

# How to get them to read signs

John Stanley

People don't read signs! How often have you heard that? Lets be honest, we have all become sign blind, you should not expect us to read signs. Researchers tell us that city dwellers can be exposed to 30 000 messages a day and your messages are a small minority of those.

The key is how do you get people to read signs. The aim should not be to put up any message anywhere on the hope that someone will read them, you need a sign strategy that helps customers and reduces customer stress.

The keys to make your signage work are:

- Don't place signs on entrance doors, this is not the place where people will read signs, all they achieve is to spoil your library image.
- The transition zone is the first three metres when a consumer enters your library. This is a time when people want to take in the ambience and the total environment. Signs and notice boards in this area should be simple, directional and only provide image messages.
- Community boards are part of the total package of a library, but ensure these are placed in a browse zone of the library, to allow people to linger longer and take in all the relevant messages.
- Departmental signs should be in lower case. You and I are more likely to read lower case than capitals.

- Product promotional signs should be read. Most retailers use the KISS principle, Keep It Simple Sells, therefore keep signs to the basics. Include the title of the book along with three bullet points on the benefits of the book.
- Don't use jargon on signs, talk the language of your consumer, not the language of the library industry. Too many industries use industrial jargon and confuse the customer.
- Have a signage checklist and check all your signs on a weekly basis. If you don't you'll find that irrelevant, outdated signs will start appearing and the inevitable clutter will start appearing.
- Use the right colours. Red and green are good background colours. McDonalds and BP have learnt the value of colour combinations on signs and we should do the same in libraries if we are to get the message across.

*John Stanley is a conference speaker and retail consultant with more than twenty years experience in fifteen countries. John works with libraries around the world assisting them with their merchandising, staff and management training, customer flow, customer service and image. John Stanley Associates produce an e-newsletter specific to library retail. This includes innovative ideas and advice to help you grow your library. If you would like to receive a regular copy please visit <http://www.jstanley.com.au> or e-mail them on [newsletter@johnstanley.cc](mailto:newsletter@johnstanley.cc).*

## AMOL receives international recognition

Australian Museums and Galleries Online (AMOL) [<http://www.amol.org.au>] is a comprehensive internet site designed to help Australian museums and galleries make information about their collections available to a world-wide audience. It is also the principal gateway to Australian museums for professionals and volunteers working in the museums sector, community users and researchers.

AMOL is a collaborative project bringing together Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments and the museum sector to focus on the task of increasing access to Australia's heritage collections and sharing information. AMOL is an initiative of the Cultural Ministers Council and its Heritage Collections Council (HCC). It continues to expand under the guidance of the HCC's On Line Working Party.

The sixth annual *Museums and the Web (MW2002)* conference, the premier international venue to review the state of the web in arts, culture, and heritage, was held recently in Boston. Once again, MW2002 recognised the best cultural and heritage Web sites,

and AMOL received two prestigious awards.

The two awards — one for Best Professional Site and the other for Best E-Service site for the Art Trails Victoria project — highlight the valuable and innovative role that AMOL provides by linking Australian museums and galleries to online audiences.

Art Trails Victoria, [[http://www.amol.org.au/art\\_trails/](http://www.amol.org.au/art_trails/)], was designed by AMOL and features a virtual tour of seventeen regional Victorian galleries with panoramic views of internal and external galleries. The site was designed for tourists and uses six well-known tourist trails in regional Victoria to highlight the member galleries' collections and history, opening times and admission prices.

[amol.org.au](http://www.amol.org.au) is the portal to more than 1000 Australian museums, galleries and cultural institutions. AMOL contributes to and supports the museum industry, providing technical expertise, information and guidance to its users. The Federal Government provides \$240 000 a year to AMOL through the Cultural Ministers Council. ■

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\*Suitable for Libraries