

Carla G. Spinillo

Editorial

Dear readers

It is with great pleasure that we bring to you the third issue of IDJ volume 22!

The 22.3 issue features contributions from researchers, academics and practitioners to the discussion of information design teaching, medicine communication to patients, design processes, and technological possibilities to the field. The issue also brings conference reviews by Moldenhauer (HCII—Human Computer Interaction International Conference, 2016) and Noël (Information+Conference, 2016).

Three articles in this issue are from the Vision Plus 2015 Symposium (VP2015), organized annually by the IIID—International Institute for Information Design. These articles are by Pontis and Babwahsingh's; Verba and Perraut's; and Waarde's, and are introduced by Clive Richards, president of the IIID. Richards also introduces the VP2015 and highlights the fruitful partnership between IDJ and IIID. In addition to Richards' introduction, these articles are commented on here, together with the other articles considered for this issue, so as to show the authors' views on their topics.

Medicine communication is the topic of Kwok's and Waarde's articles. Kwok discusses the legibility aspects of Chinese medicine labels. He reports an empirical

research on Chinese typefaces focusing on the effects that the size and anatomy of the font characters have on the reading of medicine labels by the elderly. By comparing the performances of elderly users in tests of reading, word recognition, and sentence search, the author questions the Chinese regulations for medicine labels which restrict legibility to font size. Similarly, Waarde discusses the quality of the information available on medicine packaging, labelling and inserts when reporting a personal experience in England. He pinpoints the drawbacks in the way the information (instructions, warnings and explanations) about a pain killer is provided (in written form or graphically represented). The author calls for a shift on medicine communication from 'providing information to patients' to 'enabling patients to act appropriately'. Both Kwok's and Waarde's articles show that, regardless of the writing system, medicine information to users is a matter of communication, therefore an information design matter. Furthermore, the articles ratify the importance of a user/person approach to the design of useful information artifacts.

Accordingly, the article by Pontis and Babwahsingh presents a number of methods/techniques to take users' information needs and profiles into account at the very beginning of the design process: the conceptual design stage. For the authors, this stage comprises the phases of understanding (problem, audience and subject matter),

simplifying and designing proposals. To each phase they associate data collecting methods/ techniques, which are grouped into three categories: explore, analyze and create. To demonstrate the applicability of the conceptual design process proposed, Pontis and Babwahsingh report a case study of a wayshowing project for a library, in which some of the techniques mentioned were used. Although the article may not bring a fresh approach to design processes, it contributes to the professional field. It gathers data collecting methods/ techniques in a systematic manner, bridging research and practice in information design. The user-centered approach to design artifacts is also the topic of Chow's article, who proposes a digital tool to facilitate user's selection of options from a range of possibilities: the Swing Compass system. Using the rose compass as a metaphor for the interface, the system suggests choices to users based upon their previous selections. The system also allows users to change their choices by 'turning the compass.' The users' impressions of the system were investigated in an empirical qualitative study, whose results were considered satisfactory by the author. In a sense, Chow's project used technology to empower users. However, one may wonder whether it has in reality empowered people or restrained their choice behaviors.

The roles technology plays in people's lives, a key issue to information designers, is the topic of Search's article. Search discusses how visual, aural and haptic sensorial means (multisensory design) can be used to explore and enhance information communication through augmented reality, which can promote the integration of physical and virtual worlds. This can be done by adding, for instance, digital texts, graphics and sound to real environments. The strength of the article lies on Search's theoretical approach to the topic. Semiotics of space and time, relational aesthetics, multisensory design, and kinesthetic interaction are merged to set the ground for employing augmented reality in information design

projects, proffering it as a challenge and an opportunity for practitioners and researchers.

Finally, we have Verba and Perraut's article on information design education. They report undergraduate design projects which deal with real-world problem in the field of health: The Communicating Pain Project. In such projects were asked to involve the project's stakeholders (patients/users, health professionals and university staff) in the design process. As a result, interesting projects were produced for scaling, logging, visually communicating, and self-assessing pain. The activities undertaken by the students required them to think (problem/context) + engage (users/stakeholders) + propose (design solutions), leading to motivation to design. Although the article does not bring an innovative viewpoint to the teaching of information design projects, it provides evidence for employing a participatory approach in undergraduate design courses.

Since education is considered a world priority area, it seems pertinent to pose questions regarding information design. The United Nations (UN) have education as one of the main sustainable development goals for 2030, aiming to 'Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning' (<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/>). According to the UN, it is estimated that more than a hundred million people in the planet (mainly women) lack basic literacy skills. Thus, the right to elementary schooling for children and the right to basic literacy skills for people are core issues worldwide. Nevertheless, with regard to information design education, the main concern seems to be teaching information design as a discipline/subject, and mostly at university design courses. Despite the importance of teaching-learning skills, approaches and contents at a higher education level, information design education calls for a broader view of its possibilities and contributions. In this sense, the question we can pose is 'how can information design help to ensure inclusive and quality

education for all and promote lifelong learning'? Some initiatives have been made in this regard in both the academic and professional fields, such as the outstanding work of Rosemary Sassoon on children's handwriting. However, much remains to be done to advance information design (for) education. We hope the IDJ 22.3 will contribute to a reflection on this topic.

Have a pleasant reading!

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