

Introduction

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Signs are and continue to be important navigational tools that help passersby orient themselves to urban landscapes. These devices become part of these urban environments and are utilized by a wide variety of pedestrians and motorists. Those who erect these signs do so with the hope that their messages will be seen and understood by all who view them. The same is true for those who generate public art displays, which are typically regulated in similar fashion to signs. Localities are committed to regulating signs to ensure that they do not cause safety issues or create aesthetic blight. Crafting regulations that weigh the need to be viewed with issues of public safety is a fine balancing act. The authors contained in this issue of the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Signage and Wayfinding* seek to share the importance of context and cognition as a basis for establishing regulations that may affect the visibility of both signs and public art.

Garvey and Klena challenge readers to consider the impact of minimum and maximum sign height requirements on visibility. Communities consistently establish maximum sign heights to maintain aesthetic consistency. The authors suggest, based on empirical research, a minimum sign height should be established to ensure that signs are not obscured by other obstacles. They provide a list of urban characteristics they believe can help policymakers make evidence-based decisions to ensure that signs are appropriately designed based on relevant environmental characteristics. This study extends upon the developing understanding of the importance of context in regulating sign characteristics, building on the assumption that signs should be placed in locations and ways that they are visible to a wide audience.

Sundar, Wu, and Kardes are similarly interested in the topic of sign visibility. Their study focuses on the impact of faded fonts on visibility and information retention. The authors hypothesize that faded fonts may, in fact, increase viewer awareness. To test this hypothesis, the team ran two experiments with faded fonts on images comprised of both greyscale and high-contrast black and white text. In each experiment, the researchers concluded that faded fonts can, in fact, increase awareness because viewers take more time to process the information available to them. The team plans to expand upon this work in the future to better understand how the use of faded fonts might influence short- and long-term memory, as well as how movement affects the processing of such information.

Greub reflects on the power of public art as a medium for communication in a pedestrian-oriented public space. As part of a design competition, she and her team composed an urban design plan for Blocks 69-70 in the Central Business District of Salt Lake City, UT. One element she proposes is the use of media screens that the public may utilize to publicly display private images through social media. Her team's design also emphasizes a variety of multifunctional spaces intended to enhance community through artistic flexibility and public art.

Each article contained in this issue fills important gaps in our knowledge about visibility. As a collective, these authors provide us with a more solid base for understanding the importance of visibility of signs by all users.