

Understanding Color As A Design Element

Typography, color, and design are the three elements of effective visual communications. Of the three, color is the one element that can be measured, quantified, and classified. To the human eye, color is information. It is a true language; it transcends the language of words. It communicates instantaneously, reliably, and exactly. Better than any other language, color identifies, communicates, and creates visibility.

The recent introduction of color photocopiers, the increased usage of full color printing in promotion pieces, and the introduction of color to desktop publishing computer workstations prompts your editor to write about color. Color is a very complex element of communications. This article addresses the basic concepts of color and helps you understand how to utilize color effectively in your visual communications pieces to evoke the response you seek.

What is color?

In terms of physics, color is nothing but light of a particular wavelength or frequency. The higher the frequency (or shorter the wave length), the more energetic the light. Differentials in energy produce different colors; for example, red light has less energy than blue light.

Light has literally millions of colors, but our brains can manage only four main color groups: red, blue, green, and yellow. What we "see" are blends of these four color groups. Light can be described as the messenger, which is perceived by us as color, the message.

In terms of psychology, color has been described as the "soul" of design, evoking the full range of human emotions. Historically, color has been used to identify; to indicate rank or status; to reflect love, peace, or death; and to instruct via signs.

A skilled designer uses color in controlled ways to create visual conditions such as differentiation and sequence. (i.e., traffic light instructions of caution, stop, and go are differentiated by yellow, red, and

green. We know the sequence of lights is yellow, red and green.) Color can generate feelings ranging from calm to excitement, joy to sadness. Color can also impact spatial perception, causing spaces to seem closed-in and compressed or open and airy.

Color is not an island. The ability of a color to evoke a response comes from its relationship to the color it is placed near. For example, when a color is placed against white, the shade of whiteness becomes important. Some whites can appear as shades of gray, yellow, blue, etc. The visual relationship between the white and the color will determine the communication that is received by the viewer.

The Color Experience

The viewer's previous experience with a color, society's impact on the viewer's color perception, and the psychological make-up of the viewer all affect color communication. Everyone associates colors with personal experiences. In the late sixties Dr. Max Luscher illustrated a way to measure color perception and indicate personality traits (the Luscher Color Test). Over the centuries, different societies developed color symbolism based on religious, traditional, and superstitious interpretations. Many of the colors and messages associated with heraldry still impact the western world's color communication today: black symbolizes death and sorrow, purple relates to royalty, red communicates courage. Color communicates different messages in each society, which is why, in the "global village," communications professionals have had to learn the particular color symbolism of the target market, lest the wrong message be sent.

Complementing this basic foundation of color communication is the ever-changing "popular" colors of society. These are colors that reflect the latest trends in apparel fashion, car decor, interior furnishings, and graphic design. There is a group of folks who predict what the popular colors will be—and retailers listen. Because of The Color Marketing Group's predictions, you see an invasion of the same range of colors in all

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Pearls of Wisdom

The Special Libraries Association annual conference in San Francisco this June will feature a Swap and Shop of promotion materials. Organizers are looking for samples and contributors. Contact Kathy Hubbard at 713/767-8988 for additional information. Promotion samples may be sent to Linda McKell, Advanced Information Management, 444 Castro Street, Suite 320, Mountain View, CA 94041 (415/965-7799).

This year's Library Public Relations Council sample promotion package had several good pieces in it. Of special note is the InterLibrary Loan brochure from the Arapahoe Library District in Colorado, the Brown Bag (literally a brown bag) Business Forum announcements from the New Orleans Public Library, and the Guide to Half Hollow Hills Community Library in Melville, New York. Contact the libraries to obtain samples, or join the Library Public Relations Council to receive your own promotion package next year. Contact Council Representative Sharon Karmazin at The Library, 2 Jean Walling Civic Center, East Brunswick, NJ 08816 (908/390-6781).

The Independent Librarians Exchange Round Table (ILERT) of the American Library Association (ALA) is focusing its attention on fee-setting and marketing topics. One of their programs at the ALA conference in June will be a poster session on "Marketing Your Information Skills," which will include a display of printed promotion materials. Contact Mary Beth Vanderpoorten, 3035 Weatheron Drive, Birmingham, AL 35201.

A discussion group on exhibits and displays in libraries has recently formed under ALA's Association of College and Research Libraries. For information, contact chairperson Michael Miller at North Dakota State University Libraries, Fargo, ND 58105-5599 (fax 701/237-7138).

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Missing issues must be reported within 2 months of issue date. Missing issues requested after this time will be supplied at the regular back-issue price.

Starting with Volume 5, Number 1, issues reflect the months spanned by the number, e.g., September/October, November/December, etc.

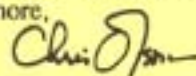
An alternative to the typical library posters available today are the scenic photograph posters from Great Performance. While the company's catalog focuses on poster motivational themes (e.g., "Preventing Burnout," "How Healthy is Your Diet?" etc.) a whole section of the catalog contains poster photographs and captions that might be of interest to libraries looking for a change of pace in their wall decor. For a copy of the catalog write: Great Performance, Inc., 14964 N.W. Greenbrier Parkway, Beaverton, OR 97006 or phone 800/433-3803.

A recent issue of *Library Journal* contained an interesting article on fee-based information services in libraries. Written by Steve Coffman and Helen Josephine, "Doing it for Money" provides a snapshot into a controversial but growing trend among library services. The end notes to the article provide references to the activities and products of FISCAL (Fee-based Information Service Centers in Academic Libraries). For more information refer to pages 32-36 in the October 15, 1991 *Library Journal*, or contact Lee Anne George, FISCAL Chair 1991/92 at 202/994-6973.

Since writing the *Marketing Treasures* article on newsletters, your editor has discovered an excellent book on developing content, writing copy, and designing newsletters. *Marketing With Newsletters* by Elaine Floyd is a worthwhile investment for librarians who want to communicate the positive aspects of their services to readers and not just announce new books. Contact EF Communications at 5721 Magazine St., Suite 170, New Orleans, LA 70115 (800/264-6305). The price is \$24.95.

In the last issue of *Marketing Treasures* (Vol. 5, No. 2, Nov/Dec) your editor reviewed *A Manual on the Evaluation of Information Centers and Services*. Here is additional ordering information. AIAA (American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics) is the U.S. Distributor. Their address is Technical Information Services, 555 West 57th Street, Suite 1200, New York, NY 10019 (212/247-6500). A copy of the book is available for ILL from your editor's *Marketing Treasures* library.

My book of library clip art is progressing quite nicely. It has over 185 original graphic images divided into 13 different categories. All subscribers have been sent an invitation to purchase the book at the prepublication price of \$35.00. Look for my letter in the mail. If you don't receive the letter by mid-February, and want to know more, contact my office at 410/647-6708.



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areas of a department store. From hand towels to socks, suddenly almost everything seems to fall within the same range of colors. This is nice for coordinating outfits, but too bad if your favorite yellow is not "in."

Color Theory

Regardless of the popularity of certain colors or of how color is interpreted given the culture of the viewer, certain universal rules govern how color is perceived by the human eye.

Four descriptors are used to technically describe color: 1) *Chroma*. How intense the color is; its strength or saturation. 2) *Value*. The lightness or darkness of the color. 3) *Hue*. The quality that distinguishes one color from another. 4) *Temperature*. How "warm" or "cool" the color is.

While color is broken into three primary colors, red, yellow and blue, there are actually six hues that compose the entire spectrum of visible light. In the color wheel shown here the three primary colors and three other hues are shown (in all capital letters) in their assigned positions in the wheel. In between these colors are hues that vary in color temperature.

Color temperature is probably the most misunderstood aspect of the color wheel, and yet it's the characteristic that determines the interaction of colors. There are seemingly endless variations of temperature between hues. The color wheel shows the temperature assignments. Contrast between the relative temperatures of colors is the color complement. While most people think of red and green as being the most complementary colors in terms of temperature, actually red-orange and blue-green hold that honor. Looking at the color wheel you can see they have extreme opposite color temperatures, or "temperature polarity." A relative temperature neutrality exists between blue-violet and yellow-orange, as well as between red-violet and yellow-green.

What does all this mean and how does it impact your promotion pieces? Well, have you ever noticed that some color combinations visually "vibrate"—the colors seem to jump at the point where they meet? This happens because the eye can distinguish between two colors of equal value, chroma, hue, and temperature. As these factors become more differentiated, (i.e., color temperature polarity is approached) the interaction be-

tween the colors increases, causing the eye to be overstimulated. The same principle is at work when you look at a red square for several seconds and then shift your eyes to a plain white piece of paper. You "see" a green square. This green afterimage is the perfect complement of the actual color red you were just looking at. To confirm this, look at the color wheel—green is the direct complement to red. The same is true with blue to orange and violet to yellow.

You can make the physics work for your next promotion piece. Select intense, complementary colors if you want the piece to jump out and grab the reader's attention, or select colors with common temperatures, such as red-violet and yellow-green to achieve a neutral temperature range and a quieter look. You can also use the color wheel to choose a common base color or undertone among several colors. For instance, if you desire an overall cool temperature to three colors, then select colors with a base color of blue. An undertone color of blue will give all three colors a cool temperature, plus they will automatically form a harmonious color grouping.

To summarize, the more in common colors have with each other, the less they will contrast. The less colors share in common, the more they will contrast. Use the

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color wheel to determine temperature polarity and neutrality. It's true that you can select colors based on a sense of taste and personal preferences, but it is the understanding of how and why colors interact that will give you the control to put your instincts to work creating the right communications message.

Color in the Real World of Printing

Understanding the color wheel isn't going to help you work with your printer. The color wheel helps you select colors. In a design project you need to translate those color selections to the two most prevalent color systems in use today: Pantone Matching System and four-color process.

The Pantone Matching System (PMS) is a color system developed by the Pantone Company that attempts to standardize the language of color instructions between designers and printers. Imagine trying to convey to a printer that you want sky blue and orchid pink on your brochure. What exactly do "sky blue and orchid pink" look like? Obviously both colors are subject to wide interpretation. The Pantone Company solved that problem by identifying a whole range of colors (as of this writing 1,000 colors, to be exact) and assigning a standard number to each one. Using the Pantone Matching System Specifier swatchbook, you find the blue and pink colors that match your idea of "sky blue and orchid pink" and note the assigned PMS numbers. Give these numbers to your printer. He'll look up the color formula for each PMS number and use the formulas when mixing the inks. When you see the final printed piece, it will match your expectations because both you and the printer used the same color standard—the Pantone Matching System.

It's very simple. You use the color wheel to determine the desired color interaction (i.e., temperature). Then you go to the PMS book to select the actual colors. The PMS book gives you the basic color formula (i.e., one part blue, two parts red) for each color. Therefore, you can make selections based on the color wheel and work with an underlying hue, thereby ensuring that you select

a harmonious group of colors and perfect your choice in the PMS book. Again, you can select colors based on your personal preferences, but using tools like the color wheel and the PMS book will give you an advantage in planning effective color schemes.

The other major color system that printers use is called the four-color process. This system is reserved for printing jobs with photographs or so many colors that it becomes cost-effective to "build the color" rather than use pure Pantone colors as described above.

According to the Color Marketing Group's 1993 Consumer Color Directions, the earth and its ecology will continue to influence color in 1993. The sky and sea, flowers and minerals will dominate how we communicate in colors. Colors to look for include:

zinnia, a saturated hot pink,
malachite, a mineral green,
blue spruce, a forest blue/green,
nightshade, a blackened red/violet
juniper, a muted yellowish green
blue lagoon, a sparkling water blue
horizon, a neutral violet
poppy, a hot red-orange
passion, an aggressive purple

In House Graphics, December 1991, p. 10.

The four-color process uses four base colors: black, cyan, magenta, and yellow. Using these four colors, in varying degrees of intensity as expressed in 5% increments of color—100% yellow, 55% cyan, 10% magenta, 30% black—a desired color, let's say forest green, is built one color at a time—a layer of yellow ink, a layer of magenta, then cyan and finally black. Four printing press passes later, all four color layers have been printed, and the resulting color is forest green.

The four-color process is used to print photographs, since thousands of different colors can be contained

in just one photo. Each color in a photo is capable of being reproduced using the four base colors in varying degrees of intensity. If you have a promotion piece that uses more than four colors, your printer may suggest using the four-color process to create the colors or "build" the color layer by layer as described above. Using the four-color process instead of Pantone colors can sometimes save on printing costs. Ask your printer for advice before you specify one color printing system over another.

Your editor uses color extensively in all client promotion materials, and has two recommendations: 1) Color is a marvelous design element. Don't be afraid to use it to get your message across. 2) Don't let your personal color instinct get in the way of color selection. Refer to the principles of color and the color wheel to select the colors that will communicate your message the most effectively.

Worth Its Weight in Gold

"We have to encourage American executives to get out of their boardrooms and onto the factory floor to learn how their products are made and how they can be made better." Malcolm Baldrige, Secretary of Commerce, 1981-1987.

The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award was named after the dynamic Secretary of Commerce whose work has contributed to the improvement of America's competitive position in the global marketplace. The companies of many *Marketing Treasures* readers have competed for the award or use the award standards as a measure and guide for improving the quality of their products. But have you ever stopped to think about how the award criteria could help your library?

The Corporate Guide to the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award by Marion Steeples is one of several titles from Business One Irwin Publishers of Homewood, Illinois devoted to the award. While the first part of the book reviews the award and the award process, it's the second part that provides golden nuggets of insight for organizations intent on improving quality levels and competitive advantage. Steeples explores the requirements of the seven award categories and illustrates each with stories from award winners.

And look at the award categories—Leadership, Information and Analysis, Strategic Quality Planning, Human Resources Utilization, Quality Assurance of Products and Services, Quality Results, and Customer Satisfaction. So many of them are facets of a well-orchestrated library marketing program that it would be worthwhile to examine each category and how your information service compares—after all, your library is a service business.

An insightful companion piece to any of the national quality award books is an article in the November-December 1991 issue of *Harvard Business Review* (Vol. 69, No. 6, pp. 80-95). "How the Baldrige Award Really Works" by David Garvin. Garvin addresses two myths about the award, and reviews the award categories step-by-step. Enlightening anecdotes are sprinkled throughout the piece.

Whether you are seeking new insights into managing your library business, or looking for information to support your organization's improvement of quality levels, the books and articles on the Baldrige Award will prove to be worth their weight in gold.

(Resource for books: Business One Irwin 708/206-2700.)

Promotion Gems

The Special Libraries Association (SLA) has prepared promotion materials for the 1992 International Special Librarians Day scheduled for the Thursday during National Library Week. Shown here is the logo depicting the theme "Information Knows No Bounds." T-shirts, coffee mugs, posters, coasters, and more are available as promotion items. For information, contact the SLA Public Relations Department at 202/234-4700.



SLA also sponsors a competition for Special Recognition for Excellence in Public Relations. Take advantage of what you learn in *Marketing Treasures* and get recognized! (Reader Carol Ginnburg of Bankers Trust won the Member Recognition for Excellence in Public Relations Award last year.) Call Lauren Emmolo at SLA for entry forms.

When you prepare promotion materials for this year's National Library Week celebrations, keep in mind the following results of a survey on the use of type.

1. Survey results recommend using serif typefaces for long stretches of body copy. Reserve the sans serif typefaces for headlines and short paragraphs.
2. When words were typed in all capital letters, survey results showed that readership was 20-30% lower than when words were typed in upper and lower case letters.
3. Survey results showed the response to the same product increased 33% when positive type was used (black type against a white background) versus reverse type (light type on a dark background.)

(Source: Estin Kiger, *Direct Marketing*, as seen in *Communication Briefings*, November, 1991)

Sparkling Reviews

If Your Strategy Is So Terrific, How Come It Doesn't Work? William S. Birnbaum. American Management Association, 1990. ISBN:0-8144-59965-x. \$22.95.

Books that sport titles like this one set themselves up to be down-to-earth, nitty-gritty discussions of marketing strategies, but frequently don't live up to expectations. Not so with this book. Here is a refreshingly frank presentation of the marketing planning process that any librarian with a basic understanding of marketing concepts can utilize.

The author's personal writing style (you can almost hear him speaking) carries the reader easily through some complicated strategic planning territory. The book offers planning forms, a manager's checklist of 27 issues to

address, and examples that illustrate points without getting in the way of informative planning techniques.

The first part of the book starts the reader thinking in strategic terms, including the point that "There are no customers, there are only relationships." (If you've been looking for a quality improvement slogan, you just read one.) The second part of the book provides an approach to the strategic planning process, including a discussion of the author's SW-OT matrix, a system for understanding your library's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.

This is a good book to have in your personal marketing management library. It's one of those books you can use to jump-start the planning process and to inspire yourself with creative planning energy.

The Crystal Ball

February 20 "Exceptional Customer Service." A one-day workshop offered by Dun & Bradstreet in Allentown, PA. Contact: 212/312-6880.

February 25 "Creating a Strong Visual Identity." A slide presentation by Anthony Russell (his firm designed the award-winning ID system for the Brooklyn Public Library) at the Library Public Relations Council dinner meeting in New York City. Contact: Sharon Karmazin 908/390-6781.

February 25-27 "Activating Your Firm's Service Culture." A two-day symposium presented by the First Interstate Center for Services Marketing at Arizona State University in Scottsdale, AZ. Contact: 602/965-6201.

February 28 "Marketing Your Library." A one-day seminar taught by Arlene Farber Sirkin in Vancouver, Canada. Sponsored by the Canadian Library Association. Contact: Terri Tonchyshyn 613/232-9625.

February 28, March 6 & 13 "Presentation Skills for Information Professionals." A three-day workshop offered by Rutgers in New Brunswick. Contact: Jana Varlejs 908/932-7169.

March 3 "Marketing Your Library." A one-day seminar taught by Arlene Farber Sirkin in Calgary, Canada. Sponsored by the Canadian Library Association. (Also scheduled for March 5th in Winnipeg and April 6th in Ottawa.) Contact: Terri Tonchyshyn 613/232-9625.

March 4 "Effective Design for Desktop Publishing." A one-day seminar offered by Lou Williams in Phoenix. Contact: 800/837-7123 or 312/565-3900.

March 9-11 "Face-to-Face with Focus Groups." A two-day seminar offered by George Washington University in Washington, DC. Contact: 202/994-5200.

March 11-13 "Competitive Strategy: How to Develop Marketing Plans, Strategies, and Tactics." A two-day seminar offered by the American Management Association in Chicago and New York. Contact: 518/891-0065.

March 13 "Producing, Designing, Editing & Writing Newsletters." A one-day seminar offered by the Newsletter Factory in Baltimore, MD. Contact: 404/955-2002.

March 23 "How To Satisfy Every Customer Every Time." A one-day seminar offered by the Keye Productivity Center in Manchester, NH. Contact: 800/821-3919 or 913/345-2140.

March 8-10 "4th Annual Customer Satisfaction and Quality Measurement Conference." A three-day conference sponsored by the American Marketing Association and the American Society for Quality Control in San Francisco, CA. Contact: 414/272-8575.

March 23-24 "Crafting the Future-Driven Marketing Platform." A conference sponsored by the Conference Board in Los Angeles, CA. Contact: 212/759-0900.

March 23-25 "38th Annual Conference of the Advertising Research Foundation" in New York City. Contact: 212/751-5656.

March 30-31 "Value-Added Selling." A two-day seminar offered by the American Management Association in Dallas. Contact: 518/891-0065.

April 16 "Marketing Plans: How to Maximize Your Marketing Resources." A workshop by Arlene Farber Sirkin sponsored by CAPCON in Washington, DC. Contact: 202/745-7722.