

Introduction

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This issue of the Interdisciplinary Journal of Signage and Wayfinding begins the second half of our first decade of publication as the only academic journal dedicated exclusively to signage and wayfinding research. Since Volume 1, Number 1 of IJSW was posted in December 2016 much has happened in the world, with significant advances in signage and wayfinding digital technology, and signage research methodologies, specifically (e.g. wearable eye-tracking hardware). And of course, the unforeseen and devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have led to multiple low- and high-tech innovations in visual communications that have raised numerous and interesting research questions.

This issue of IJSW celebrates our sixth year by “Looking Back, Looking Forward and Recognizing the Importance of Signage Research” and begins with an extended interview with Jim Weinel. While those involved with signage research in the U.S. will recognize Jim, and his late wife Sharon, as ardent advocates for science-based academic signage research, others may gain new insight to their important roles. Indeed, it was through the generous support of Jim and Sharon Weinel, together with the vision and the organizational acumen of Dawn Jourdan, that the Academic Advisory Council for Signage Research and Education (AACSRE) and this journal (IJSW) became a reality. The interview with Jim seeks to reveal his vision for how rigorous academic signage and wayfinding research can contribute to the improved design, placement and regulation of signs as part of enhancing the critically important social functions they serve.

The other contributions to this issue have been selected to reinforce this understanding of the importance of the Weinels’ support for signage research, and how the resultant research is having important

impacts. Dawn Jourdan's article on the origins of AACRSRE and IJSW builds on and complements the interview with Jim Weinel by explaining the need for and recent history of academic signage research. Charles (Ray) Taylor contributes a systematic overview of the multidisciplinary nature and broad impacts of the signage research that has arisen from AACRSRE and been published in IJSW as a result of the Weinels' support. Similarly, Steve Kopp's review of the many successes of the AACRSRE's Emerging Fellows Program, supported by the Weinels and prosperous under Kopp's leadership, provides insight to the need for such forward-looking programs to continue to attract bright new scholars to the signage research field. Chris Auffrey's article about the emergence of the American Sign Museum under Tod Swormstedt's leadership and the Weinels' support, emphasizes the importance of the institution for signage and wayfinding research. It also highlights how the American Sign museum and similar institutions help provide a social as well as academic understanding of the past, present and future roles of signs.