



Arts and Sciences Documentation Getting Started

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INTRODUCTION

This is a question I get asked very often: Where do I even begin if I want to enter and Arts and Sciences Faire project? In this essay, I will cover a few topics that will help you overall with your project and specifically with your documentation.

Find an Inspiration

Start with an inspiration of a medieval object, poem, recipe, or craft. Find examples of the thing you wish to present from the medieval period. Making a cool thing and then trying to document it later can get you in a real pickle, so if you want to enter the Art/Sci Faire, start with an actual medieval inspiration piece that you can document. It's best to pick something you are excited about researching and creating.

1. Understand your Inspiration

How was it made? How was it used? What materials and methods were used to create it? When and where would it have existed and been used? What was the purpose of the inspiration piece you have chosen. Once you understand the piece, you can hone your skills to create an Art/Sci entry where you bring together medieval technique, ingredients, materials and information.

2. Find Other Examples

As you get to understand your inspiration item, look for medieval items from the same time period or location that might be similar to your inspiration. When you have several examples to consider, you may develop a better understanding of your piece and even a more detailed concept of how it was made or done in period.

3. Find Sources

Research and locate sources that help you understand your project more fully and best explain the process. If you discover you are having a hard time finding information sources, try local libraries, Laurels and Arts and Sciences officers.

A. Primary Sources

Primary sources are the ones that allow the entrant and judges to get the closest understanding. Images of medieval objects, first hand accounts from the period and publications that provide research and empirical observation, like archaeological surveys.

You should have at least one primary source for your entry. The more the merrier.

B. Secondary Sources

Secondary sources synthesize, analyze, review and summarize primary sources. A description of an item is a secondary source unless it is made from direct observation of the original.

C. Tertiary Sources

Tertiary Sources usually provide an overview of information from primary and secondary sources.

Determine what you will need to get started

1. Materials, resources, and supplies

Make sure you understand what supplies and skills you will need. Will you need to purchase items or supplies? Will you need help in a skill? Will you have to substitute items, materials, or processes for cost or safety? If your item is not a static entry, you may still have resources and materials that you need to gather from resources to vocabulary studies.

2. Mentors and guides

Who might be a good resource if you get stuck? If you don't already know someone online or in your local group who is familiar with your topic, ask around. You may not need to reach out for help, but if you get stuck with a question or need a resource, having someone to talk to can help you clarify your ideas. This person or persons can also be a great resource if you decide you want to research more about the topic later.

Basic Documentation

1. How was it done in the middle ages

In the middle ages, how was this piece made? What processes were used?

2. What materials were used in the middle ages?

What materials (ingredients, words, etc) were used to make the piece?

3. How did you do it?

What steps did you take to make the piece? Taking photos as you work can help you keep track of your own process.

4. What materials did you use?

What materials (ingredients, words, etc.) did you use to make the piece?

5. What are the differences between the inspiration piece and your entry?

Did you do something different in your process than medieval people would? Did you use different materials? Did you change the design or outcome? Does it look different?

6. Why do those differences exist?

Why did you choose to use a different process than they would have in the medieval world? Why did you choose different materials? Remember, substitutions and changes in your process are acceptable if you explain why you chose them. It's possible that your materials were too expensive or dangerous, or that you don't speak the native language that a poem was first written in. Explain to the reader why you made the choices you did.

Organizing Your Documentation

1. Table of Contents

The table of contents should tell the judge or reader on which pages they can find information about various topics.

2. About your inspiration piece

Include a picture, medieval recipe, or a primary source image for static displays. Always explain where the images were found and what they are depicting or explaining. Explain what the piece was used for, who created it, who might have used it and provide a little background information.

3. Medieval methods & materials

In this portion of your information, explain each method, tool or material that would have been used to create the piece in the middle ages. Cite your sources on your information.

4. Your methods & materials

In this section, explain each method, tool or material that you used to create your entry. For each medieval component you explain, you should have a corresponding explanation for the components you used.

5. Substitutions

Here you explain what differences exist between your piece and the inspiration piece. If a material was too toxic or expensive, you may have substituted a modern material that would closely approximate the medieval option.

6. Bibliography

Cite all of the sources that you referenced or used in your research. It might be 2 sources, it might be 40. Plenty of websites can help you format a bibliography. Arts and Science Faires don't require one particular style or format, just that the information be presented in a way that is easy to reference and understand.



Consider the Future

If you plan on entering Arts and Sciences Faires again in the same or similar categories consider creating sections in your documentation that can be re-used. If you enter a leatherworking piece, your information on methods and materials used for preparing medieval leather might not change much. In your next entry you can shift that whole section to your new documentation and only make minor edits to re-use it.

For Example:

As a scribe, I keep documentation sub-files on making ink, cutting quills, vellum preparation, pigments, paint brushes, etc. As I enter a new piece, I can copy and paste those sections into my new documentation and just make small changes where it refers to the entry. I like to provide medieval method/material, my method/material, substitutions used and a section bibliography for each sub-file.

When You Are Done with Your Project

1. Check it over

Once you are done, it's a good idea to have someone else read over your documentation, even when you are just starting out. A second pair of eyes can find things that you missed. For example, did you actually list all your tools? Did you skip a step you should have described?

Setting Up At The Art Sci Fair

1. Pre-Register

You can pre-register your entry for Regional and Kingdom Arts and Sciences Faires. Pre-registered entries allow Art/Sci staff to find judges in advance for pieces, especially ones that might be on very rare topics. Not everyone is familiar with 13th century

French Court Dance, but if you pre-register your entry and explain the topic, you have a better chance of a judge being found who is familiar with your topic. This makes life easier for pretty much everyone involved.

2. Sign-in when you arrive

Once you've arrived at the Faire, go to the registration desk and sign in. They will generally give you a table spot or number and a place to set up. Most of the time, you will be limited to about half a table of space. If you need more space, make sure to pre-register with your needs.

3. Set up your piece

Put a cloth on the table if your item is small and going on a table top. If your item is smaller, you might want to slide a box under the cloth to prop it up or show it off better. Display your work neatly and attractively.

4. Focus on your item

If it's an item, make sure the item is the most noticeable thing in your display. If you are entering a written piece, consider printing it and putting it up visually in a frame or on a small display. You can include a few of the period tools or items you may have used to make the entry, but don't clutter your display with too many objects. You want your entry to be the focus.

5. Have copies of your documentation

Try to have at least two copies of your documentation for judges to access. Three is ideal.

6. Decide whether to stay with your piece or not

You may absolutely stay with your piece during judging if you'd like to converse with the judges, ask questions, or have questions answered. Many judges prefer this as it turns the experience into more of a learning conversation. Of course, if you are shy, uncomfortable, or have other obligations, you do not have to remain.

7. Pick up your piece at the appropriate time

Later in the day, you will be asked to pick up your entry and your judging forms. Please do not arrive early or late to do so as the hall may be needed for other things and, generally, populace voting occurs at some point after formal judging ends.

After the Faire

1. Contact your judges for more information

If you are confused or have questions about commentary or scoring on your piece, please contact your judges. Art Sci is supposed to be a learning experience so these conversations are important. Often you will find notes from your judges asking you to contact them so they can provide you with information, additional resources or just geek out about how cool your entry was.

2. Focus on the feedback and the learning

The score is just a number for competition. While competition can be valuable, the real value of art sci is learning. Focus on the feedback, what you learned, and what you could learn in the future.