



Processo seletivo 2023/2024

Prova de idiomas: inglês

## **Transformational Information Design**

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There is growing recognition that information design makes a vital contribution to modern industrial and digital societies. Good information design helps people cope with the complex decisions they need to make in today's world. Poor information design makes everyday life more difficult, disadvantages those with less education, and can even cause accidents.

In this essay I want to make a case for the importance of information design and raise some issues about the skills information designers need and their role within organizations that produce complex information.

### **What Is Information Design?**

Firstly, what is information design? This may seem a superfluous question in a book about information design, as there will no doubt be other definitions in other chapters, and by now you may have constructed your own. But this is my interpretation.

For me, information design is the application of a design process to the task of informing people. Sometimes the significance of definitions is in what they do *not* say – information design is *not* just what you get when you give a graphic designer some information to arrange. The information (that is, the words, the data, the document) does not exist before the process starts; it emerges during the process, which starts with a need for someone to know something or to explain something.

Communication involves both a communicator and an audience. And there is always an agenda – a purpose or goal that may be different for each side. This is what differentiates information design, in very different ways, from both literature and legislation. Literature is expressive and often celebrates imprecision; legislation prioritizes accuracy over ease of understanding. But information design needs to be both active and accurate. It offers to change the state of knowledge in its audience (“offers to”, not “seeks to”, as the audience has choices about whether to attend to a message, heed it, and remember it).

Because “design” is part of the name, information design is often thought of as a subset of graphic design. But for information designers, it is the other way around. The information design process includes:

- defining objectives;
- defining audiences: their goals, their experience, their abilities;
- structuring communication journeys: routes through complex concepts or communication events within some other process (for example, installing software, applying for social security, choosing a phone, travelling by train);



- writing words;
- drawing diagrams;
- making or selecting pictures;
- arranging information in pages;
- testing designs with audiences;
- specifying and managing systems of information.

Distinct from graphic design, it draws on a wide range of specializations for its knowledge base, tools, and techniques. It is both visual and verbal, and it is concerned with user needs more than artistic expression. Often invisible until something goes wrong, information design is a demanding and difficult field that is underrepresented in education and training.

### **Why Information Design Matters**

Most of us have at some time misunderstood certain information – on a sign, in a document, or on a website. Sometimes it doesn't matter very much – we can correct our mistakes. But sometimes it matters quite a lot, resulting in missed lights or broken machines. And sometimes the consequences are disastrous – a drug overdose or an industrial accident.

Let's take just a couple of examples. In elections held in Scotland in 2007, voters were given two ballot papers, one for their local council, the other for the Scottish Parliament. Each of these two elections used a different, and new, system of proportional representation – in a country where voting had traditionally involved just putting an "X" next to one candidate in a list. Because the ballot papers were poorly designed, around five percent of the votes were wasted. This was greater than the winning margin in some places.

In the United States, voting is even more complicated, and there are well-publicized stories of the problems some voters have in registering and in casting multiple votes in each election. The American Institute for Graphic Arts runs a Design for Democracy programme linked to elections, in which information designers volunteer their time to help states and counties produce more usable ballot papers.

Poor information design can also have more serious consequences. In his foreword to David Berman's book *Do Good: How Designers Can Change the World* (2009), the information designer Erik Spiekermann describes a fire at Düsseldorf airport in 1997, in which sixteen people died because they could not see the small, poorly placed and poorly lit exit signs.

### **Information Design and Literacy**

Information design matters in less dramatic ways as well – to help us cope with the complexity of modern life. It has become a cliché to note that we have been suffering from an information explosion over the last few decades. Not so many years ago, we had the choice of a single telephone company and there was only one thing you do with the phone – make a phone call. We bought insurance through an agent who did the work for us. We bought train tickets at the railway



station and had a simple choice of travel class. Now, we have numerous phone companies, phones, and tariffs; we go online to buy complex financial products; and, in the UK at least, we are faced with complicated train fares based on time of day, advance purchase, and the flexibility of booking terms.

These choices depend on clear information and the ability to use it. We have all suffered from unclear information, but what may be more surprising is that a significant proportion of the population also lack the reading skills they need. Most developed countries claim a literacy level of close to one hundred percent, but this only means passing the most basic test of reading and writing. Functional literacy is a better measure of how effective those reading skills are. It comprises three parts: prose literacy refers to the ability to read linear text; document literacy is the ability to solve problems using information in documents; and quantitative literacy is the ability to understand simple arithmetic, such as percentages. When you extend the concept of literacy in this way, the figures come crashing down.

The International Adult Literacy Survey was conducted in the late 1990s and defines five levels of literacy (level 1 being very basic, with level 5 being the most sophisticated). Level 3 is the critical level, which is defined by the OECD as a suitable minimum for coping with everyday life and work in a complex, advanced society. Denotes roughly the skill level required for successful secondary school completion and college entry. It requires the ability to integrate different sources of information and solve more complex problems.<sup>1</sup>

Around fifty percent of the population in countries such as the US and UK are below level 3, and the situation is worse in Slovenia. According to the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education:

Research results showed that from 65 to more than 70% of the adult population in Slovenia do not attain literacy level 3, which is indispensable for equal participation in modern society. According to these outcomes Slovenia was ranked at the tail end of countries under investigation.<sup>2</sup>

Document literacy involves strategic reading. This means reading with a purpose, supported by a monitoring process known as metacognition: being aware of whether we understand what we are reading, then re-reading or slowing down if we do not; skimming ahead for an overview; interpreting what we read in the light of our own purpose and what we know of the writer's motives. Good information design supports and encourages strategic reading, which is easier if, for example, there are clear headings that work together as a set and layouts that show the structure of the content; it is also important that readers' questions and problems are anticipated and dealt with. In fact, given that literacy normally reflects the ability both to read and to write, we might say that organizations who fail to supply well-designed information are themselves illiterate.[...]

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<sup>1</sup> Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Literacy in the Information Age: Final Report of the International Adult Literacy Survey* (Paris: OECD, 2000), p. xi.

<sup>2</sup> Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, *CONFINTEA Mid-term Report: Slovenia*. (Ljubljana: Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, 2003), pp. 32–33.



PPDESDI

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**1. De acordo com o autor, o que diferencia o design da informação de, por exemplo, a literatura e legislação?**

- ☐ O design da informação é uma disciplina mais direcionada para a expressão criativa, ao contrário do que buscam as práticas de literatura e legislação, focadas em entreter e educar o público.
- ☐ O design da informação é um campo que prioriza a precisão e esforço de compreensão, enquanto a literatura não se importa com eventuais imprecisões, e a legislação não tem como a facilidade de compreensão.
- ☐ O design da informação é uma forma de literatura especializada, que se concentra em transmitir informações complexas de maneira criativa, sem pretensões de ser necessariamente compreendida, como a legislação.

**2. No texto, por que o programa "Design para Democracia" é mencionado e qual é seu propósito?**

- ☐ O programa é mencionado como exemplo de design da informação que auxilia estados e municípios na produção de cédulas eleitorais mais compreensíveis, garantindo um processo de votação mais justo e eficiente.
- ☐ O programa é mencionado como exemplo de como aplicar o design da informação e promover a expressão artística em campanhas políticas, permitindo que designers desenvolvam materiais eleitorais mais criativos.
- ☐ O programa é mencionado porque fornece treinamento em design da informação para designers de todo o mundo, objetivando a melhoria da qualidade geral de informações no que tange questões do sistema democrático.

**3. Waller afirma que o design da informação é uma disciplina desafiadora e sub-representada em termos de educação e treinamento. Por quê?**

- ☐ Porque o design da informação é uma forma de arte com alto grau de complexidade, o que dificulta ensiná-lo em sua totalidade em escolas de arte e design;
- ☐ Porque o design da informação exige conhecimento especializado em uma ampla variedade de áreas e prioriza as necessidades dos usuários em detrimento da expressão artística.
- ☐ Porque o design da informação é uma disciplina ainda em formação, e que precisa ser amplamente reconhecida e difundida para que possa ser melhor atendida em termos de educação e treinamento.

**4. No texto, como o autor posiciona o design da informação com relação ao design?**

- ☐ O design da informação é uma subárea do design.
- ☐ Design é apenas parte do nome.
- ☐ O design é uma parte do processo de design de informação.

**5. Com base no texto, disserte brevemente sobre a relação entre Design de Informação e alfabetização documental a partir da leitura estratégica.**