

## Volume 59 Number 1

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### In with the New!

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“Out with the old. In with the new!” — this is how Mike Zender finished the editorial of the last issue of volume 58 and how I start the editorial for the first issue of volume 59. Issue 59.1 (2025) marks the start of the new Visible Language Consortium of three universities: University of Leeds (UoL in the UK), North Carolina State University (NCSU in the US), and University of Cincinnati (UC in the US).

It is my true honor to represent the first of the three universities to host *Visible Language* for three years and hold the title of editor-in-chief while we work together, and on equal terms, with two fantastic editors: Mike Zender and Matthew Peterson.

Since 1967, three *Visible Language* editors have established very solid foundations for the journal and developed it to be one of the most prestigious journals in the area of communication design. As tempted as I am to list them all and praise their great efforts and contribution, I will make Sharon Helmer Poggenpohl’s words in her article at the end of this issue — “*Visible Language* Evolves” — my words. Sharon served as *Visible Language*’s editor and publisher for as many as 26 years (up to 2013) and the way she tells us the story of *Visible Language* is precious and one that I could never tell as well.

Instead, I am going to take you “behind the curtain” of the new Visible Language Consortium and give you a sneak peek of what we are doing in terms of “Out with the old. In with the new!”

**Governance and structure.** As shown in Figure 1, we strategize, govern, and operate through an executive board and an editorial board. The executive board convenes

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@: [ISSUE](#) > [ARTICLE](#) >

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**Visible Language Consortium:**

University of Leeds (UK)

University of Cincinnati (USA)

North Carolina State University (USA)

as often as needed, and the editorial board meets every four weeks with a defined agenda and agrees on a set of clear actions to implement in the four weeks that follow. Our pioneering approach as a consortium of three universities has also led to a well-structured governance that allows for *resilience*, *empowerment*, and *succession*.

*Resilience* because *Visible Language* is no longer dependent on one editor or a very small editorial board, and therefore there is no risk of *Visible Language* ever having to pause or delay operations due to a reduced workforce. Having said that, Mike Zender’s resilience and ability to keep the journal on track almost single-handedly for over a decade was incredible and unmatched.

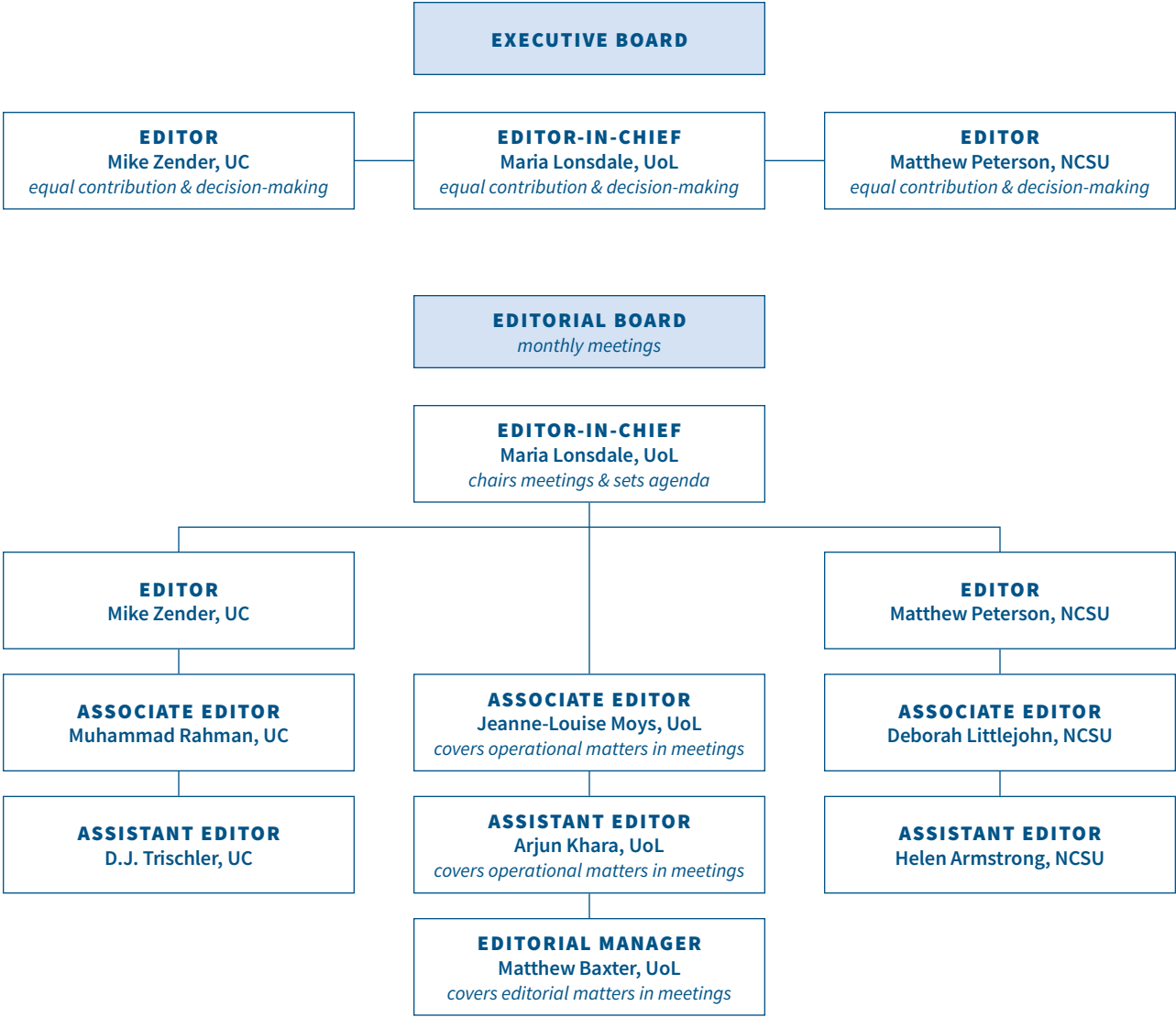


Figure 1. *Visible Language* governance and structure — January 2025 to December 2027.

*Empowerment* because we established a structure where each university in the consortium has a clear line of roles, where more senior roles (editors) mentor and empower other roles in the chain of command. This then equips those with roles beyond editor to contribute to strategy and decision-making, act independently when actioning certain tasks, and develop and grow in their *Visible Language* role but also academic career.

*Succession* because by mentoring and empowering roles beyond editor in a chain of succession (associate editor followed by assistant editor) means that we are developing the next generation of editors for *Visible Language*. That next generation will keep the journal fresh and at the forefront of publishing in the area of communication design and beyond. The way this works is as follows. Eventually I will step aside to give way to my current associate editor at the University of Leeds to become the editor for our university; Matthew Peterson will do the same for NCSU after his three years as editor-in-chief between January 2028 and December 2030; as will Mike Zender in the future.

**Workforce.** Following from the above, our editorial board includes academics at all stages of the academic career, i.e., senior, mid-career, and early career. Moreover, while the three consortium universities are based in the UK and US, our editorial board includes academics who are native from countries in four different continents. This breadth in terms of cultural backgrounds, together with a range of career stages, informs *Visible Language* on how to be a truly open access journal, i.e., accessible to and catering for all globally.

Beyond the *Visible Language* editorial board, we also work with students and industry creatives to bring an extra layer of knowledge and perspective. For example, we are currently working with Justin Pokorski, a Master of Design student at the University of Cincinnati, to develop a *Visible Language* archive. We are also working with a young team of communication, digital, and UX/UI designers at PACE (Professional Academy for Creative Enterprise) in the School of Design at the University of Leeds.

**Focus.** We have been discussing and looking closely at what *Visible Language's* focus should be from 2025, which will continue to evolve and adapt as the field of design grows and changes. After various and careful discussions, our consensus and decision is that *Visible Language* is the journal of research in interface, experience, and communication design. *Visible Language* impacts academic professionals, industry professionals, and students by supporting knowledge generation in and adjacent to design. The journal advocates the teaching, research, and practice of visual communication design to enhance the human experience. *Visible Language* balances artfulness with science, innovation with respect for human patterns of use, evidence-based research with intuitive exploration, and technology with humanity.

**Innovation and growth.** While the new consortium has only been officially in place from January 2025, we have been very proactive and ambitious in terms of where we want to take *Visible Language* and our readers. Various actions/initiatives have taken place already, some have started and are in development, and others will start in the next few months. Here are some examples.

- ▶ Editors Mike Zender (University of Cincinnati) and Matthew Peterson (North Carolina State University) visited Editor-in-Chief Maria Lonsdale at the University of Leeds in 2024 to forge the new Visible Language Consortium collaboration.
- ▶ We are launching this first issue of volume 59 under the new consortium through our new *Visible Language* open access model. We worked to secure the institutional support necessary to cover the irreducible costs of publication beyond our volunteer efforts — to ensure that neither readers nor authors incur expenses.
- ▶ We designed a new *Visible Language* logo that went through various stages of development and iteration. We have recently launched a bespoke *Visible Language* website.\* We also have a new design for the article PDFs that can be downloaded through *Visible Language*'s open access, which prioritizes integration in broader scholarship beyond design through stylistic decisions and typographic features. The design will continue to evolve through future issues in collaboration between the *Visible Language* editorial board and the PACE Creative Team. We will also have presence on various social media platforms.
- ▶ We are currently in the process of developing a *Visible Language* next generation archive — Viz Archive — with UC's Master of Design student Justin Pokorski. This is a unique and innovative approach in an academic journal. Its design is going through various stages of development, testing, and iteration to make sure it caters to the needs of all of our readers: academics, practitioners, and students.
- ▶ The Visible Language Consortium is committed to rigor and relevance in design scholarship. Towards that end, the journal is now Scopus-indexed. This is of great relevance to academics and researchers in countries such as the UK, where our research outputs are assessed through the Research Excellence Framework (REF).
- ▶ We are also being more proactive in terms of reaching our audience in person. The first of these activities was to attend and have journal representation at the ATypI Copenhagen Conference in April 2025.

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\* <https://www.visible-language.org/journal/>

**Ethos.** The only thing we will not change is our *ethos* as a journal. As an editorial board we will continue to operate in a collaborative, collegial, respectful, and kind manner, both internally as well as externally with our authors, reviewers, and readers. We will be an editorial board fully dedicated to *Visible Language* and hands-on to make sure *Visible Language* continues to be one of the most prestigious design journals, for the greater good of our design discipline and ultimately of its contributors and readers.

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With this in mind, volume 59 focuses on our three key audiences and each of the volume's three issues is dedicated to them. Issue 59.1 — **Past** — *Visible Language* invited prestigious academics and researchers who have been long-term contributors to the journal and to the field of communication design. Each was asked to share their perspective on design research informed by their years of experience and what their thinking is at this stage in their career. Without wanting to spoil it, I will only mention who our contributors to issue 59.1 are so that it gives me the opportunity (and on behalf of all three editors) to thank them immensely for their time and contribution. They have all been a delight to work with and we are so honored to start the new era of *Visible Language* sharing their words and insight.

- ▶ Nigel Cross: “Making Design Research Visible”
- ▶ Meredith Davis: “A Shifting Practice Paradigm Meets a Persistent Curriculum Paradigm”
- ▶ Charles Bigelow and Kris Holmes: “Digital Type Challenges”
- ▶ Mary Dyson: “Towards Interdisciplinary: Juggling Similarities and Differences”
- ▶ Karel van der Waarde and Myra Thiessen: “Nineteen Questions to Evaluate Typographic Research: Chaff and Wheat”
- ▶ Sharon Poggenpohl: “*Visible Language* Evolves”

Issue 59.2 — **Present** — *Visible Language* will bring articles written in collaboration with design practitioners and/or focusing on design practice and industry to inform our readers of the current landscape and trends in the field of communication design, especially concerning artificial intelligence in design.

Issue 59.3 — **Future** — *Visible Language* will publish articles generated from collaboration between research design students and their supervisors, who are currently developing the latest research that will be implemented and disseminated in the next few years. As of this writing there is an open call for papers.

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This is a time of great excitement for us all on the *Visible Language* editorial board. So much done but so much still to do! Most importantly, we have fully achieved our

number one goal when establishing the consortium — to make *Visible Language* an open access journal for all our loyal readers and to the many new readers we hope will join *Visible Language* from here onwards.

*Visible Language* is now the design journal that everyone around the world, with no exceptions, can access and enjoy free of charge, publish their research and practice in, also free of charge, and learn from others in order to inform their research, practice, or studies.

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