

# BOOK DESIGN NEWS

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VOLUME V ISSUE II

"WHERE FORM FOLLOWS FUNCTION!"

CELEBRATING TWENTY-TWO YEARS IN BOOK DESIGN

## WHO & WHAT'S NEW

• *Cover Designers.* Finding a really good cover designer can be nearly as difficult as finding a really good interior book designer!

I am a strong believer in the separation of interior and exterior book design. Each serves a totally different function and should be created by the respective specialists.

The book cover motivates a reader to open the book. Once inside, the interior design guides the reader through the presentation of the written word. "The cover is my body, the interior is my soul."—JOHN REINHARDT, 1997

I know you already have access to a fine interior book designer [hint, hint], but you may need some help in finding a good cover designer.

Look no further. Here are my picks for "top-o'-the-line" quality cover/jacket designers:

**Jack W. Davis**  
408 Park Lane  
Champaign, IL 61820  
TEL: 217 356.1809  
FAX: 217 356.1880  
EMAIL: jwdavis@c-u.net

**Andrew (Andy) Hunt**  
WOLF SONG DESIGN  
andy@wolfsong.com

These two guys love what they do and it shows in their work. Be sure to tell 'em I sent ya!

## WHEN IT ALL GOES WRONG!

How often are you faced with arguing over blame rather than working towards a solution? Our society seems so intent on laying blame rather than finding solutions. Are we all so "hung-up" on ego that we can't accept failure for what it really is—a learning tool? Sometimes, it seems, the threat of blame is so powerful that it will keep people from even trying.

"Show me someone who doesn't fail, and I'll show you someone who doesn't try," I like to say.

How can we really know how far to push the envelope, to reach for the stars, if we don't go over the line occasionally?

I believe so much that "Success is built on a foundation of failure."

I was helping my neighbors with their computer the other evening and was asked, "How did you get so good at this?"

I simply said, "I have failed a lot!"

Those who are more interested in performance, in achieving results, brush blame aside in order to get to the meat of the matter. We all make mistakes. It is part of our very existence. By accepting a mistake as knowledge and using that knowledge to move forward, we become successful.

I've had my share of blunders over the years (and I'm sure all of you have had some doozies) and I still go through periods where it seems everything I touch falls apart. I want the people with whom I work to know they can tell me of these goofs, regardless of whether the mistakes are mine or theirs. I need to know of these errors so that I can fix them. They need to know they can count on me—working together to achieve success.

We can't allow mistakes to live on. If we concentrate on blame rather than resolution, the mistakes not only live, but prosper. They grow!

Ask yourself, do you have the confidence, the trust, in both your designer and yourself, to comfortably discuss mistakes—both theirs *and* yours? You should be able to call your designer, without hesitation, and work together for a solution, without the fear of a blaming tirade.

If you carefully unwrap success, you'll find it neatly packaged in a large bed of mistakes.

# THIS INFORMATION IS ONLY MARGINAL!

A fellow designer once asked me to explain margins.

I said, "What?"

"I mean how do you decide what margins to use when designing a text page?" He asked.

After giving it much thought, I decided to take this interesting (and lengthy) subject and break it down to a few useful, basic thoughts. Much has been written about the mathematical relationships of page proportions.

Figure 1 shows the "Golden Canon" of book page construction as it was used during late Gothic times. After much labor, this canon was finally discovered by Jan Tschichold in 1953.

The diagram shows a page (2:3 proportion) divided into ninths. By drawing the diagonal rules as shown, we find some interesting things happening. First, by drawing a text block that intersects the diagonals, we find that this text block is the same proportion as the page itself. We also find that a circle, with a diameter as that of the page, matches the text block in height and width. There is a rule that states that the height of the text block should be equal to the width of the page.

The mathematical relationships that exist from one page size to another open up further discussions of proportion and dimension. From here it only gets more complicated and interesting.

All of this tends to be a little overwhelming and is sometimes a bit impractical in our designs today. As designers and production managers, we are faced with economic factors that prevent us from applying many of these principles of design. We are required to fit a book to a particular page count so that the book can be produced and sold at a price that will return a profit. This, more times than not, dictates our page dimensions. We are forced to cram as much type on a page as possible, squeezing the margins.

Nevertheless, we should strive to create a page that is pleasing and readable. Here are just three basic functions

of the margins. They are: (1) The margins position the type area to the page and the facing pages to each other.; (2) The margins "frame" the type area in such a way that is consistent with the design used.; and (3) The margins must allow for the physical handling of the book so that the reader's hands (while holding the book) do not cover the type.

Remember, the margins of the page are as important to the design as that of the type area. Look at them as *part*

of the design, and have fun with them. Sometimes an unconventional design calls for unconventional margins.

It's also important to note that this discussion of margins must be applied to the bound book. Therefore, consider the binding will eat up some of the inside margin and this "lost space" must be considered when determining the margins.

If any of this fascinates you and you need to know more, you can overload yourself on the subject with Jan

Tschichold's book (my personal favorite) *The Form of the Book*; Robert Bringhurst's *The Elements of Typographic Style*; and Hugh Williamson's *Methods of Book Design*.

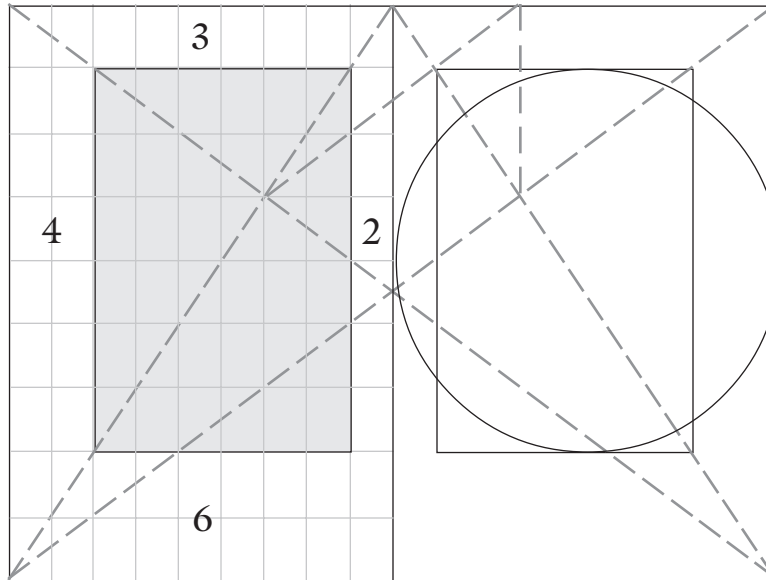


FIGURE 1. This diagram shows the secret (Golden) canon as determined by Jan Tschichold in 1953; Villard's Diagram; and Raúl Rosarivo. Margin proportions of 2:3:4:6.

## J·R·B·D T-shirt

It had to happen and it has! If you've logged onto my web site lately, you've noticed an offer for a free (that's right, FREE) *John Reinhardt Book Design* t-shirt.

This t-shirt is in limited production and I am giving away one t-shirt a month to the individual(s) who convinces me (via e-mail) why they *must* have one of these shirts. This is the only way you can get one of these shirts. They are not for sale.

You've always known I'll give you the shirt off my back—just tell me *why* I should!

E-MAIL: [john@bookdesign.com](mailto:john@bookdesign.com)