Xerox to Signide

Memorandum

Paul Arthur & Associates Limited
Ottawa
JUL 20 1965
Received.

To: Designers

From: Rudolf Modley

Subject: Guidelines on designing universally usable graphic symbols (glyphs).

Some philosophical considerations.

We are handicapped whenever we leave the familiar environment of our own language and of our own specific cultural system.

We may not understand the foreign language and we may not understand the foreign customs. We may not know how to act in such a case and we - and our counterparts - lack the means of communicating with each other.

The enormous increase in foreign trade and travel and the deeper involvement of highly industrialized countries in the development of African and Asian nations make the resulting problems increasingly acute.

A natural response to the need for better communication has been the development of universally recognized graphic symbols which are not based on any single language system or on any specific cultural system. Among such symbols (glyphs) are mathematical "operators" such as "plus" and "minus", road signs indicating curves and crossroads, map symbols for railroads and rivers, the signs for $ and #, and many others.

Good graphic symbols are simple and concise. They often convey their message faster and more precisely than words. They are therefore effective means of communication even among people who speak the same language and belong to the same specific culture.

This memorandum is concerned with the creation of a system of visual signs which can be used universally. It outlines the objectives and tries to spell out the limitations within which a designer will have to work in developing glyphs.

The Glyph project. The concept for a system of universally recognized graphic symbols was suggested to the United Nations (International Cooperation Year) by Margaret Mead in 1964. The Committee for the International Cooperation Year considered the suggestion as "in harmony with the aim of International Cooperation Year." A North American Interim Committee for Glyphs is being formed with L. K. Frank (Belmont, Mass.) as Chairman, Margaret Mead (New York, N.Y.) as Vice Chairman, and Rudolf Modley (Kent, Conn.) as Executive Director. The project will draw heavily on earlier contributions by organizations and individuals. (At present, communications should be directed to Rudolf Modley, Kent, Conn. 06757, Phone 203-927-3624).

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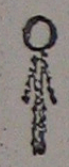
Memorandum

Appendix 2

RM - 8295
June 23, 1965

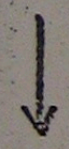
Suggested basic "building blocks" for glyphs.

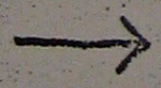
Person 

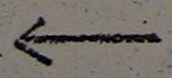
Man 

Woman 

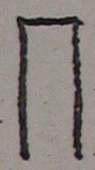
Up 

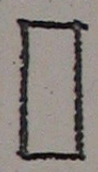
Down 

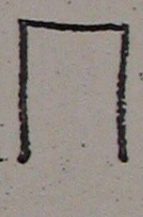
Right 

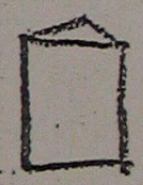
Left 

(and variations)

Small room (open) (entrance) 

Small room (closed) 

Larger room 

Building 

Water (still) 

Fire, Smoke 

No, Do Not 