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Almost all of our contributors to this issue draw our attention to ways of writing other than that of our familiar Roman alphabet. And it is salutary for most of us to recognise that there are some systems of writing, such as Chinese or Arabic, that are used by a large section of the world's population—millions of people, to whom our alphabet is completely unfamiliar.

One writing for one world—the pioneer work of C K Bliss

Patrick Wallis Burke

The author discusses the differences between alphabetic and pictographic modes of recording human experience. In alphabetic systems, words come first, ideas second, whereas in ideographic forms of writing, the idea is paramount. Each ideogram is a thought-picture, not merely a unit in the systematic dissection of the sound-structure of a language. And since ideographic writing is not linked to speech-sounds, it can achieve a universality that is impossible with a phonetic system. The author believes that the work of C K Bliss is important because he forces us to consider whether there might not be entirely new ways of transcribing language—ways that could lead to one language for one world.

'Stamp on it'—some aspects of postage stamp design

Stuart Rose

The author, who is Design Adviser to the British Post Office, gives a short historical survey of British postage stamp design, from the first-ever stamp (the Penny Black of 1840), to the present day. He then goes on to discuss the various difficulties that accompany the design of the many commemorative issues that are now produced in Britain. He believes that too many people look at stamps as works of art and, in so doing, fail to appreciate the skill of the designer in solving the many difficult graphical problems posed by the subject.

Easier than ABC—some experiments with a 'plastic' language

Peter Watson

The author briefly describes the work of Dr Hodges of California State University, who has been studying the problem of how to help low-IQ, non-verbal children to develop their ability to communicate. She has achieved some remarkable successes by means of a plastic language kit, made up of various coloured, shaped pieces of plastic, which the children use to symbolise various objects or actions.
We show here a sample tourist folder adapted from one published by C K Bliss. It should be pointed out that his system is copyright (1942-1966), and that further information can be obtained by writing to him at the following address: Semantography—Blissymbolics Publications (Non-profit), 2 Vicar Street, Coogee, Sydney, Australia.

Read the symbols line by line, not haphazardly here and there, and see how quickly you can combine them to new meanings. Children succeed in their first lesson.

Here are 30 international symbols already used all over the world.

1234567890+ - \( \times \) \( \div \) = >

NUMBERS AND MATHEMATICAL SIGNS

MARKS DIRECTION SUN MOON STAR ELECTRIC lightning

SAFETY MUSIC CROSS OUT MEDICAL Aesculapius sign Star

TRADE Mercurius sign simplified simplified

Here are 29 Blissymbols:

MAN WOMAN GROUND WHEEL LUGGAGE TIME

OPENING CLOSED. ENCLOSURE lightning line repeated, copy, print special openings

MAIL SAFETY MUSIC CROSS OUT MEDICAL TRADE

letter international note obliterate Aesculapius sign Mercurius sign

cancel simplified simplified

Here are some Blissymbols:

MOUTH EAR EYE NOSE HANO PLANT

speech hearing sight smell see later vegetable, fruit

By putting the Action Symbol on top of the symbols above, we indicate the Action (verb) of these pictured things, as to see, to smell, to touch. With this, children wrote whole sentences in their first lesson.

The higher mind above the individual mind (skull outline) indicates God, parents, teachers, who instill conscience in us.

Please continue to the top of the next column.

How to use the "line letter."

Alphabetical letters are formed by lines. By adding one horizontal line to F we get the different sound E. In much the same way we can use the "Line Letter" for the forming of hundreds of pictorial symbols as shown below:

The symbols for open and closed can be used for banks, consulates, etc. together with symbols for time and days (see below).

Please continue to the top of the next column.
Experiments conducted by teachers have shown that children grasp these pictorial Blissymbols quicker than words. They can read new combinations they have never seen before, and they can boldly and logically combine new meanings they need when writing to penfriends who speak other languages.

Why are the symbols so simple? Because the line elements can be put on any typewriter by removing the capital letters, but leaving the small letters for names and ordinary correspondence. An IBM ball typewriter is even better.

And the Lord said, behold the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, and they may not understand one another's speech.

So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build a city.

Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

So runs the biblical account of the way in which Adam's early language was changed into the confusion of tongues we know today.

The Book of Genesis, in which it occurs, is probably one of the oldest stories in that extraordinary rag-bag of Hebrew poetry, history, anecdote, and devotion, that now forms the basis of present-day Christian mythology.

It has all the marks of being a traditional story, known to the Israelites long before its ancient author set it down.

The story begins abruptly.

We are not told who is speaking, nor who is being addressed and, whenever I heard it as a child, it always gave me the uncomfortable feeling that I should not be listening.

If this vengeful Lord was intent on creating a wide variety of spoken languages he was remarkably successful. It has been estimated that there are now at least 2,800 different languages being spoken in the world today, not counting minor dialects.

Human language is rooted in speech. All known societies, no matter how 'primitive' they may appear in other respects, possess fully developed languages. Human beings may tread the earth naked, and clutching all their material possessions in one hand, but they are never dumb, in any sense of the word.

And learning to speak is our most remarkable intellectual accomplishment. Very few of us, indeed, ever manage to do anything quite as clever again. Present-day research in phonetics, or into the neurology and physiology of speech, only increases one's wonder at the astonishing skills that are mastered.

Yet we all take it completely for granted.

In speech we exchange ideas and feelings. We hang out pennants of sound; thread together the meaning-full sound-units we call words.

Blissymbols can be typed and cabled by Facsimile Telegram without any telegraphic coding, decoding, and without translation into any language.

Here is an example of a Facsimile Telegram:

PLEASURE RESERVE 1 ROOM 2 BEDS BATH GARAGE ARRIVE SUNDAY

DANGER HIGH VOLTAGE.

positive negative hard mouth wave negative mouth

DANGER.

YES? NO! DON'T TOUCH! DRINK WATER DON'T DRINK!

DANGER.

fire extinguisher safety sign

DEPARTURE ARRIVAL THROUGH EXPRESS TRAIN CHANGE TRAINS

Aesculapius sign (snake around rod) shop open to street level Aesculap

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used to convey them are as diverse as the cries of the birds.

Since words die as soon as they are uttered, man has long sought ways of trapping them; making them permanent by such means as writing and printing.

In essence, the problem facing the inventor of a writing system is to find a satisfactory eye language to act as a substitute for the primary ear language.

A study of early writing systems shows us that our modern scripts developed from pictorial representational signs of various kinds.

At the outset, they were a completely distinctive way of recording human experience. They were true eye languages.

Pressures in the development of spoken language, however, gradually turned these scripts into phonetic or partly phonetic systems.

But once writing disengages itself from pictorial representation it becomes completely dependent upon the spoken language and develops into a more or less faithful recording of the sounds of speech.

It becomes visible ear-language.

Ideograms and alphabets represent two solutions of the same basic problem.

Phonetically written words, however, cannot draw upon the same stores of models as ideograms.

Phonetic and syllabic alphabets use essentially arbitrary symbols to represent a comparatively comprehensive spectrum of the sounds that make up a given language.

Speech sounds are split into their components and letters are coined or borrowed to represent these sound components.

If faced with various groupings of letters and knowing each of their sounds, one can utter back the word.

The word, however, is meaningless; no more than a label attached to some idea, object or event.

The function of the word is merely that of triggering off in one's mind the idea for which it stands.

In alphabetic systems, words come first, ideas second.

In ideographic forms of writing, on the other hand, the idea is paramount.

Each ideogram is a thought-picture; an entity, not a unit in the systematic dissection of the sound-structure of a language.

It is difficult for anyone familiar only with the common European languages to appreciate the differences between alphabetic and ideographic languages.

Yet there does exist a language spoken by more people than any other, and with a literary tradition of over 35 centuries, which is ideographic, not alphabetic, in construction.

If we look at the structure of the
Chinese language, we find that it is not conspicuously complex. In many ways it might be said to be simpler than the Western languages. It has little 'grammar' as we know it. Verbs are not conjugated; nouns are not declined. Instead of the syntactical rituals that have plagued western schoolchildren for generations, the Chinese wrote the written language to provide a literary continuity across thousands of years, as well as binding together the diverse cultures of China.

Although the sounds of the language have changed considerably over the centuries, the written characters have changed little. A modern Chinese man would not be able to understand the spoken language of Confucius. Yet he can read and understand Confucius’ written characters just as they were set down over fourteen centuries earlier.

On the other hand, few Englishmen could translate even a twelfth-century English text, since they would be faced with a phonetic rendering of an unfamiliar language, much closer in character to German than is their present-day speech.

Chinese characters have a more direct connection with their meaning than do English words. If we write down the sequence of letters that spells “horse,” it has meaning only through the mediation of the sounds that each of the letters makes.

It would little real difference to English-speakers if we adopted the Chinese alphabet, or the Shavian alphabet, to render the same sounds, since the shape of the letters bears no relation to the concept “horse.” The Chinese character “horse” means horse without any reference to the sound of the word. It still bears an echo of the animal that inspired the early symbol. Form and meaning are much more closely linked.

Throughout history, the Chinese language has been notoriously difficult to learn. Way back in 1930 it was estimated that only three million newspapers were sold in China, to be read by only one person in twenty-five.

Certainly, under the communists, the Chinese have made considerable progress in increasing literacy. They have instituted some simplification of the written language, reducing the number of written characters to three thousand and making the more complicated ones to make them easier to memorise and write.

But for all its tortuousness, Chinese can be wonderfully apt and vivid. Much more importantly, it has the advantage that the written language can be understood by speakers of totally different dialects.

This is one reason why it is difficult to 'romanise' Chinese.

To do so would merely separate the various Chinese tongues from each other.

Just look at the way in which the Roman alphabet is used in languages like English, French and Hungarian. If I wish to conjure up the concept and quality of the square, I must write either "square," "carre" or "négyszög." If I were to show an Englishman, a Frenchman and a Hungarian, a picture of a square, they would each recognize it at once.

And this is what the Chinese ideograms do for Mandarin, Wu, Xiang, Cantonese, Kejia, Gan, Min, Mongolian, Tibetan, Formosan and Japanese speakers.

Language may be primarily spoken sound, yet writing does not have to be so. We are demanding other demands on the sound-patterns of language. What we succeed in communicating is determined only by the means we use for communication, and Western sounds and forms are only one among many. It is only an historical accident that has led to the Roman alphabet being the major vehicle for present-day communication.

At the present time, when men from every country are meeting every day, there is a need for some form of common language something that is capable of conveying ideas, regardless of language barriers.

Charles K Bliss, the inventor of Semantography, is a pioneer in this field, whose remarkable work serves as a useful introduction to the system that he has developed.

Charles Bliss was a graduate of the University of Technology, Vienna, and is published in 1949. Since then, Bliss has published a number of books relating to Semantography. In these he has further developed it as a logical, semantic—semantic even—ethical tool. Although he sees it only as an auxiliary medium, to be used only where the language barrier has to be bridged, he believes that its symbolic logic can be a help to many people.

And I think that he is probably right. Like him, I have found that exposure to a language like Chinese has a decidedly liberating effect upon one’s conception of the nature of language.

Certainly, I was startled to discover how parochial my grammatical habits were. Marshall McLuhan believes that our phonetic modes of writing have led us to a linear, sequential form of awareness. He observes that;

"Consciousness is not a verbal process. Yet during all our centuries of phonetic literacy we have favored the chain of inference as the mark of our mental effort. At this present time, when men and women do for Mandarin, Wu, Xiang, Cantonese, Kejia, Gan, Min, Mongolian, Tibetan, Formosan and Japanese speakers.

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An example of Bengal script from a handwritten collection of poems (India, 1926) by Rabindranath Tagore

Some examples of the logotypes of various Asian newspapers. Reading from top to bottom, these are: India (Hindi), India (Bengali), Thailand, Laos, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and the Khmer Republic
A first meeting of Asian typographical experts was held in Tokyo, Japan, in March 1974. It was sponsored jointly by the Asian Cultural Centre for Unesco (ACCU) and the Tokyo Book Development Centre (TBDC).

The meeting also received the cooperation of the Japanese National Commission for Unesco, the Japanese Typographical Association and the Japanese Association of Type Founders.

The meeting was attended by experts from India, Indonesia, Japan, Khmer Republic, Laos, Malaysia, and Thailand. In addition, technical advisers from Japan and Thailand, and observers from the Khmer Republic, took part in the discussions.

For some time now the Asian Cultural Centre for Unesco and the Tokyo Book Development Centre have been engaged in cooperative work in the development of new, non-Latin typefaces for use in Asia. During the course of this work they had found that throughout Asia there was, as yet, no well developed print culture and little understanding of the importance of good typography.

This first meeting, therefore, was organized to meet certain important objectives—these being:

1. to exchange data and information concerning the present state of typography throughout Asia,
2. to discuss what kinds of typography would be most appropriate for use in the printing of newspapers and textbooks for primary and secondary school education,
3. to discover effective ways in which regional cooperation might be extended in order to develop and improve typographical practice within the regions.

Prior to discussion, the meeting was told of the work being done by the Tokyo Book Development Centre, in the design and development of new non-Latin typefaces. In 1969 work began on a new Thai typeface. During the past five years three new faces belonging to the same family had been completed. These were to be known as Unesco-Ti-Fine, Unesco-Ti-Bold, and Unesco-Ti-Italic of 19.5 point size. In addition, Unesco-Ti-Bold of 30 point, and Unesco-Ti-Bold of 36 point had also been completed.

In 1970 work began on the design of a LAOTIAN typeface. So far two new designs have been developed, Unesco-Loi-Fine, in 24 point and Unesco-Loi-Bold in 32 point. Work has also been in progress since 1972 on a new typeface in Khmer characters.

The meeting was attended by experts represented by textbook production. The top sample is in Bataksh, the one below is Makassaarsh. Both are produced by the Amsterdam Type Manufacturing Company. Below them are two typefaces designed in Japan. The upper one is for Thailand, and the lower is for Laos.

During the meeting, experts presented reports on the state of the typographical arts within their own countries. There was also detailed discussion of the particular problems represented by textbook production. It was conceded that the present supply of available typefaces was limited and inadequate. The meeting therefore resolved that member countries would collect together specimens of elegant type or calligraphy for further study by the Tokyo Book Development Centre.

Problems of type-casting were also discussed. At present, different type-founders used differing formulae for their type alloys. Since many of the Asian countries have no type-founding facilities, it is vital that extremely costly type should not only be durable but give sharp impressions. It had been found that very frequently joint characters set in certain foundry type, broke down when run on high speed printing plants. It was also noted that different countries supply type at differing type-heights. Holland, for example, uses 24.85mm, Belgium: 23.68mm, France: 23.56mm, England: 23.32mm, and Japan: 23.45mm. Such variations cause considerable problems to book producing agencies. The meeting resolved, therefore, that all member countries should adopt a standard type-height, both in the manufacture of type, and in the ordering of type from outside countries.

The majority of participating countries use Indian type letters. Syllables are formed by adding vowel signs over, under, or on both sides of the consonant. If typefaces are constructed with the vowel signs integral with the character, the number of pieces becomes extremely large. Consequently, the vowel signs are cast separately from the consonants, as additional characters. There are a great many, and they are very small, so that it takes a lot of time to set type. They are also easy to damage or lose. For syllables that are used very frequently, the vowel signs are made integral with the character. As a result, there is a real need for studies of frequency of syllables to be undertaken.

The examples shown below are as follows:

- The upper two types are examples of those currently in use in Indonesia. The top sample is in Bataksh, the one below is Makassaarsh.
- Both are produced by the Amsterdam Type Manufacturing Company.
- Below them are two typefaces designed in Japan.
- The upper one is for Thailand, and the lower is for Laos.

During the course of this work they had found that throughout Asia there was, as yet, no well developed print culture and little understanding of the importance of good typography. This first meeting, therefore, was organized to meet certain important objectives—these being:

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3. to discover effective ways in which regional cooperation might be extended in order to develop and improve typographical practice within the regions.
Depending on where you happen to be standing at the time, the very mention of the words ‘Postage stamp’ will conjure up a wide variety of reactions, from stimulating, brain-numbing number of differing reactions, some of them highly emotional. I suppose to most of us the words will recall questionable deals in dog-eared swaps, obtained by dubious acts from some poor stamp dealer in the Strand, and conducted with typical schoolboy threats behind the Pavilion during a school match. To others they will conjure up a wide variety of glasses and stamp albums with the seductive hope of an investment in a fortune to be gained in old age. For many they just suggest an artistic form which they may not understand yet feel they know all about and for which they accuse the Post Office of wasting its time and their money. But to designers they will denote an area of industrial design, perhaps one of the most sophisticated in the whole field of graphics, certainly a highly significant one in the performer of one of the largest systems of package handling in the country.

It is not for nothing, therefore, that the Post Office received a Design Award from the Design Council for its 1972 issues of stamps, an award given not for their philatelic qualities but for their excellence as printed examples of industrial design.

Therefore, it is at stamps as objects of design that I want to look, rather than as examples of fine art or indeed at their other functions as subjects for collecting and philatelic interest. And if from this standpoint I can tread rather more firmly, I was going to say “stamp”, on some popular misconceptions about stamps, so much the better.

It has always seemed to me that there exists a fundamental contradiction between the aims and objects of the Post Office and those of the philatelist and collector. For whereas we will spend endless time, money and energy in an attempt to achieve perfection, the phi- latelist in his pursuit of oddities, and errors, and imperfections sustains a highly prosperous trade. Certainly there is no other corner in the printer’s world where his errors are sought after with such avidity.

If we then accept the concept that the postage stamp is first and foremost an object of industrial design, what are the influences which affect its design and production and how significant are they in terms of the ultimate result.

Broadly there are, I suppose, five main areas of influence. Those imposed by the operational requirements on a stamp as an essential aid to the processing of mail, those imposed by the subject matter in the shape and quality of outside advice sought by the Post Office, by the standard of performance of the designers themselves and by the technical competence of the printers.

All these factors have, in varying degrees, influenced the design and production of stamps ever since the introduction of the Penny Black in 1840, and they are as significant today as they were then.

To most of us, perhaps, the best stamp that has ever been produced. But in our parlance it was not designed. It was the piecemeal result of an intellectual solution to a number of practical problems.

But before we start to analyse these influences on the design of stamps today, let us go back to the beginning and see how these same influences affected the production of early stamps.

Like so many bright ideas the Postage Stamp was the result of the Reform Bill of 1832. One of the many sociological abuses the Bill sought to reform was that attaching to the inefficiency, high cost and privileged abuse of the Postal Service. In his pamphlet “Post Office Reform, its importance and practicability” Rowland Hill had set out his argument for a uniform postage of 1d for a letter weighing ½ ounce for delivery anywhere in the British Isles and almost as an afterthought had suggested that if every house was fitted with a letter box and postage pre-paid, I quote “the letter carrier would drop the letters and having knocked he would pass on as fast as he could walk.”

The system Rowland Hill sought to reform was then a cash-on-delivery system. Time was wasted in awaiting an answer at a house, argument with the recipient over payment, often repeated visits to get an answer rendered inevitably in a very heavy financial loss for the Post Office.

It was, therefore, this new concept of pre-payment of postal charges that immediately influenced the design of the new labels as they were first called. It is of some interest that Rowland Hill himself had forecast the stamp as we know it by specifying a suitable label as “a bit of paper just large enough to bear the stamp (that is the cancellation) and covered at the back with a glutinous wash which the user might, by applying a little moisture, attach to the back of the letter.”

Perhaps the most decorative was an engraved design from Charles Penton Whiting printed in two colours and showing a portrait of the young Queen from a drawing by Henry Corbould for use on the City Medal struck in 1837, was commissioned to engrave the dies for a similar portrait to be printed in Perkins, Bacon and Company for use on the first adhesive stamp. The background was machine engraved by a technique in current use on bank notes and designed to reduce to a minimum all chances of forgery.

So it was that William Wyon, who engraved a bas-relief portrait of the young Queen from a drawing by Henry Corbould for use on the City Medal struck in 1837, was commissioned to engrave the dies for a similar portrait to be printed in Perkins, Bacon and Company for use on the first adhesive stamp. The background was machine engraved by a technique in current use on bank notes and designed to reduce to a minimum all chances of forgery.
Rowland Hill himself had recommended that "labels, if made of some paper difficult to imitate and like the medicine stamps, printed from copperplates with various colours in the same impression, thus requiring the combined ingenuity of the papermaker, the engraver and the printer, would be secure against forgery"...and here speaks the careful client..."and the cost, only 1d for 200.

Hand in hand with this obsession for security against forgery was the equal concern against the possibility of re-use. The printers had recommended the use of black for printing the engraved plates, but the black cancellation mark was found to be inadequate. So the ink on the cancellation was changed to red. Alas, the printer's ink was more permanent than the cancellation which, with the help of a solvent, could be removed from the stamp. After only one year, therefore, the black colour had to be replaced with a red penny and printed with fugitive ink, less permanent than the cancellation, which now became black again.

During the forty years which has passed since the Penny Black, new stamps had been produced of different values but without sufficient attention being paid to their operational efficiency. With the result that in 1884 the Post Office was forced to set up a Committee of enquiry into the whole question of stamp design to quell a growing tide of complaint from its own staff and the public. From them, largely on the confusion caused between values and colours which was hard to distinguish. It is fascinating to read the terms of reference for that Committee drawn up one hundred years ago: "It is of the first importance that, in any new scheme of Postage Stamps which may be devised, there should be a variety of colour, form, and design as to render the Stamps of different values easily distinguishable from one another, both by Post Office officials and by the public, not only when first used, but also after they have been cancelled.

2 The Stamps should be printed so thoroughly and effectively a manner as to prevent fraudulent use of them after they have once passed through the Post.

3 They should also be such in manufacture and design as to preclude the possibility of imitation.

4 Regard should be had to the desirability of producing Stamps which shall have as much artistic merit as is compatible with the first three conditions.

5 The whole subject requires very careful and deliberate consideration, with the help of information and suggestions, not only from practical officers of the Department who may be called to assist the Committee, but also from any persons, skilful in design or otherwise, of whose knowledge the Committee may desire to avail themselves, for it has become most desirable, in the case of particular features, that an amended scheme should now be devised which may hold out every reasonable promise of efficiency and permanence."

Whoever it was who drafted these instructions which affected stamp design, the factors which govern the "design" of stamps, which was quite remarkable for his period. The issue which resulted from the Committee's recommendations was in many respects a disappointment, and it is difficult to trace any close association with the original brief. Admittedly, the values are now expressed in numerals instead of words, but the set lacks any clear consistency in the overall pattern. And so the pattern of stamp design was set for nearly the next forty years and not only a change in reign was thought a sufficiently important occasion to change the design. Poor Edward VII on his accession had to content himself with having his own portrait slotted into the same frame vacated by his mother.

Today we have become so used to the idea of new stamps that it is difficult to appreciate that it was not until 1926 that a special stamp was issued which affected stamp design generally are not common to both types. Like the ordinary stamps, the definitive issue which includes now some nineteen different monetary values, these are available all year round at all Post Offices and, by large, the only philatelic interest in them once they are issued, is technical rather than usual, changes in printing cylinder numbers, and in the past, differences between phosphor overprints on the front and types of adhesive on the back.

Operationally, these stamps are highly vulnerable because they account for by far the greatest volume of mail. Any embarrassment to sorting operations, by manual and mechanical, which is generated by these stamps can have disastrous effects.

The special, or commemorative issues, however, fall into a different category. First, they will only relate in value to four or five established service rates—and possibility four air-mail rates. We never publish in a non-tariff rate denomination.

Primarily, a postage stamp is a receipt for the prepayment of a postal service and it is the only indication to the customer of the type of service the customer has bought. It must, therefore, denote clearly the value of the service by portraying the monetary denominations in numerals, and by colour. It must be capable of cancellation to prevent re-use and in a manner which will neither obliterate the value recognition nor make illegible the date on the date stamp. It must also for overseas mail denote the country of origin. Traditionally, since the first Penny Black, we have always used the sovereign's head to identify British stamps and it has appeared in varying sizes on every stamp we have ever produced, whether in a definitive or in a commemorative issue.

Insofar as a stamp must indicate the type of service that has been bought, it then becomes a significant indicator in the sorting and trafficking processes for that service. Any ambiguity, therefore, in the identification of its value or confusion with other values can very easily cause delay in the processing of mail, whether by hand or by machine.

Nowadays, an increasing volume of mail is being sorted mechanically and, broadly, the system relies on light reflections from bars of phosphor printed on the surface of the stamp which activates electronically a release device. The quality of that signal has a direct relationship with the hue of the colour on which the phosphor is printed. As a rule of thumb we get a weaker signal at the blue end, and also where the tonal values are dark rather than light.

On special issues, however, where there is no second class value, we sometimes print the phosphor all over the surface when the background colour is too dark to give a satisfactory signal and compensate by increasing the width of the white margin. The reflection then comes from the margin and not from the printed area.

We have had to do that on two occasions recently: on the Reynolds and Raeburn paintings and on the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association stamp, designed by Richard Sanders.

In the sale of stamps at a Post Office counter, the clerk must be able to identify the value quickly and with certainty and the customer, too, must be in no doubt that he has got what he paid for.

So much, then, for some of the operational requirements of a stamp, none of which we consider to be inhibitory to the designer in producing a satisfactory visual result, provided they are taken well in the forefront of his mind.

But when we come to the choice of subject for special issues, then we find some restrictions in the restrictive area. The Post Office will receive anything up to two hundred suggestions from bodies of one sort or another, laying claim for an issue of stamps to commemorate an event, a person or an anniversary.

In addition, we compile our own list of what we consider to be suitable subjects in terms of public acceptability and political expediency. We are, indeed, too, to take some heed to what our marketing experts would have us believe to be suitable subjects, although I must admit that if they were to have it all their own way, babies, dogs, pop stars and football players would be the ideal subjects, as all of them admirable and wholly lovable in their own way, but not I think the best material for a postage stamp.

Out of all this wealth of advice and suggestions we have to choose six or seven subjects, for that is the maximum number of issues in a year which we can handle and which the public can stomach.

Increasingly, I believe, we are becoming more aware of the influence of the subject on the ultimate design result. Inevitably, there are some subjects which will defy even a tolerable graphic solution, let alone a good one. However worthy they may be as subjects, as stamps they can only be mediocre. It is not easy to define that area at all accurately, but my belief is that the more conceptual a subject is, the less likely is it that we will produce a good design result.

But what do we mean by a good stamp? To answer that question in terms of graphic expression and aesthetic
result is, I fear, too difficult for me to explain, but it can, I believe, be answered in terms of attitudes. Miniaturist design demands a quite specific approach, for it is more than a question of possessing the necessary skill and craftsmanship to paint within a very small area. If we accept that a stamp designer must have a tolerable standard of craftsmanship to do any good at all, and an ability or not to analyse a subject and extract from it the one meaningful factor that will allow him to produce a good, or not-so-good stamp.

To my mind, stamp design is first and foremost, an intellectual process and it is this capacity to crystallise a problem into one inevitable graphic expression that makes the difference between a good and not-so-good designer.

Admittedly, this is true of all industrial design but it seems to be more critical in the design of stamps where the room to manoeuvre is more restricted. But if we place this degree of analytical responsibility on the designer and assume that in seeing the solution, it follows that the Post Office itself must be quite clear in its own mind about the problem it has, and now it thinks it sees the solution.

Not in visual terms, necessarily, but in the way it believes the public will react to a certain point of view and the way in which a particular graphic delineation will be seen as the over-all expression of a well-defined policy.

Let me take a fairly obvious example of what I mean. Christmas can be expressed visually, either as great big Xmas trees, or with toys and crackers and Christmas trees, or as a sentimental picture of an England which never really existed with stage-coaches, deep snow, fat jovial welcoming inn-keepers and a roaring bright fire in a self-timbered coaching inn, or as a religious festival seen through the eyes of the mediaevalist or brought more up-to-date with the Mowbray version of a rather different Palestinian scene.

All these options are open to the designer, but it is essential that both the designer and the Post Office know which expression politically, (with a small ‘p’) the Post Office could not tolerate. For unless this sort of understanding exists, a designer cannot design with intelligence and certainly not with confidence.

Over the years I believe we have increased our understanding of the necessity to be more professional in our dealings with the designer and certainly, the advice the Post Office seeks itself is now far more knowledgeable of the problems of design. Simply the growth of the Postage stamp in 1940 the Post Office has always sought the advice of experts in fields related to the arts and crafts of stamp production. Artists, critics, engravers and printers had all been consulted over the years to see if the best advice was available, for then the Post Office laid little claim to being skilled in matters of aesthetic judgement.

But the advice it sought tended to be of a general character and was not always of the most help. The best advice was sought from Garter King at Arms, the Director of the National Gallery and even as recently as 1948, on the occasion of the silver wedding of George VI the artists were told that the stamp would be printed in blue, because that was the colour thought by the Royal Fine Art Commission to be appropriate.

I must say some funny things went on with that issue, because before they started work the artists were told to go and look at some stamps produced in Belgium between 1935 and 1939 (ten years earlier) of Queen Astrid, Prince Baudouin, and Rubens, which had been contained within a simulation of a picture frame. It was suggested (by whom I cannot establish) that a design of this nature seemed appropriate for a personal occasion such as their Majesties’ silver wedding. ‘What’s on the wireless, dear? A beautiful picture of the King and Queen!’ Fortunately, by the time we arrived at this silver wedding of their daughter, this sort of unprofessional advice was no longer offered or sought.

With the setting up of the Council of Industrial Design in 1944, however, a new body of design advice was formed under its auspices in the shape of a Stamps Advisory Panel, and for a number of years this panel was responsible for the design of stamps. But in 1968 it was replaced by a Post Office Committee under the chairmanship of a Post Office Director and composed of MPs, philatelists, designers and non-professional, but aesthetically informed members.

At the same time the Post Office created the full-time post of Design Director, and so took one more significant step towards making itself more professionally informed on matters of stamp design.

I find this whole question of the interaction of advice and direction on the design of stamps a fascinating one, for there seems to be a very definite relationship between the character of the advice and the resulting style of design.

If we only go back twenty years to the end of the reign of George VI we can appreciate better this change of attitude towards stamp design. Just look at the first five stamps of the reign—the new definitives.

Five designs, five different designers by Enid Marx, Farrar-Bell, G Knife, Mary Adshead and Edmund Dulac, with one more by Lynton Lamb for the high values. I suppose at a time when these were the only stamps in circulation, it was a good thing to build variety into the issue. But in my view, the Post Office rather overdid the ‘57 variety thing in the Regional stamps. It is interesting that the five regions were given the power to design their own stamps without any central control.

But today we take the opposite view, and when Arnold Machin was commissioned to design a new definitive range in 1966, we went for consistency of design throughout the set, including the Regionals adapted by Jeffery Matthews, and the impressions on pre-printed stationery.

Machin had already made a new bas-relief portrait of the Queen for use on the new coinage, and this formed the basis of his portrait for the stamp. In choosing the more formal profile pose he gave the stamp a greater feeling of dignity and authority than was possible with the earlier three-quarter photographic head.

His original concept was a bas-relief profile surrounded by some sort of rococo decoration and he had presented some preliminary designs which were highly decorative. The total effect, however, would depend on the quality of the modelling in the head and the right balance in the photograph of the sculpture. Machin therefore carried out a number of photographic tests with the printers, Harrison and Sons, seeing his sculpture under a variety of lighting conditions. But the Post Office and Machin were so delighted with this very simple effect of the head on its own that it agreed to drop the words ‘Postage’ and ‘Revenue’, and he gave up his original idea of a more decorative design.

But to pursue this question of advice and the preparation of briefs. In 1958 we issued these stamps in honour of the 7th British Empire and Commonwealth Games held at Cardiff. The Post Office brief to the designers said nothing about representing athletics but insisted that some heraldic motif symbolising Wales had to be included. In 1960 we were asked to issue another set of stamps for the 9th Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh. This time our brief to the designers said ‘athletics’, but such was the change in the sociological climate, that we had to ask them to portray only those events which had a multi-racial complement of competitors.

In 1970 we aimed to create a visually related set by trying to find a literary common denominator—and we found it in people.

For what subjects could be more disparate than the signing of the Declaration of Arbroath in 1320, the Sailing of the Mayflower in 1620, the Anniversary of Florence Nightingale and the Founding of the Royal Astronomical Society, both in 1820? We asked John Lockwood Kipling to design the stamps and the International Co-operative Alliance in 1895.

But I fear, the one of the problems of design has everything to do with art and is not a question of possessing the necessary knowledge of the subject. Unless the distinction between art and design is quite clear in the mind of those who are concerned with the design, approval and production of stamps, it is very easy for the designer as solvers of problems and not as artists who are concerned only with the visual side of stamp design. This will be biased in the direction of personal opinion (and isn’t their opinion as
good as the artist's?) and away from the direction of informed judgement.

From time to time we find ourselves exposed, like all public corporations, to public criticism of our judgement. In a way the Post Office is in a difficult position insofar as it imposes on its public certain conditions of choice which the public cannot avoid. If you, as the public, do not like our stamps, you cannot go and buy the ones you do like somewhere else. Recognition of a monopolistic position on the part of a supplier can be frustrating to the public. The Post Office, to a point accepts, therefore, that it has a responsibility, in democratic theory at least, to give the public what it wants, but in doing so is aware that in practice that can be a fallacy. For just as the public is incapable of arriving at a representative point of view, even if it knew what it wanted, so it realises that in most specialist fields it knows more than the other man. Certainly, it realises that it is rarely wise, as one Postmaster-General would have us believe, that we should always aim to "please the man on the Clapham Common bus."

At the heart of the public acceptance of a stamp is public understanding, or the degree of public familiarity with the subject and, thereafter, the quality of subject recognition which the designer builds into it. I spoke earlier of the dependence of design quality on subject suitability. Let me pursue that further.

There was, I believe, a fundamental mistake in the choice of the BBC as a subject, for we had been asked to give visual expression to what, for most people, was an auditory experience, however manfully David Gentleman dealt with the problem. Similarly with Post Office Technology in 1969. Each stamp by David Gentleman was a brilliant distillation of a very complex subject, but they were all relatively unintelligible until you read the small type. You could argue that the design becomes more intriguing, but to me it suggests that the designer was given an impossible job of making graphically credible a subject which is literary, rather than visual interest.

The first 'definitives' for the reign of Queen Elizabeth II

I confess I always become a little suspicious when a stamp demands a caption to make the design intelligible, rather than to give information, and suspicious more of the choice of subject than of the quality of the design.

So far I have said nothing about the final influence of the design of stamps, the technical competence of the printer. Without doubt, it has been the gigantic strides which the printer has made in improving his technique of miniscule reproduction that has contributed so significantly to the development of stamp design and production in the United Kingdom. When you recall that the first two-colour gravure stamp was printed in 1960 and the first multi-coloured stamp in 1963, you will appreciate how much has been achieved in so short a time.

Having spent all this time in trying to explain my views on what it takes to create a good stamp, I would like to cite one or two recent issues which I believe prove my point.

This I believe to be a classic by David Gentleman... as indeed were his designs for the Investiture of Prince Charles. They have a magical quality which quite properly exemplifies the somewhat fairy-tale character of the whole affair.
The illustrations of design proposals by James Chalmers, Charles Fenton, George Dickinson, and William Iyon are reproduced by kind permission of the Reginald M Phillips Collection in the National Postal Museum.

Today Charlie W is a star pupil. A year ago he was a mental write-off to many people. He had an IQ of only 15 and (the average is 100), and the chances of him ever being able to look after himself or do any of the ordinary things which children enjoy seemed completely beyond him.

The chief reason was that, associated with his extremely low intelligence, Charlie was unable to talk at the age of seven, nor had he any prospect.

Yet today Charlie is at school and is avidly learning new things every day. He can communicate with the people around him; children and adults — he can play simple organised games and can even count. He is now behaving as though his IQ has been doubled— even trebled—inside a year.

He has been transformed because of a remarkable piece of scientific insight by psychologists at California State University. With luck, Charlie will be just the first of many low IQ non-verbal children suddenly to discover, in a limited but priceless way, what life has to offer.

It all started with chimpanzees. A few years ago, psychologist David Premack, at Santa Barbara — also in California— started experiments on communication between chimpanzee. He had an idea to make a "language" from pieces of coloured plastic because the chimps could not speak. For example, he taught them that a red triangle meant "apple", a yellow diamond meant "put" and a black square meant "table." He was then able to catch a chimp to "Put the apple on the table," and the chimps would understand and follow his command. Premack found that his chimpanzees could easily learn a "vocabulary" of more than 100 words in a few months and had no problem in stringing together sentences of up to seven words. Not only did the chimps understand him; they used the plastic language to communicate among themselves.

It is one of those ironies of science that chimpanzees benefited before anybody realised the system might have useful applications for people. In fact, it wasn't until last year that psychologist Patricia Hodges, of California State University, thought that what worked with chimps might work with retarded children.

Children with IQs of less than about 40 usually have no language. Some learn to understand basic words like "stop," but few learn to actually use words themselves. This lack of a language makes their handicap even worse because they cannot express their feelings in any other way.

To Dr Hodges, therefore, they are in a situation not unlike that of the chimpanzees. She therefore visited Dr Premack, looked over his colony...
When we speak of corporate identity, we are probably thinking of systems of products, services, events, and so on, and the way in which they are identified and communicate coherently with us, either as users or as potential users. A corporate identity, in this sense, is something which is designed (perhaps for the first time, or perhaps revised and reconstituted more than once), to identify, coordinate and express the special character of the system in all its manifestations—both to its consumers and to those who operate it.

To make me feel good about buying it, or feel good about working for it. To make me recognize it instantly. To make me want it. To tell me how to use it. To rationalise its functioning. Also to make it more profitable.

It may be applied as a cosmetic to improve the appearance independently of the reality, or as a first-aid dressing to enable it to continue functioning without curing organic defects, or as an adhesive to connect artificially a number of dissociated elements. But a corporate identity programme should not only seem coherent.

It should also express what is coherent in a system and help it to be more coherent. It is the outward manifestation and projection of a personality. As such it is not only a graphic phenomenon, but may be experienced through, for example, human relations, human services, and structural, spatial and audible means. Socially it is frequently designed to influence and inform particular target human groups-economic groups, cultural groups, categories of employees.

What happens if we look now at man-made systems used and consumed by most of us most consistently, and with a minimum of real choice exercised by us?

We choose, or are persuaded, to buy a Mercedes, or a floor polish, or a festival ticket, or a seat on a particular airline, or a toothpaste. Or we choose not to, or are not persuaded. But where choice is severely limited, and where we are frequently placed by necessity, in the various socio-environmental systems in which we spend most of our time—towns, villages, railway stations, and so on. Of course we may choose to try to live independently of such systems, but economic, cultural, political and social pressures and needs make it unlikely that many of us will.

Perhaps it is only in the pharmaceutical field, where my doctor prescribes a specific product and dosage, that I am limited in my choice and untouched by presentation or reputation. On the other hand, of course, my doctor may well have been influenced in his particular prescription choice for just these reasons.

There are two particularly interesting aspects of environmental corporate identity, considered in the broadest sense. Firstly it presents more complex problems, entails different priorities, than the more familiar and evident corporate identity programmes we have referred to, and may lead us to redefining what we mean by corporate identity in this context. Secondly it is more closely concerned with the needs of individual human beings.

When I speak of the corporate identity of a socio-environmental system I am not thinking, for example, simply of a municipal authority which attempts to express itself visually in a coherently designed way—through the use of a symbol, coordinated printed matter, identical colours on vehicles, and so on. These are some of the outward manifestations of the traditional corporate identity programme. Their purpose is to communicate a particular image of the special character of the system—the identity it wishes to be recognised by, for whatever motive. Just as the clothes I wear are an expression of personality—whether I have taken great care over their choice or have assembled them haphazardly.

With a socio-environmental system the corporate identity is both the essence and the appearance. That is to say that it is impossible to disentangle the functions, the needs, the relationships, the values on the one hand, from the visual whole and all its elements on the other. This visual whole is infinitely rich and complex. It is whatever we think of when we speak of the overall 'character' or the 'feet of, say, a town.' And it is made up of everything from the climate and the physical surroundings and approaches (such as mountains or motorways), to the spaces and the structures, to the letterforms, the images, the objects, to you and me—the users of the system, of the environment.

Not only are we consumers of the environment (just as we are the users of a commercial system—a make of soap or an airliner), but we are also part of that environment—an element in that socio-environmental system—a piece of the whole corporate identity that is projected. This is quite unlike the relationship of a consumer to a product or a service to its corporate identity. When I consume a particular socio-environmental system I may be doing so by choice or by accident, permanently or temporarily. The impressions I receive may be different or consistent. I may feel I am standing outside it as an observer, or I may feel that I am inside it as an active participant or perhaps as a victim.

Communication in an environment and by an environment

Peter Kneebone
How the system has come to be what it is is also very complex, subject to many influences and the result of a variety of factors. It can be the result of planning or accident, of growth, of sudden change, of policy imposed from outside or from inside, of administrative actions, or commercial actions, or group actions, or individual actions. It can be all or some of these. In other words, it is evolutionary and relatively unpredictable. It is different on Wednesday and on Sunday. When the sun shines or when it rains. When I am old or when I am young. When there are tourists or when there are not. When, suddenly, some notices are erected or a building is repainted. When new detours or one-way systems are applied in its streets.

These environments exist as expressions of different kinds of human needs. First there are the causal needs that determine the existence of the fundamental character of the environment—political, cultural, commercial, industrial, educational, and so on. The environmental system happens and evolves. Then there are the functional needs relating to how the system operates in terms of its users. It is used by me, a person happening to be inside the system at a given moment, and it is used also, as well as controlled and directed or administered, by the deciders—those who role is to make the system function and determine how it should function. Of course these two categories overlap, and I could say that I participate in the evolution of the system and that I can, indeed should, play a significant part in determining how it should function. The distinction between the two categories is, however, useful because it points to two different communication needs. These are the need to receive information and the need to transmit information.

I will limit myself to a single, but vital, area of information. It is one which has great influence on the identity of the environment and how we react and perceive this identity. Of course, in a sense, the environment, though we may attribute a soul to it, has an identity only when we recognize, experience and interpret it. Consequently how we function within the environment, how the environment helps us to do this, and how the environment is modified to make communication more effective are all critical matters.

The communication referred to here relates to the need of the environment as a whole, to be directed, to be warned, and to identify services, facilities and features within a particular environment. Conversely, we could say that it refers (on the part of the deciders) to the need to orientate, to direct, to warn, etc. That is to say there is a need for messages of a specific sort to exist. We can further say that there is a need for them to be legible and unambiguous.

However we can also observe that the needs of the users are not always accurately understood by the deciders, that the actions of the deciders do not always reflect the users' needs, that the users do not always understand the deciders' intentions, that, in fact, there can be a conflict of needs and that the means of transmitting the information often violates the needs of the environment. If the user, the individual, you and me, the public at large, is not well informed and if the environment is offended and its identity degraded, then we find ourselves reaching a self-defeating crisis point.

Visually, in the environment, these messages appear to us very often as signs containing words and images. There is a whole range of signs—whether they intend to tell us many things. Where we are, where to cross the street, where to stop, where to go, how to get home, the way to turn, where to park a car, where to find the cathedral, when to stop, when to be careful, and so on. Of course these messages do not always have to be communicated by words or images. Many could (in cases where the environment is still being created) be built into the conception and fabric of the system—through a careful consideration of spaces, colours, structural and human relationships, and so on, in terms of orientation, direction and identification. This could be so in new towns or hospitals or airports or railway stations. But this is rarely the case—except in a few one-off situations like major exhibitions.

What is almost invariably the case is that new information is imposed, like a postage stamp, on an old system. Signs grow like weeds in our urban environment. Like weeds they are unnecessary. First of all there are all the names of streets and the numbers of houses and signposts on the roads between towns and villages. Then, more and more rapidly, more and more needs become apparent.

This has been due to various factors. Urban systems have grown larger and more complex. The demands made by both private and public transport have become more and more insistent. Tourism, national and international, is no longer restricted to limited privileged sections of the population. Governments and local authorities have become more conscious of their duty to inform, direct and warn, even if they often do not understand the nature of the problems posed.

Consider now some interesting features of the question.

Public signs, and I am not thinking exclusively of road signs, have been so freely applied in many urban environments that they do not simply stand out as carriers of useful messages. They also, by their profusion, frequently cancel each other out. While they have, automatically, become part of the environment because they exist in it, at the same time they may clash discordantly with the environment as it was, and pollute visually rather than clarify. What is remarkable is that we accept the situation as complacently as we do.

Two comparisons illustrate the point. The first is between a relatively new and somewhat older environment, both created for travel, both in Amsterdam. At the airport, Schipol, the purpose of the environment has been correctly analysed and the signage (all verbal and bi-lingual) is unusually large. They dominate the environment because our first need is to understand the information. Environment and message are one. On the other hand, although Dutch Poth is a very good job of improving and coordinating the confusion of the international railway pictograms, they have applied them with such abandon at the main railway station that we no longer read them. They have become a rich decorative element superimposed. The second comparison is between two attitudes to the urban use of road signs—in France and in England. In England, the whole, a certain restraint and logic are felt to have been active in the placing of the signs so that information is, again on the whole, where you need it without being over-obtrusive. In France, however, you are too often assaulted by an incomer abundance.

There are curious contradictions implicit in the use of public information signs. They are, as we have seen, part of each environment in which they function and they also have to stand apart from the environment in order to tell us how to use it. That is to say that the "no waiting" sign, or the traffic light, or the town map, or the post box, once they are placed in the cathedral square are as much a part of the square as is the cathedral. Though the cathedral may be bigger, visually the "no waiting" sign may strike us first.

Perhaps this is something like the presence of pylons and water towers and railway viaducts in the open countryside. Their presence relates to a precise need at a particular point in our technical-cultural development. Whether it meets the need is another matter.

There is absolutely nothing inherently wrong in this unless we try to make a case for a static society with a static environment. It is, however, essentially unproductive to argue that the signs are carriers of messages and are sending out their particular signals, the total environment in which they stand is itself sending out new kinds of signals because of the addition to it of the signs. Just as the valley with the railway line running across it is no longer the valley as it was before the railway came.

This may appear obvious. Just like the fact that we are, with certain exceptions, talking about signs that are not only applied to meet specific needs in a specific place but are common also to a very wide variety of urban environments. Not only are the messages common to all the environments ('No Entry', 'Town Centre', 'Stop', 'Post Office' and so on, are identical messages in different places). It is also important that they should be immediately recognised as being the same.

Consequently a considerable effort has been, and is being, made, to achieve visual standardisation—internationally as well as nationally—of very many signs, particularly those that carry pictures rather than words. Even if you do not understand a language, and even if the shop bears no identifying marks, you will always recognise a baker's shop by its smell and by the contents of its window. These are dominant signals. This is not the case with all other kinds of essential information.

So we are confronted with a communication situation which is far less organic than the cathedral square. We have four main visual forms—signs which are part of an international system, signs which are part of a national system, signs which are part of a local system, and the many cases where signs from these different categories are seen in combination with each other. So, to return to the question of environmental identity, we find that a socio-environmental system has a particular identity (which is certainly corporate, however irrational it may seem), that (because of the increasing complex needs of its users and its administrators) it contains public information in the form of signs which (in order to communicate effectively) are often conceived as part of a general system with a quite different kind of visual corporate identity, and that the two (the environment and the information) cohabit to produce a system with a changed identity. The result may be efficient and homogeneous, or it may be disastrous.

Now what needs emphasising is that the notion of urban public communication is not solved when we have created a system or systems of signs with a
The roots of the problem
Hartford Thomas

If you are looking for moral stories about the way we live now you can hardly do better than consider the present state of the paper industry.

Moral number one: we are already at the limits of growth when the growth rate in demand for paper products exceeds the growth of the forests.

Moral number two: the times are out of joint, all of them. By which I mean, for example, demand can swing from stagnation to boom in six months, but it takes two or three years to build a paper-making machine, and up to 90 years to grow a tree; currency exchange rates can alter by 20 per cent or more within the period of a one-year contract.

Moral number three: the scale of things is out of joint, too. One new paper-making machine, churning out newsprint paper 26 feet wide at a rate of 1,000 yards a minute without stop for a year at a time can more than meet the current excess demand on a paper producing company—but if two other companies also build new machines, this could lead to financially crippling over-capacity, for one machine costs around £15 millions.

Moral number four: what kind of a world do we want to live in, anyway? Standard of living is closely linked to the quantity of paper products consumed. To meet the demand for paper, juggernaut felling machinery can now clear mature forest at the rate of say 5,000 to 6,000 trees a day with a typical working group of 50 to 60 men. This will be replaced by confiner plantations. Not beautiful.

And so on. I came back with these rather sombre thoughts after a week in Sweden looking at some of the Swedish forests and paper mills, and talking to some of the people who head the industry and are responsible for its future development.

The Swedish industry is deeply concerned, and putting a very large effort indeed into the regeneration of the forests it fells.

Svenska Cellulosa, which is the biggest forest owner in Europe, with forests covering an area about half the size of Switzerland, believes it should be possible to double the timber volume felled—but in 80 to 100 years. Currently it is planting 20 to 50 million tree plants a year—but Scandinavian pine and spruce take 80 to 100 years to mature.

That is the baffling nature of the time scale. For the next twenty years Sweden’s forests will be suffering from insufficient replanting in the early decades of this century. It is argued that this shortfall can be met in the next twenty years by a once-for-all cutting of the remaining over-age forests. Unhappily, the effect of that would be to bring the forest potential back to the current level of supply around 1995. And what will have happened to demand by then?

As a rule of thumb forecast, it is said that the demand for paper products rises at about one-and-a-half times the rate of economic growth in the developed countries, say 6 per cent (perhaps more) every year. It is improbable, to say the least, that the world’s forest resources, already stretched to the limit in Europe and North America, can cope with that.

So the hunt is on for faster growing trees. The Canadian pinus contorta which matures in 45 to 60 years is being introduced in Scandinavia. Some Swedish companies are already looking overseas to the possibility of the fast growing eucalyptus (which has the disadvantage of a weak fibre).

What of technology? Are we getting to the limits there too? On the scale of the machinery, yes, where the object has been to economise on high labour costs. But there is still scope for the use of new techniques. One is much more thorough collection of paper waste for recycling, which is already practicable. And 500,000 tons of paper waste is equivalent to one million trees.

There are one or two other possibilities. One is to use the whole tree, roots, branches, needles and all, instead of leaving the stump in the ground, and stripping away the branches and bark as in present practice. This is already being tried out in the United States. Again, you can get more paper per tree by grinding down the wood into a dust rather than stewing it in chemicals to make pulp, which involves substantial loss of fibre.

Mr Sverker Kastrup, who is vice-chairman of the board of Swedish Pulp and Paper Association, and executive vice-president of Svenska Cellulosa, put it this way: "The availability of wood is going to be a more restricting factor than anything else. Our forests will yield more as reforestation comes to fruition, but it will be only a slow expansion. The great expansion period is behind us."

For a world which is everywhere hell-bent on accelerating its rate of growth, and for a world which signals its wealth by the amount of paper and packaging of every kind that it uses, that is, or ought to be, a sobering thought.
Note to contributors

Six thousand years of writing
René Ponot

The general public is surprised and impressed to learn that many people wrote "in the past" on a wide variety of materials. Doesn't this happen nowadays and in many extraordinary ways? The man in the street can have few preconceived ideas about it. Does the woman who dished out a ladle-full of soup containing dozens of letters of the alphabet, ask herself whether the pasta is a material for writing?

It is because the public clearly has an interest in the variety of forms of writing that has led me to discuss them. And I cannot do it more effectively than to choose some of the more attractive samples of writing from the Engraving Room of the State Press, which has one of the richest typographical collections in the world. (1)

The ability to write is universal.

It will be necessary, before anything else, to limit my subject matter. I am not going to try to proceed to classifications nor establish relationships, still less to make up a family tree (searchers will find too many hidden reefs).

Moreover, I would not be able in just a few lines to give the slightest insight into the history of the types that I am going to show. But I can display them and attempt to explain the why's and wherefore's of some of their peculiarities.

In any case, nothing prevents me from inviting the reader to share the wonder and enjoyment that one feels at the sight of this ability to write. The art which bears witness, in the words of Marcel Cohen, to all the systems that make visible that which is expressed by words.

It is saying in another way what Ensemble asserts when the points out that between the different types of script and their beauty there exists an ancient—one might say, congenital—affinity. Beauty, the quest for which, in writing, is not the privilege of any race or nation. (2)

Experts put the number of languages currently spoken in the world at 2,800, without including dialects of lesser importance. (3)

Of these, many do not have a script, or use a borrowed one. On the other hand, some languages do have their own script, the decipherment of which, whether it has been accomplished or not, remains an indispensable part of the work of researchers.

Although the number of scripts—some 400—is well down on the number of languages, it still remains that thousands of signs, all with a longer or shorter history, have served to fix graphically the thoughts of man for more than six thousand years.

The materials and the tools

And "only" 400 scripts is still a lot. For it would not do to think that all are equally original. The majority are content to have forgotten their ancestry. They have evolved in a certain area in accordance with the requirements of a certain language and, what is more important, in relationship to their specific materials and tools.

It is essential, therefore, always to bear in mind what and with what people write.

On what?

Among the fifty or so examples that I have chosen can be seen writing on papyrus or animal bristles, stylus and spolia, goose-feather, etc.

The material and the instrument are decisive.

It is easy to understand that two individuals in their search for a system of writing will conceive their signs in a totally different way, according to whether one is using a reed on papyrus and the other a stylus on clay.

And if, instead of devising their own writing, they confine themselves to reproducing an existing model, the results will be equally dissimilar. After a certain time, the nature of the material will condition the actio of the implement in such a way that no resemblance will exist any more between the original and the reproductions, nor between the reproductions themselves.

I could also add to the list of materials for writing: glass, bone, lead, iron (Egypt), linen, forgetting tablets of baked earth (Mesopotamia), stone (Mesopotamia), marble (Greece), copper (India), leather (Dead Sea area), deer-skin (Mexico), birch bark (India), agave (Central America), bamboo (Polyynesia), palm leaves (India), wood (Scandinavia), silk (China), ivory (Austen in France), wax tablets (Egypt and Western Europe).

With what?

It is obvious that the implements used for writing on each of these materials cannot be the same: reed, brush (of papyrus or animal bristles), stylus and spolia, goose-feather, etc.

The material and the instrument are decisive.

Accordingly the Executive Editor would like to receive articles from members, or suggested experts in member countries. Wherever possible, we would like to group submitted articles into an issue that bears upon a particular theme. It would be helpful if such contributions were thought of as attempts to add to the collective knowledge of our organization and to the raising of design standards via cognitive, rather than intuitive judgements.

Graphic design has been slower to accumulate 'ergonomic' data than some other of the design professions, so that we would welcome reports of any investigation that could add to an understanding of the processes of visual communication.

Articles can be from 2,000 to 6,000 words (depending upon the extent of illustrative material). They may be submitted in either French, German or English. It would be particularly helpful if summaries in the remaining two languages could be submitted with the main text.

Listed below is a selection of suggested headings. The list is in no way definitive, it is intended merely to trigger off responses from possible contributors.

Aesthetics (ethical or descriptive), Art movements in relation to visual communication, Animation, Book Design, Creativity, Cartography, Cartoons, Computer graphics, Corporate image, Children's books, Concrete poetry, Colour theory, Colour printing, Design philosophy, Design practice, Education, Education of graphic designers, Educational use of visual communication, Ergonomics of visual communication, Film, Film setting, Graphic design schools, Graphics in architecture, Coinage, Illustrative material, Information theory, International languages, Legibility research, Methodology, Magazine and newspaper design, Psychology of perception, Printing processes, Photography, Semiotics, Traffic signs, Television and video-tape as media for visual communication, 'Underground' publishing.

Please address all contributions or enquiries to the Executive Editor, *icographic*, 7 Templeton Court, Radnor Walk, Shirley, Croydon CR0 7NZ England.
For example, when paper came into common use, or when the position of the hand holding the goose feather changed, people writing in cursive became accustomed to predetermined transformations in style, but not the birth of new writing systems. Nevertheless, this does not prevent the inexperienced eye from perceiving a different script.

Which comes back to saying that it is very difficult to determine, with regard to script, how much its form is due to the material on which it is found, unless one is certain that this material is the one for which it was invented.

All peoples have bowed down to the glories of stone inscriptions. But should we conclude that such writing that has come down to us in exclusively epigraphic form, has never been used in other ways?

This particular form may be no more than an occasional adaption to stone of that which the scribes in question normally put on to different material. Material which, alas, was perishable and which time has left us nothing for us. Before all other information, it is undoubtedly the knowledge of the material on which a creation and transformation that helps us to understand better why some languages and scripts have disappeared without leaving any trace, or only the slightest trace of them survive, while others, protected from the rigours of time, have remained intact and have been able to be protected from the rigours of time, and with it all those of that material which, alas, was perishable and which time has left us nothing for us.

As regards the direction in which these scripts are written, everyone knows that European languages, of which Anglo-Saxon (1), Georgian (17), and Slavonic (46) are shown here, are written from left to right. As for Manchu, we have just noted that it had been created some twenty years earlier in 1690 to replace Mongol.

Let us also remember that Egyptian hieroglyphs (22) appear according to circumstances in both vertical and horizontal lines. Horizontally, they are read from right to left or from left to right. This depends upon the sign representing person or animals when the heads always point toward the beginning of the line. The Mayan signs (33) offer examples of using the horizontal as much as the vertical.

Southern Arabian (47) is "boustrophedon", which is to say that it goes in the same direction (in Greek: bous)-one line going from right to left, the next from left to right and so on. The Hittite hieroglyphs (23), sometimes arranged in columns, are generally boustrophedon when the heads always point toward the beginning of the line. The longest one presently known is made up of no more than two hundred signs.

The various Germanic tribes before their conversion to Christianity, are almost all engraved on rocks or tombs in the form of inscriptions that are generally short. The longest one presently known is made up of no more than two hundred signs. Their direction is not fixed, i. e., it is that in which it can alternate, but left to right does predominate. The runes are usually formed of a vertical stem to which are attached one or more bars, avoiding curves and reaching as far as possible horizontally. This is explained by assuming that the runes were originally engraved on wood, a material in which it is easier to cut bars at right angles or obliquely to the grain, than in line with it.
Before “writing” them, the Babylonians drew their characters on clay tablets, using a bevelled reed. Although clay had the advantage of being present in abundance in Babylonia, it suffered the inconvenience of being poorly adapted to work with a stylus, but what could have replaced it? The curves, for example, leave smudges on the edge of the grooves and have a tendency to become angular. Also the scribes had early on made a change in their technique. Instead of scratching the clay, they drew their signs with rapid strokes on the tablet, the read being held in the whole hand. The resulting impressions, of course, had the characteristic shape of corners,

hence their name cuneiform (36).

The Palmyrian alphabet (37) which was used from the fourth century BC until the sacking of Palmyra by Aurelius in 273 AD, is derived from Aramaic, from which it is distinguished by an abundance of curves, loops and flourishes.
The Chinese script (11), for which there is evidence of texts going back almost four thousand years, has undergone a long graphic evolution. But it was the brush that was decisive in finally giving the signs their angular appearance by which we now know them. And this was due to the way in which the brush was held in the hand of the user.

The rounded shape of Laotian characters (29) is determined by both the material and the implement used. They are written on Latania leaves using a style and a flat rule as a guide.

Sinhalese (45) also has recourse to the stylet, but the characters are written on palm leaves.

The influence of speed

Clearly, the desire to write swiftly brings about changes in the forms of the writing. Compare the "cursive" form of Gujarati (21) to the "carefully written" form of Nagari (35), from which it is derived—the horizontal bars forming the
Six thousand years of writing

25 Iberian—circa 60 BC

26 Javanese—8th century AD

27 Kharoshthi—3rd century AD

28 Khmer—in 14th century form

29 Laotian—in 9th century form

30 Libyan—2nd or 3rd century AD

31 Mandaean—3rd century AD

32 Manchú—17th century AD

33 Maya—from 10th to 16th century AD

34 Nabataean—1st century BC

35 Nagari—in 13th century form

36 Ninivite cuneiform—circa 3000 BC

tops of the letters have just disappeared.

Further to be noted is the slant adopted by the cursive style of Estrangelo (14), written from right to left, and Georgian (17), Greek (20), Thai (44), and Tamil (49), written from left to right.

The exceptions that I shall leave unexplained, since I have not done enough research into the reasons, are Coptic (12), Palmyrian (37) and Phoenician (40).

In the case of Kharoshthi (27), the only Indian script written from right to left, is it not possible to postulate a certain copying of Tamil (49), or other varieties of local cursive written from left to right?

As for Persian (38) from the end of the fourteenth century AD, shown here, it only appears to lean in the opposite direction. It is, in fact, appropriately called “suspended writing” (nesta’liq) because each word, written obliquely, starts above the line.
41 Punic—146 BC

42 Runic—1st century AD

43 Samaritan—circa 900 BC

44 Siamese—after the 5th century AD

45 Sinhalese—3rd century BC

46 Slavonic—9th century AD

47 Southern Arabic—6th century BC

48 Syriac—1st century AD

37 Palmyrian—from 9th century BC to 272 AD

38 Persian—end of the 14th century

39 Phags-pa—13th century AD

40 Classical Phoenician—circa 13th century BC

to finish below it, so that the downward movement prevails over the forward one.

Finally, Syriac (48), also called Jacobite, assumed its particular appearance of a script inverted towards the left for a similar reason: the scribes wrote the signs from top to bottom and they were then read from right to left.

An aesthetic function of efficiency

Have I said enough to make it clear that the diversity of written forms has nothing gratuitous about it? Their beauty, which speaks for itself, does not need explaining, but doubtless it was not useless to show that their beauty is not the mere triumph of ingenuity or fantasy. It is that beauty born of a gesture that must conquer in order to convince.

Curiosity aroused by the sight of so many signs different from our own, can all too often give rise to a feeling of condescension, or superiority.
How to design in Chinese (without really being able to read it)

Henry Steiner

The designs shown in this article were done by me during the past few years, employing Chinese characters.

I have been practising in Hong Kong for a dozen years and have used Chinese typography or calligraphy on many projects either because we were communicating to a Chinese-reading audience, or because of their appropriateness, or because of their exotic flavour.

In the accompanying examples, it will be noted that the same devices apply which one would employ in designing with European typography. Among these are; contrast of size or texture or style, emphasis through colour, substitution of pictures for letters.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to combine sizeable areas of Chinese and English text on one page in a visually satisfactory manner, and I avoid it whenever possible. But it is feasible in very small doses and in some of the illustrations can be noted combinations using either harmony or contrast.

Chinese characters are, however, a joy for the designer used to the disciplines of European typography. They can be set vertically, or horizontally, reading either left-to-right or the reverse. Since each character is constructed inside an invisible square they can easily be copy cast with a piece of graph paper. And they look nice, whether one can read them or not. In fact, it could be argued that illiteracy enhances the appreciation of their formal qualities (which is a marvellous excuse for my not having made more progress in learning to read them after so many years).

References

1 The Engraving Room of the State Press, classed as an historical monument in 1946, contains for foreign characters alone, more than 300,000 types that enable them to reproduce sixty-five ancient or modern scripts. The author and photographer extend their thanks to the Director of the State Press for having given them permission to take out the illustrations in this study from their sample work entitled The Engraving Room of the State Press, (Paris 1963).

2 Etiemble, Marcel Cohen, in L'Art de l'écriture Unesco Exhibition of 50 pictures, 1965)

3 Pei, Maria A: The World's Chief Languages (Allen and Unwin, 1949)

4 Dobhoffer, E: le Déchiffrement des Ecritures (Paris, Arthaud, 1959)

5 A printing type has on its upper face (or surface face), the type face or reproduction sign in relief and in reverse. The type face, or printing part, can thus more or less completely take up the surface face according to its shape.

Right hand illustration: Lavatory signs. Most Chinese characters have too many strokes to adapt to the dotted alphabet that I designed for this building's graphics. This is a case of pure luck.

And yet their effectiveness is not to be questioned. Some are familiar to millions of people, to whom our twenty-six letters seem equally mysterious. Since they are known to everyone, two last examples will provide a suitable conclusion for me.

365 Muslims, of whom only 65 millions, take note, have Arabic as a mother tongue, read and write Arabic (when they are literate).

The problem of China is more complex. The script is made up of such a large number of signs that the average person does not have the time to learn how to use them. Of the 50,000 to 80,000 that have been used over the years, 8,000 are still in use at present, of which 1,000 are needed for basic reading. It is thus all too clear, but none the less true for all that, that for 750 million Chinese to be able to read and write is to be able to decipher and draw these characters.
Left hand illustration:
Many complex Chinese ideographs are built up of simpler ones. In this logo for a Japanese antique dealer, the character 'Sumi' contains within it the second character of the name 'Sumi Da.' The change of colour brings it out of hiding as can be seen on the front cover of this journal.

Right hand illustration:
A tin for peanut oil. The three radical strokes of the character for 'oil' have been replaced by photographs of peanuts. Thus the composite ideogram communicates instantly to the Chinese clientele for whom this package was designed.

Right hand illustration:
The Chinese number 3, consisting obviously of three strokes, makes a perfectly legible date in this greeting card.

Left hand illustration:
A section of the New Testament in Chinese with the characters meaning 'Peace on Earth' enlarged in the left panel. The squareness of Chinese typography gives this Christmas card its visual harmony.

Right hand illustration:
The character meaning 'jade' somewhat resembles the capital letter E, which it replaces in this logo for a jeweller.

Left hand illustration:
The common outline and the Helvetica-like design of the Chinese characters gives a unity to this exit sign—part of a set of architectural graphics.

Right hand illustration:
The cover of an annual report for a Hong Kong newspaper. The report was done in Chinese throughout and took full advantage of the characteristics of Chinese typography. The title runs vertically (the ability to do this must make European designers envious) and in keeping with tradition the report opens from the left—or what in many areas would be considered 'the back of the book.'
Is one of the family a friend of yours?

So one's an old friend.
Let's see why.
First you like the way the paper runs.
Fast. Trouble-free.
Well it must to remain such an old friend.
Then you get the product when you need it.
Which must mean your paper stockist is on-the-ball.
None of this happens by chance.
Culter Guard Bridge make papers that print for maximum impact. And picks a stockist who answers your phone with a fast delivery of Hi-Fidelity Art.
That's not your old friend?
That's just the point.

All five of our branded lines are friends of somebody. So if you can rely on one, you can rely on the lot!
It's because we’re not a giant that we can make such a statement.
Big enough to make five national names. But not big enough to lose control on quality from making to making.
So how about meeting four new friends from Culter Guard Bridge?
Not all at once of course. Just when you need them from your nearest stockist.
We supply so many there's bound to be one in your neighbourhood.
ICOGRADA

The International Council of Graphic Design Associations was founded in London in April 1963. ICOGRADA is an association of independent Member Associations. Membership is open to societies of professional graphic designers and organisations concerned with the training of designers and/or the raising of graphic design standards. Member associations are elected at the biennial General Assembly, which elects also the Executive Board, determines policy and overall activities and agrees financial arrangements.

The aims of ICOGRADA are:

1. to raise internationally the standards of graphic design and professional practice by all practicable means.
2. to collect and exchange information on professional, educational and technical matters.
3. to improve graphic design training and to assist the interchange between countries of graphic designers, teachers and students.
4. to organise exhibitions, international assemblies, congresses and symposia and publish documentation on graphic design and visual communications technology, including a News Bulletin.
5. to act as an international forum for co-operation and exchange of views between designers, organisations representing professionals from allied and other fields and those of commerce and industry.
6. to encourage the better use of graphic design and visual communication as a means to improve understanding between people everywhere.