

Preface

Every book is superior to a CD-ROM or Web site.

For example, the pleasure of holding a large, illustrated volume in your hands, paging through it, feeling the exquisite paper, perceiving the quality of the photos and the printing, losing yourself in browsing through, reading and paging—these are the qualities of sensual and intellectual perception that only a well-made book can offer.

Books are extremely flexible; you can read them everywhere—on the train, in bed, in the bathtub. You don't need any electrical outlet or other contrivance. Books are more or less inexpensive and form the basis of our culture. Who could imagine that there would ever come a time when there were no more books?

Every CD-ROM or Web site is superior to a book.

Web sites can be very up-to-date. An author types in text at his PC, sends this text per FTP to a server, and the text can be read worldwide immediately.

A multimedia encyclopedia provides pieces of information that are always only a mouse click away from each other. It can present complex structures clearly and enable the user to display details as

needed. Simulations, virtual worlds, complex databases, and the combination not only of time-independent media (text, pictures), but also of time-dependent media (sound, video) offer new possibilities that previously could not be implemented in books. Nothing is as flexible as multimedia systems—do we need books in the future?

This comparison makes it clear that there is no »either...or« where old and new media are concerned; rather, we must consider »both...as well as.« Printed media have their strengths and weaknesses—digital media have theirs also. It is worthwhile to use the strengths and reduce the weaknesses in order to combine new and old media sensibly and appropriately.

This book concerns itself with showing how you can use the strengths of digital media. In so doing, the type of presentation and organization of information that is transported with the help of multimedia CD-ROMs and Web sites plays an essential role. This book would like to help creators of multimedia systems to design digital media appropriately and in a manner oriented to the intended target group. It presents backgrounds and contexts, clarifies them with the help of authentic examples, and en-

courages the further development of the language of digital media.

This book is based on the findings of the psychology of perception and learning, ergonomics, communications theory, imagery research, semiotics, and aesthetics. Examples help to illustrate these findings. Nevertheless, this book cannot be, and does not intend to be, a »cookbook.« It does not intend consciously to postulate any fixed rules, for inflexible rules are the end of all creativity. Of course, the book does indicate guidelines within which a screen designer should move in order to design his products to be user-friendly and of high quality. Nevertheless, we should have the courage to experiment, to try unusual things, and to go against the rules deliberately, provided that we know those rules already.

We find ourselves just at the beginning of the age of digital information and we are just beginning to learn how to deal with the technologies that have entered our lives in recent years. There will still be many experiments, standards will crystallize, and »gurus« will step onto the stage and then disappear again. The speed with which all this happens before our eyes is breath-

taking and fascinating. Where will the journey lead?

This book, now being published in its third German edition, is appearing simultaneously in English language for the first time. Over the years it has grown, has become more extensive, and now, in addition to numerous updates, it contains new chapters on the topic of »Barrier-Free Web Pages« and »Intercultural Screen Design.« The chapter that formerly was called »Motivation« was renamed very consciously to »Emotion« and refers to metacommunicational factors that will continue to gain importance.

I hope that the readers of this book will be inspired to advance the language of digital and interactive media.

I would be very happy to receive letters from readers, including opinions and suggestions.

Frank Thissen
frank@frank-thissen.de



<http://www.springer.com/978-3-540-43923-3>

Screen Design Manual
Communicating Effectively Through Multimedia
Thissen, F.
2004, XV, 321 p., Hardcover
ISBN: 978-3-540-43923-3