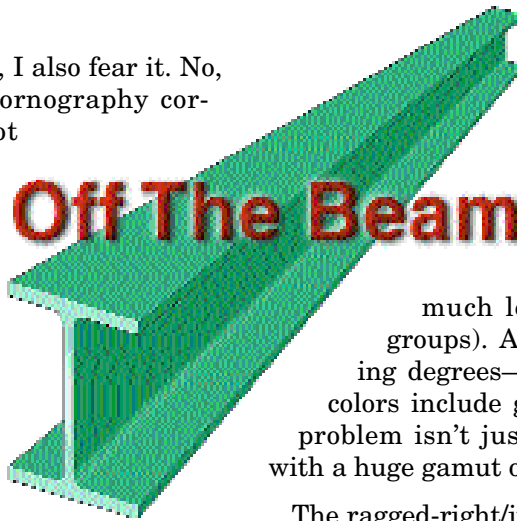


As much as I love the Internet, I also fear it. No, I'm not worried about online pornography corrupting my child (well, I'm not overly worried) or online shopping eroding local sales taxes and thereby increasing my property taxes. What worries me is the tremendous potential for misleading information to be easily and widely disseminated.

For example, just the other day one of my colleagues and I had a discussion about magazine design. My colleague is not fond of green and wondered about my propensity for using it frequently as an accent color. Likewise, my colleague stated a preference for ragged right text rather than justified text (ragged right allows each line to end naturally, while justified text creates neat little column blocks). A second colleague, overhearing the conversation, thought I'd be interested in some information from one of the many online list discussions. One of the contributors opined that "If you have a predominantly male audience, consider eliminating green as an accent or major color since a high proportion of males are colorblind to green." That same contributor stated: "Design-wise you should examine things such as whether your columns are justified (that lowers readability compared with a rag-right column)."

Well, it's all very well and good to state a preference for a color other than green, or a preference



for rag-right over justified type. The danger lies in skewing the facts.

Yes, approximately 12% of Caucasian males are red-green deficient (for some reason, this is much less frequent in other ethnic groups). As a result, they see—to varying degrees—certain colors as grey. These colors include green, red and purple. So the problem isn't just with green. It's essentially with a huge gamut of colors.

The ragged-right/justified text discussion is even further off the mark. Almost every study (yes, there are people who study these types of things) has shown that there is no readability difference between the two typesetting styles as long as the type is proportionally spaced (that means that different letters take up different amounts of room—an "m" takes up more room than an "n", which takes up more room than an "i").

Yes, the Internet is a truly wonderful means of communications. And it can be a wonderful source of information. But make sure you take what you find on the Internet with a big grain of salt. When dealing with the Internet you're always better off following one of the most famous journalism axioms: "If your mother says she loves you, check it out!"

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