**Fact Sheet: The Role of a Poster**

The basic difference between the poster and other visual communication methods is that the poster speaks to the audience "on the move." Pieces such as folders, brochures and booklets are designed for the reader who has time to stand or sit and read for a while. A poster must capture the attention and get the message across in a matter of seconds. It must capture the reader's interest in taking the desired action through a brief message packed with punch and detail!

**Characteristics of a Good Poster**

- A good poster tells the story quickly
- It must be grab attention
- The message must be convincing
- Creative use of colour is important
- An effective poster should reflect simplicity

**Design Qualities of a Poster**

1. A good poster reflects a balance between different design features. There are two kinds of balance:
   
   (a) Formal balance (also referred to as symmetrical design).
   
   (b) Informal or asymmetrical balance (a design with variations on either side of an imaginary central vertical line).

   The choice of balance is entirely up to you, and depends greatly on the purpose and content of your poster. Symmetrical balance can be useful for posters.

2. **Design movement** is the systematic directing of the viewer's eye from one part of the poster to another. People have a natural tendency to read down a page and to the right, as illustrated here.

A good poster design will incorporate this principle into the positioning of particular elements. For example, a large heading or slogan in the upper left corner will catch the initial attention of the viewer, since this is the position where their eye will naturally start. Similarly, position contact details, company logos and slogans at the lower right corner of the poster, in order to provide the interested reader with such content immediately after they have read the main body of the poster.
3. A poster should also be designed in a way that demonstrates **unity** between the component parts. Each section should be positioned to support, define and lead to other areas of the poster. This can be achieved through the following methods:

(a) Overlapping various sections and areas of the design

(b) Using lines and borders to define certain areas or group several elements

(c) Altering background colours and features to highlight certain areas.

4. **Emphasis** is a vital aspect of poster design. You might think that several features of a poster (slogan, heading, illustration, etc) are important for the viewer to see first. These details can emphasised in several ways, such as:

(a) Increasing the size of fonts or illustrations

(b) Contrasting the colours of different sections

(c) Using white space to break the poster into identifiable sections

(d) Contrasting the background behind the illustration or lettering.