

## Visual Communication Weekend - the organiser's view

Contributed by Nick Rosenthal  
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Read event organiser Richard Truscott's review of our hugely successful June 2007 meeting in Cambridge. Visual Communication Weekend It went well; very well; better than expected; but more than that, the weekend was just as I'd hoped it would be. I wanted to set up a weekend that would expose the delegates to influences and experiences that they might not meet in their working life. But first let me thank all the delegates and speakers who took the trouble to make comments to me in person and to fill in the review form. The social side of the event was successful to, no body drowned on the punting trip, and the weather was good too. The dinner was typified by good food, good wine and good company finally winding up at three in the morning. My thanks go to Nancy and Nick for their part in organising the taxis for the punting and wine for the dinner. Summary of the reviews I ran a review questionnaire, here are some highlights: All delegates who responded said the event fully or mainly meet their expectations or its content and organisation. The majority of delegates (96%) found that the sessions delivered the right depth and breadth of topics. The majority of delegates (92%) were fully or mainly satisfied with the accommodation, means and social events. Every delegate thought the event was good value for money. Some delegates wrote unsolicited comments on the form, which included, Excellent! Fabulous, The best food ever! About half the delegates returned a review. Event report The speakers were a varied bunch from the UK, North America and South America. Their presentations ranged from the deeply practical, to the theoretical and insightful. The delegates were a varied bunch too, from employees of high street retailers to independent authors who run their own businesses or work as contractors. Philip Ball showed us how Medical Artists work by using illustrations of his work. Every one was fascinated by the subject and the high skill, medical knowledge and artistry of the work. Philip showed how medical artists abstract what they see in operating theatres to make accessible visuals that instruct surgeons on how to do the procedure. Patrick Hofmann's talk on Saturday gave insights into how visual instructions were used by him to help non-English speakers use a complex leather cutting machine and how a telephone company by using visual phone instructions got more business from customers who were immigrants to Canada. Both of these projects had a significant return on investment that fully justified the work done by Patrick. On Sunday Patrick talked on icons and pictograms and gave the results of his usability studies to how these are used and which have the most universal appeal. Who will ever forget the Polynesian toilet? Matthew Ellison gave a deeply practical talk on how to do screen captures and spoke about the tools he suggests using for this type of work. He also highlighted some of the do's and don'ts of making clear screen captures. Caroline Jarrett told us about forms and how people use them and how they miss important information on forms because of where and how the information is placed. Phylise Klien took us to an area not often visited and showed with some simple examples how the brain processes information and the cognitive processes we go through when we see a visual. José de Souza talked about how we show motion in visuals. His talk was illustrated by showing all the ways illustrators have tackled the problem in book and even in cigarette cards. Conrad Taylor showed how line thickness affects our perception of visuals and how depth and shape are affected by line width and shading and how we can make the end result more real. In conclusion I'd like to pinch something somebody once said about music, events like ours are a trinity of effort (composer, performers and audience); so let me thank, Philip Ball, Matthew Ellison, Patrick Hofmann, Phylise Klien, Caroline Jarrett, José de Souza & Conrad Taylor for their presentations; the Møller Centre for hosting on the event, and the delegates for showing their support and interest by coming to the weekend. Without someone to attend the event, all of the organising is a waste of time. In Nancy Halverson's last newsletter piece as President she pointed to the low attendance numbers. I want to find out why more members don't come to these events. There could be all sorts of reasons of course, some of which I can't even begin to imagine! So please drop me a line by email to [programme@stcuk.org](mailto:programme@stcuk.org) and tell me why you don't come to the events and what I can do to change them to get you to come.