

Memorandum

To: Rhonda Stanton
From: Hallee Hinds
Subject: Annotated bibliography explaining reasoning for the use of color in document design to help readers
Date: October 5, 2017

I am writing to introduce the bibliography for the research completed on an area of design that will be helpful when designing my Professional Writing Student Recruitment and Advising Guide. After briefly discussing the topic of research and the information found, this memo will outline the research that was conducted to determine the best uses of certain elements in document design.

Introduction

This annotated bibliography serves to explain the finding from each source throughout my research. The element of color serves an integral part in completing my guide, so researching it greatly broadens my understanding of why designers make certain choices when it comes to using color in documents. I have researched the different aspects of color to figure out what helps an audience focus and retain information, as well as to see what general purposes color can serve in documents. The balance of using color and negative white space is also discussed in some articles, and because the two balance each other out, it's important to understand how they are so related. The articles I have used for research contain a variety of ideas, but all of them consist of one common belief, and that is the idea that color is a beneficial tool in document design.

“Color Usage.” *IT Accessibility at Illinois*, 2016, <https://itaccessibility.illinois.edu/word-documents/color>.

This article conveys the idea that color shouldn't be used alone in a document, which makes sense. A designer wouldn't create a document with color and no text. The author describes that using underlining, borders, and symbols can work alongside color to help convey meaning. Using color to highlight essential information, such as due dates that are used in this article, can help draw the audience's attention to a part of the document that the designer needs them to see and/or read. Using color with text can also be beneficial in some documents. Using a different color text can draw emphasis to a passage, quote, or callout that may be inside a paragraph. One test to see if your document is readable if it were to be printed without color is to print a black and white version. It is one true way to make sure that the color you use in a document has purpose and meaning that ties into the text on the page. This article gives me the idea to print my document in black and white to make sure all color I use is necessary to the document's readability. **(IT Accessibility Webpage)**

Kitchel, J. Elaine. "APH Guidelines for Print Document Design." *American Printing House for the Blind, Inc.*, www.aph.org/research/design-guidelines/.

Kitchel's article has a section that discusses using white space, which is an extremely important part of using color in a document. It is stated that white space makes a page more readable by providing contrast to the text and the color on a page. Using large margins and increasing leading are two ways to create enough white space to ensure that the page is readable and useful. Using headings and subheadings can also help generate white space, which is a major part of my document because there are so many different topics that will be discussed. As this source is directed toward creating documents for those with disabilities, it is an important source to consider, because my document can also be given to students with disabilities. To create a document that is as easily readable as possible for those students, using high-contrast colors and using light colored paper for printing can better help these individuals. I think this source is an important one to have, because when creating materials for the University, we have to make sure that they are accessible for all students. (APH Webpage)

Knight, Terry W. "Color Grammars: The Representation of Form and Color in Designs." *Leonardo*, vol. 26, no. 2, 1993, pp. 117-124, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1575896>.

Color affects more than just print materials, which is another way that audiences can see and understand the importance of color. Knight describes in his article the significance of color in design of all forms. He describes color grammar and the way it is used to describe the qualities in a design. Color regions are described as two or three-dimensional areas of color. In two-dimensional designs, color areas sometimes overlap each other. One section of the article describes how when colors are overlapped, they are sometimes adjusted so that the designer is dealing with transparent and opaque colors to create the effects of blending some color areas and concealing other colors areas. This section also states that overlapping regions of color are dealt with in rankings. One color is ranked above or below another, which determines which one goes on top of the other. Through this article, we can see that the audience will greatly benefit when designers think through their decisions about using color in a document and when they use their knowledge of color grammar to determine the best use for color regions in design. (JSTOR Database)

"Our Colors." *Missouri State Brand*. Oct. 2, 2017, <http://brand.missouristate.edu/colors.htm>. Accessed on Oct. 3, 2017.

One extremely important website for my guide is the Missouri State Brand website. This page provides all the information that is needed to correctly incorporate Missouri State University's colors into my document. By using the color palette for the Springfield campus, we can distinguish the correct percentages of primary, secondary, and tertiary colors to use for all graphics, logos, and color blocks. By following the guide on this website, my document features will remain within the guidelines of Missouri State's Office of Publications. The Brand page

emphasizes the fact that yes, the palette is diverse and flexible, but it is important to remember to only use the colors in the palette to make sure all university materials look consistent and uniform in design. There are different ratios used for each color when it comes to different types of University documents. For example, my guide will follow the “Academic and professional” palette, which utilizes mostly the maroon, white and red colors in the primary and secondary groups of colors. This website is one of the most important resources for my project because it outlines the necessity for using the same colors in all documents created and produced by Missouri State University. **(MSU Website)**

Pett, Dennis and Trudy Wilson. “Color Research and Its Application to the Design of Instructional Materials.” *Educational technology Research and Development*, vol. 44, no. 3, 1996, pp. 19-35, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30221033>.

This article provided a new perspective and more knowledge on why color is beneficial to someone’s learning abilities. Although many people suspect that color can draw attention from someone, there are several studies to support this theory. The article describes Lamberski and Dwyer’s findings that color is an attention-getting mechanism that can provide visible effects on learning that words and labels cannot provide. Another conclusion that is mentioned is how using color in print materials helps students focus on important information and lessen the time they use to process information. One researcher points out that color can make learning easier when it’s used to focus attention on certain pieces that may not be able to gain emphasis without color being added. This article helps its readers understand how important color is to the audience that is reading a document using color to emphasize certain key pieces of information. **(JSTOR Database)**

Pfieffer, William Sanborn. *Technical Writing: A Practical Approach*. Pearson Education, Inc., 2003.

The section in this book that discusses the use of color in technical documents emphasizes the idea of creating a color style sheet while working in a single document. This strongly relates to Missouri State’s Branding palette of colors, and this article gives more detailed information on why certain color palettes and style sheets should be utilized. Providing a style sheet gives a company or organization a more uniform and consistent look when they publish materials. Using too many colors can be distracting, confusing, and costly, so using color sparingly can be an effective way to design a document. For example, the Missouri State Brand has widened its use of different colors, but it makes sure to focus on a few of the main colors so the audience is not overwhelmed with too much color. Because my document will be distributed to students in a color format, this book states that it is important to make sure to use distinctive shading and tinting when creating the document. For the best readability, blue images should be avoided as much as possible because they do not copy well when printed. All in all, this article in the text gave me a better understanding for why color should be utilized very carefully as not to distract from the purpose of your writing. **(Pfieffer Article)**

Telg, Ricky. "Elements of Document Design." University of Florida IFAS Extension, June 2012, edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/WC/WC12900.pdf.

In "Elements of Document Design," Telg describes how certain colors give different messages. He establishes the difference between warm and cool colors and the types of things they represent. For example, warm colors are used to show heat, fire, and/or the sun, while cool colors are used to represent the sky, sea, and/or wilderness. Telg also discusses the use of white space and how it creates a sense of openness. He says that having too many elements on a page can make the document look confusing, as well as detract from the meaning of it. This makes sense, because as many people have seen before, when a page is filled with color and other elements, it's hard to grasp what is actually going on in the writing on the page. We get too distracted from the text. This is why white space can be an effective use of color in a way that uses less color, but not no color. I'm glad that this article gives such a simple, but effective description of the positive use and the purpose of white space as it relates to the color on the page and how the two balance each other out. (UF Website)

White, Jan V. "Color: The Newest Tool for Technical Communicators." *Technical Writing: Principles, Strategies, and Readings*, Allyn & Bacon, 1997, pp. 576-580.

This article describes readers as "searchers," which is incredibly accurate for the document I will be creating. These readers will be searching for information about the Professional Writing Program. Many people start reading a document at whatever place caught their interest, such as a picture or the effective use of color. White gives a set of questions for designers to answer and think about while they are creating a document and using color to emphasize certain areas. He says that if a designer can answer all of the questions with a "yes," then they have not overused color in the document. One question he has designers ask themselves is whether or not color focuses attention on an element that actually deserves it. By asking this, he wants to make sure that designers aren't simply adding color to add color; he wants to ensure that there is a purpose for their doing so. If there is no effective or observable purpose for using color to draw attention to an element, then there is no need to add color to emphasize that piece of information. I like the way he asks the questions he does because it takes the designer through a step-by-step analysis of their work before they can truly understand if the color they use in their document is worthy of being there. (White Article)

Winn, William. "Color in Document Design." *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, vol. 34, no. 3, Sept. 1991, pp. 180-185, ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/84112/.

Winn's article describes the general functions that color can have in documents. The first function the article mentions is to direct attention. Early on, color can draw attention to certain words and phrases in a block of text, or to a certain feature of a graphic in a document. The next function discussed is shape and area, which means that color can be used to put emphasis on certain properties of text instead of putting single words or pieces of graphics into

groups based on their color. Entire pages can now be organized this way. Clarity is also an important function of color because besides using color to draw in an audience's attention, color cueing can clarify that actual structure of a document. Most people can also agree that people tend to identify things by their color. The article uses the example of birds that are different colors. The last function of color is that text, backgrounds, and graphics and what color they are influence the reactions people have. People tend to like colored material more than bichromatic, two-color, graphics, which is an idea that many people assume even before research confirms it. I like this article because it gives all of the specific functions that color can have in a document, and it also gives specific examples as to what those functions mean. (IEEE Website)

“Visual Design Basics.” *Improving the User Experience*, Department of Health & Human Services, <https://www.usability.gov/what-and-why/visual-design.html>. Accessed 2 Oct. 2017.

The usability sector of the U.S. government considers color to be a basic element of visual design, which coincides with most other beliefs when it comes to using color in documents. The article describes how designers use a color palette to differentiate between items, which we can see through the use of certain graphs and sometimes designers use different colors for different types of titles. Colors are also used to create depth on a page and add emphasis to certain areas. Designers also use color to help organize sections of information on a page, such as callouts or sidebars of separate information. People also utilize contrast when working with color in document design. Contrast can make different things stand out, such as logos, titles, and graphics. This article also discusses white space, and one term they use is that white space helps a page “breathe.” I really like this description because it really reinforces the idea that a person made the document, so the white space gives it a more breathable feeling, giving each section of writing or graphic room to draw emphasis to itself. (Government Usability Website)

Conclusion

This Professional Writing Student Recruitment and Advising Guide will utilize the information I have gathered through the creation of this annotated bibliography. The research I have found that addresses the use of color and white space in document design has enhanced my knowledge on the subject. I intend to use color according to the sources I have found, especially the Missouri State Brand webpage, because it clarifies the need to make sure all university documents remain uniform and consistent so that people can clearly see where the document came from. The goal of the research in this bibliography is to make sure that I utilize as many instructions and ideas as possible when using color in designing my documents, specifically those for the university.

I will continue to communicate with you and gather research throughout the process of creating this Professional Writing Student Recruitment and Advising Guide. If you have any questions about this information, or any further suggestions about this document, please feel free to connect with me via email at hmh522@live.missouristate.edu.