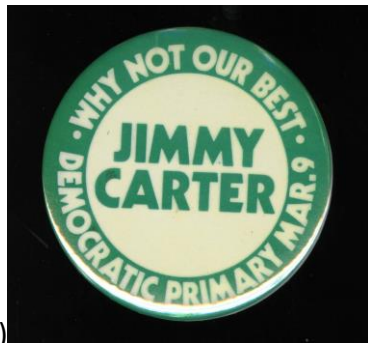# EXPLORE WITH THE COLUMBUS MUSEUM

(1)

(2)

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Campaign Buttons

Did you know that campaign buttons have been in use since the first presidential election in 1789? Though their form has changed over the years due to advances in technology, campaign buttons continue to feature in today's political arena.

Take a close look at these campaign buttons in the collection of The Columbus Museum. What is similar? What is different? (Consider themes, slogans, colors, imagery, and lettering.)

These campaign buttons are from Jimmy Carter's 1976 bid for the Presidency of the United States. What can these buttons tell you about Carter and his campaign? Look again. Buttons 2 and 3 reference specific primary elections, while buttons 1 and 4 were made for the general election. In a primary election candidates run against members of their own party (Democrats against Democrats, Republicans against Republicans, etc.) to determine who will represent the party in the upcoming general election. How has the message changed between the primary and the general election?

In political marketing campaigns design choices matter – they can literally help a candidate win or lose an election. Notice how the first button uses a symbol as well as text to identify the candidate. Another design element used by the Carter campaign was color. In addition to the more conventional color choices of red, white, and blue, Carter's campaign buttons often featured a fourth color, green, as a nod to his agrarian roots. Why might Carter have chosen to highlight this aspect of his history? To whom is he trying to appeal? What design choices do you find most effective?

Interested in learning more about Jimmy Carter's presidential campaign? Click here!

In addition to campaign buttons, candidates have a wide variety of marketing materials to choose from, such as yard signs, banners, and mailers. Each of these materials have the ability to shape our perception of a candidate and, ultimately, sway the way we vote. Think about the types of political advertising you have seen. What makes them memorable? What do you think might be the strengths and weaknesses of the campaign button as a political advertisement?

THE COLUMBUS MUSEUM
columbusmuseum.com

Campaign Buttons
(Continued)

Design your own campaign button! Imagine that you are considering a run for your local school board. School boards have a wide array of responsibilities, such as setting the yearly budget, approving contracts for teachers, and establishing goals and policies for the district.

As you plan your design, remember to consider color, lettering, composition, and the message to be conveyed. What do you want your constituents to know?
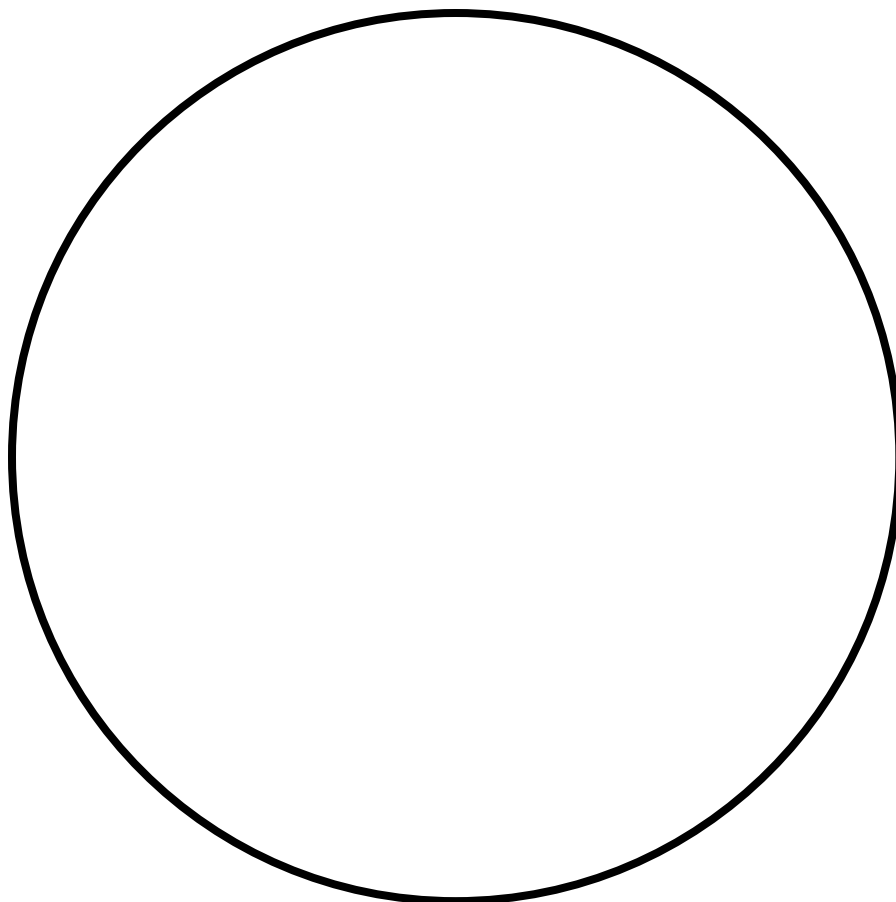
Reflect! What was the most difficult part of designing your campaign button? The easiest? Why do you think this was the case?