In 2017, in our Aungier St. Library we undertook a sign audit. A sign inventory was carried out. In addition to stack and wayfinding signage we discovered we had 52 signs over 2 floors. None of these signs adhered to a cohesive design, best practice or incorporated a visual identity that represented the Library.

In 2017 branding and design guidelines were developed in line with graphic design best practice, institute guidelines, the Official Languages Act 2003. Design guidelines for people with a disability were also incorporated. A team was established to look after all signage design, marketing, and social media. Over the last year, the team has developed a cohesive Library sign portfolio that promotes our services and resources across a range of Library and college-wide communication channels. A visual identity is incorporated into this sign portfolio.

We felt it was important to position the Library visually on campus. Our services, resources and people are our brand but it is important that the high standards delivered in this service are reflected by a high standard of design in our signage and across our communication channels. Having a consistent and cohesive visual identity can enable you to build trust with your users at various touch points across campus and across multiple communication channels. While the sign on the your left gets a message across, does it really say what you want about your service and brand? Additionally, the sign on the left requires a layer of decoding or interpretation and our message can be lost or misunderstood in that instant.

It is said that design is subjective but it is also the case where there can be bad design and good design. It allows you to communicate with your users in the most basic way. In his 2010 *Library Journal* article Aaron Schmidt also refers to “design by neglect or unintentional design”. Lehnan and Artemchik (2016) argue that this can then result in “visual communication that is unattractive, misleading, or effectively invisible to the user.” Design sets the tone of the environment.

We live in a visual world and are design literate. We can make instant evaluations on the credibility of a service or organisation based on the standards of their visual collateral.

In her 2015 paper on Librarians and graphic design skills Diana Wakimoto found that while there is obvious interest in graphic design and visual literacy on the part of librarians, as well as the effective promotion of libraries, there is a lack of research on how prepared librarians are in relation to graphic design. Graphic design is an essential part of UX but again, the focus of LIS research is on UX rather than graphic design.

Visual literacy is covered by the ACRL Visual Literacy Competency Standards but there is a dearth of literature specific to library graphic design. Graphic design is an everyday part of our lives in libraries but how many of us are trained in it? I am self-taught. An informal survey of some CONUL member libraries indicated that this is also the case with their staff. One Library did indicate that they have a staff member in an outreach role that has a graphic design background and that that individual is “invaluable” to them.
I am not suggesting that we become graphic designers but I feel this is an essential skill that is overlooked. While graphic design does have its root in art and design which I think might alienate some people, it also has rules. Those rules can be learned. Even if you have outsourced graphic design you still need the skills to communicate what you need and to recognise good design. There is a lot of research and literature covering the education of non-designers. I feel our profession needs to start engaging in the process of formally educating ourselves in graphic design, especially those of us working in areas of communication, outreach and marketing of library services.