

Vision Plus 2015 Symposium Selected Articles

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Introduction

Like the *Information Design Journal* (IDJ) the **International Institute for Information Design** (IIID) has been a key player in promoting good information design practice, research and education internationally (see www.iiid.net). There are strong links between the two organisations with members of IIID serving on the IDJ editorial board and the former director of IIID, Peter Simlinger, being its editor for a number of years. As the President of IIID it gives me much pleasure to introduce in this issue of IDJ a further link, namely the inclusion here of papers arising from one of the series of symposia run by IIID under the banner **Vision Plus**.

IIID held its sixteenth Vision Plus symposium (VP2015) at Birmingham City University, UK, on the 3rd and 4th September 2015.

The sub-title was **information + design = performance**, and delegates and presenters from all over the world gathered in the university's splendid new Arts, Design and Media Faculty building, in the heart of the city, to exchange research and practice insights on topics related to this theme. The symposium included talks on the improvement of performance through information design in a range of fields. There were also talks on arts performance itself, such as how dance can be represented. Much to the delight of delegates this latter topic was accompanied by some actual dance performances to demonstrate graphical notation methods that have been developed.

Mat Hunter, the Chief Design Officer of the UK Design Council, set the scene in his opening keynote address by pointing out the benefits of good information design for the public sphere as well as the advantages to business. He signalled the work of the council in stimulating and supporting design-led innovation through its several initiatives.

The various speakers that followed covered a wide range of topics within the overall theme of the symposium. There was work aimed at improving communication between civic or governmental agencies and citizens, particularly on the Indian sub-continent, with its huge cultural and linguistic challenges. Presentations covered the designing of health and well-being information systems and public service forms, as well as approaches to pedestrian way finding, both physical and digital, plus highway signage lettering. There were also glimpses of beautifully crafted information graphics within printed antiquarian books from the renowned Cadbury Research Library in Birmingham, and an historical survey on sans serif lettering and its key role in conveying instructional information. The full programme and some presentations can be viewed at the IIID website.

Selected speakers at VP2015 have been invited to develop their presentations for publication in this issue of the *Information Design Journal*. Karel van der Waarde's paper is based on his work on medicine labelling,

presented at an *Information for Wellbeing* session of the symposium. During the *Performance Enhancing* session, Sheila Pontis offered delegates a closer look at conceptual design methods, which she has elaborated for the IDJ. The education of information design students was addressed by Susan Verba, and here she sets out further how real-world problems can be usefully incorporated into undergraduate programmes.

Alongside the presentations at VP2015 was a display of selected posters on information design research and practice work by delegates. The winners of the **IIIDaward 2014** were announced and prizes awarded at the symposium with selected work from the competition on display. Also announced was the call for entries for **IIIDaward 2017** competition (see www.iiidaward.net).

In parallel with the symposium there was an exhibition in the Atrium Gallery of the venue: **Ivan Chermayeff Posters**. During the Vision Plus 2015 opening reception delegates were treated to an entertaining talk in front of the posters by the design historian and author Alan Powers on the life of this great graphic designer Chermayeff.

One highlight during the UK symposium was a live digital link-up with the parallel conference on information design running in Brazil and organised by the **Sociedade Brasileira de Design da Informação**. This was great fun and featured much cheering and waving in both directions across the ocean.

Another highlight was when, as President, I had the honour to present **Peter Simlinger** with the **IIID Laureate** for his leadership and distinctive achievement in information design (Figure 1). The whole information design community owes a great debt of gratitude to Peter for setting up and leading the IIID as its founding director until stepping down in 2015.

Birmingham City University is to be thanked for taking up the challenge of staging the highly successful VP2015 event on behalf of the IIID. The UK's



Figure 1. Peter Simlinger (on the left) presented with the IIID Laureate for his leadership and distinctive achievement in information design.

Information Design Association is also acknowledged for its support.

The readers of IDJ are invited to check the IIID website for future Vision Plus symposia and other events, such as the international **Information Design Summer School**, now in its fourth year, and run in conjunction with the **Simplification Centre** of the UK. If readers join the IIID they will of course receive regular notifications of these and many other information design related activities, as well as have access to the IIID yearbook and its wide ranging information design related content. There are **IIID World Regional Representatives (WRR)** in many parts of the globe who provide local points of contact and these can be located from the IIID website.

The IIID looks forward to continued links with IDJ and its many readers.

Clive Richards
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