

Signage and Wayfinding

Navigation from place to place is a fundamental human activity and an integral part of everyday life. Where are you? Where are you heading to? People use their knowledge and previous experiences to find their way in the build environment. The human perception of the build environment and information in a space comes down to balance and focus. What do you see? Why did you see it? What did you do with the information.

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1. Wayfinding Basics

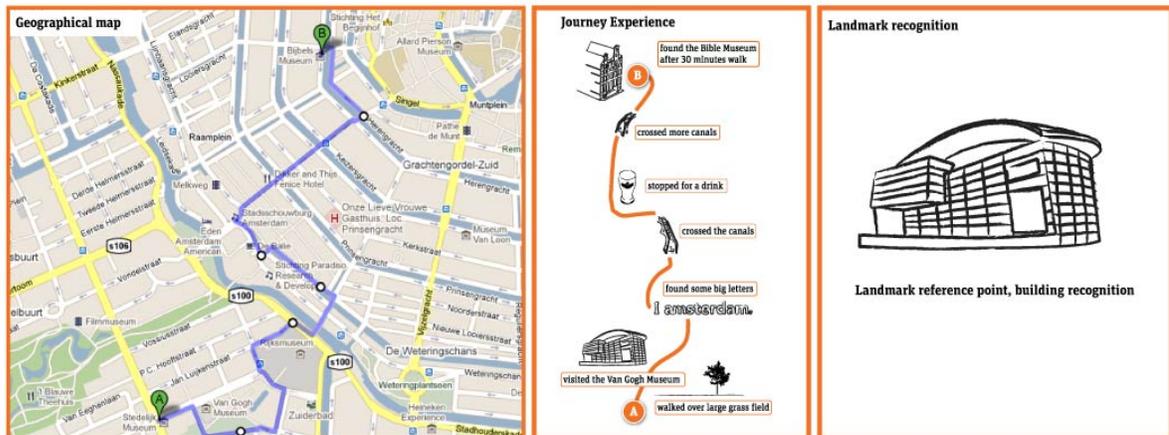
Wayfinding has the function to inform people of the surroundings in the (unfamiliar) build environment, it is important to show information at strategic points to guide people into the right directions. Complex structures in the build environment are interpreted and stored by the human memory. Distances, locations and time may be remembered differently than as they appear to be in reality.

An effective wayfinding system is based on human behavior and consists of the following characteristics:

- **Do not make them think** – Create a comprehensive, clear, and consistent visual communication system with concise messaging.
- **Show only what is needed** – Show information that is relevant to the space, location, and/or navigation path.
- **Remove excessive information** – Remove unnecessary elements to create a clear visual environment ahead.

2. How Does Wayfinding Work?

How do people orientate, navigate, or remember the build environment? Why will people recognize or understand one place easier than another? As shown in the images below, a geographical map versus cognitive (mental) map = reality versus human mental memory. When creating a wayfinding scheme the following characteristics influences the way we interpreted the build environment.



- **Landmarks** – To create a legible environment it is necessary to mark specific spaces and/or locations. This reinforces the recognition of places and plays a part in overseeing a larger area. With the use of landmarks and marking elements an area will become more visible and will be understood better in the human memory. Landmarks can be art-objects, buildings, street art, wayfinding signs or striking elements in a landscape. These elements combined will shape the identity of an (unknown) area as seen from your perspective.
- **Orientation** – In order to navigate, you need to know where you are in the build environment and where other destinations are located. Preferably it is good to know the distance in time from one place to another. If you can orientate yourself within the build environment, it will be easier to understand destinations and to navigate by landmarks. In wayfinding, maps are commonly used to indicate your location. The usage of maps is a very powerful way of expressing and overseeing the build

environment. Be sure to display the maps heads-up in the direction you are facing, this way you can easily relate yourself to the build environment.

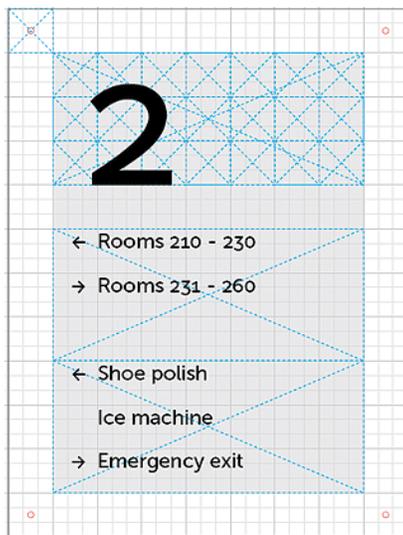
- **Navigation** – Navigating the physical reference to a area, setting, or destination. With the usage of directional (static) signs people will be guided along their path towards destination(s).

3. Wayfinding Design

When creating a signage system for an area, building, or architectural structure it is essential to develop a strategic wayfinding scheme. With this step you can build up a modular wayfinding system that will adapt to the build environment and the human expectations for orientation and navigation purposes. Research is an important step to understand the build environment and where information is needed to maximize legibility of the wayfinding system. Consider asking new church members how they navigated the building or campus initially and if they have any suggestions to improve signage.

4. Signage Design

There are four important type of signs: Information signs, for instance a sign pole with locate a destination and/or to orientate yourself in the build environment. Directional



signs, where information is displayed to find destinations, located on several strategic points in the build environment. Identification signs, where information about individual locations is displayed such as buildings, locations and public facilities. Warning signs, to indicate safety procedures such as a fire escape routes, no smoking areas and other regulations that is, or is not allowed in a specific area.

To make a signage system work together a design grid is used to order information and to scale the signs to different sizes, as part of the sign family.

With the example design I have used a base grid of 30 mm (millimeters) with a subdivision of 9.

All the measurements of the example are based on the 9×9 division. Be careful not to show too much information on one sign, this will be easily overlooked, instead use multiple signs to get good wayfinding results.

Be consistent in typography, type height, icons, grid design, color, and material choice. The signs need to be straight forward designed and in a consistent order to wayfinding scheme, always use the same order of displaying the information. Remember to make samples of the different sign types and check them in the build environment to ensure it becomes a best-practice design.



5. Signage Typeface

A signage typeface is usually a sans-serif type and available in various weights with a simple easy-to-read straightforward design. They have a good legibility with a large X-height and wide letter proportions with prominent ascenders/descenders to ensure a good readability.

When using an easy-to-read font, the typeface is recognizable for many people to read and to understand the message clearly. Therefore, the choice of a signage typeface is one of the key factors to make a wayfinding system work. When selecting a typeface for a signage design/wayfinding project please use the following characteristics:

- A clear and straightforward type design, sans-serif
- Easy recognizable letterforms
- Positive letter spacing to enhance the visual appearance
- The Font Family includes a package of many different weights
- The typeface has a large X-height for good readability



6. Applications for Churches and Schools

Good design of exterior signage along with well-kept grounds can create a positive image that can be attractive to visitors. Exterior signage is often regulated by local zoning ordinances or building codes. Consider designated visitor parking spaces with signage in a preferred location. Handicapped (ADA) parking spaces should be properly marked.



Interior wayfinding can unify buildings with consistent signage. Major functions should have direction signage such as school, worship center, nursery and restrooms. ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) has specific requirement for braille signage, color contrast and location standards.

References

<http://designworkplan.com/wayfinding/introduction.htm>

<https://www.bing.com/images/search?q=church+signage+and+wayfinding&qpvvt=church+signage+and+wayfinding&FORM=IGRE>

Contact LCEF to find an Architectural Advisory Committee member near you for additional information.



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