



# A Primer of Visual Literacy: Strategies for Managing the Digital Economy

*Donis A. Dondis*

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**A Primer of Visual Literacy: Strategies for Managing the Digital Economy** Donis A. Dondis  
This primer is designed to teach students the interconnected arts of visual communication. The subject is presented, not as a foreign language, but as a native one that the student "knows" but cannot yet "read." Responding to the need she so clearly perceives, Ms. Dondis, a designer and teacher of broad experience, has provided a beginning text for art and design students and a basic text for all other students; those who do not intend to become artists or designers but who need to acquire the essential skills of understanding visual communication at a time when so much information is being studied and transmitted in non-verbal modes, especially through photography and film. Understanding through seeing only seems to be an obviously intuitive process. Actually, developing the visual sense is something like learning a language, with its own special alphabet, lexicon, and syntax. People find it necessary to be verbally literate whether they are "writers": or not; they should find it equally necessary to be visually literate, "artists" or not. This primer is designed to teach students the interconnected arts of visual communication. The subject is presented, not as a foreign language, but as a native one that the student "knows" but cannot yet "read." The analogy provides a useful teaching method, in part because it is not overworked or too rigorously applied. This method of learning to see and read visual data has already been proved in practice, in settings ranging from Harlem to suburbia. Appropriately, the book makes some of its most telling points through visual means. Numerous illustrated examples are employed to clarify the basic elements of design (teach an alphabet), to show how they are used in simple syntactic combinations ("See Jane run."), and finally, to present the meaningful synthesis of visual information that is a finished work of art (the apprehension of poetry...).

## A Primer of Visual Literacy: Strategies for Managing the Digital Economy Details

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excellent primer on visual design concepts.

Like writing, visual design is something that can be popularly considered not a specific skill: most of us can write something, and most of us can sketch. Indeed I encourage my design students to sketch concepts no matter the quality. And I think writing is important for everyone to do.

For the practicing writer or designer, though, these opinions can feel diminishing: it can seem a craft you spent time honing is seen as something that anyone can do.

However both fields have ways in which quality can be judged, and not all attempts are equal. Both are a practice, skills cultivated over time.

I consider myself a visual designer though I am largely self taught. In my 20s I decided I wanted to be part of making technology better for people and a graduate study in interaction design seemed the best way to do so. I realised quickly the interplay of visual design with digital design and began immersing myself in visual design practice.

The first attempts were really bad. And it was difficult to articulate why: my professors would say things like not enough subtlety and I would work towards subtlety.

This book put into context these practices I learned over time. I wish I had discovered it earlier in my career. But there was some joy in reading it after. What I learned through experimentation was sort of codified.

I was at a point in my career, before reading this book, in which I began to think the whole human centered technology mission was a dud: ego maniac contractors, the weight of past business rules and processes that seemed to resist change and the design process, all seemed to point to a wasted effort. This book helped me get rooted in design as a practice again. An academic book that encourages play and creativity is rare, and I'm on the lookout for others. Designers should read this, and my students don't know it, but they will be this fall. When I hear, I thought this was a technology class? (I will), I will respond, it is, and this is a map.

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## Hosein says

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## SERAJ says

I contains useful information but it's just a book to show you how important visual literacy is. One should go for other resources to get more visually literate...

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