklin Gothic Std
- Futura Std
- ITC Galliard Std
- Adobe Garamond Pro
- Gill Sans Std
- Goudy Oldstyle Std
- Helvetica LT Std
- Helvetica Neue LT Std
- Adobe Jenson Pro
- Letter Gothic Std
- Myriad Pro
- Optima LT Std
- Palatino LT Std
- Times Std
- Univers LT Std

**Advanced Library (RECOMMENDED, after passing GD Sophomore Review)**
- All of the “Foundation Typeface Library,” plus the following:
  - ITC Avant Garde Gothic Std
  - Avenir LT Std
  - Bell Centennial Std
  - Bembo Std
  - Bernhard Modern Std
  - ITC Bookman Std
  - New Caledonia LT Std
  - Centennial LT Std
  - New Century Schoolbook LT Std
  - ITC Cheltenham Std
  - Clarendon LT Std
  - Copperplate Gothic Std
  - Didot LT Std

- Frutiger LT Std
- Simoncini Garamond Std
- Stempel Garamond LT Std
- Janson Text LT Std
- Lithos Pro
- Memphis LT Std
- Minion Pro
- News Gothic Std
- Nuptial Script Lt Std
- OCR A & B Std
- Perpetua Std
- Poetica Std
- Rockwell Std
- Sabon LT Std
- Serifa Std
- Snell Roundhand LT Std
- Stone Sans & Serif Std
- Trade Gothic LT Std
- Trajan Pro
- Trump Medieval LT Std
- Waters Titling Pro
- Weiss Std