



Editor's Introduction

Pat Crawford

Director
School of Design
South Dakota State University

pat.crawford@sdstate.edu

Robert Dalton

Assistant Professor
School of Design
South Dakota State University

Marisa Ten Brink

Assistant Professor
School of Design
South Dakota State University

This issue of the Interdisciplinary Journal of Signage and Wayfinding highlights the importance of respecting diversity in signage. As our world becomes ever more connected, signage can influence groups previously not engaged in a location. Such people may speak a different language, have different values, or simply may be visiting for the first time. Our collective knowledge in signage research allows us to be flexible and adaptable, meeting the needs of diverse audiences in diverse places.

In the first article, "Bilingual Signs: How Language Influences Shoppers" written by Susan Powell Mantel and James J. Kellaris, uses a mixed-method approach to highlight the effects of bilingual signs for possible customers. In the United States context, a sign with one language may be authentic to a specific group and create a sense of sophistication or authenticity, such signs may cause potential customers who do not speak the language to disengage. Bilingual signs, specifically in English and Spanish, Mantel and Kellaris find, provide for more diverse audiences as both language groups feel included. Both English and Spanish speaking people found the signs to demonstrate a cultural competency to deliver quality products for the customer. Bilingual signs provide heuristic triggers (non-conscious) for the customers, an ever "moving target" in our changing world.

In "Visual Mixed Messaging: the Role of Signage in Public and Private Governance of New York City Interior Privately Owned Public Spaces" by Alex Donahue, Madlen Simon, and Madeline Brown, examine the signs, and specific words utilized, of both private and public entities in privately owned public spaces. These privately owned public spaces are made more complicated in the cosmopolitan center of New York City as they are a distinctive part of the private complex and also open to the public. People desire safe places and how signage is presented and worded may influence the actions of people in the public spaces. While public (or city) signs in these spaces highlight words such as "public," "open," and "plaza," the private sector businesses operating in these

interior spaces highlight the site's amenities and regulated behaviors, such as gambling, sleeping, or smoking. While the authors do not condone or condemn any sign, they do suggest that the degree of regulation can exclude visitors from these public spaces.

The third article, "On-Premise Signage and Placemaking: Aiding Lively Streetscapes to Maintain Signage Visibility" by Robert Dalton, Sahand Abbasi, and Seojoo Han, discuss signage visibility in public streetscapes. The authors discuss placemaking, a means of designing streetscapes with the intention of engaging current and new people in a community. This includes physical, streetscape elements, such as signs, furniture (benches, lighting), street trees, and other people. The researchers statistically analyzed photos that are coded to varied streetscape elements. With the 3M's VAS software, the team knew the percent likelihood of person finding a sign in the street during pre-attentive processing – that is, before cognition could influence the eye. Once placemaking is established on a street, and thus brings more people and potential customers in an area, pre-attentive signage visibility decreases. However, as streetscapes become more complex with additional elements, signage visibility does not statistically change. The authors provide suggestions for balancing the design of these streetscape elements to increase the population in these public spaces while ensuring sign visibility.

Lastly, the journal concludes with a book review by Pat Crawford for Vikas Mehta's 2023 book, *Public Space: Why it Matters, What We Should Know, How to Realize its Potential*. The manuscript uses a combination of text, typography, sketches and diagrams to engage readers in thinking about public space from multiple perspectives and disciplines. Mehta draws on his deep disciplinary experience in architecture, planning and urban design to challenge assumptions and explore possibilities about public space.

No matter the language we speak, the specific words we employ, or the built environment around us, signs can inform and influence behaviors. As our population continues to grow globally and travel opportunities expand, the importance of signage systems and visual communications will grow. Signs provide guidance for opportunities, such as patronizing a business or understanding expected behaviors in a space. We hope you enjoy these articles and considering adding to the conversation with your own research work to expand our understanding of signage and wayfinding.