
CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS!

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COMPANION TO COGNITIVE SEMIOTICS

#1 (2008)

MEANING AND MATERIALITY

We invite submissions for the inaugural volume of the *Companion to Cognitive Semiotics*, with the special theme of *Meaning and Materiality*.

Companion to Cognitive Semiotics 1 (2008) will explore the semiotic status of the material world in human cognition, and the material dimension of semiosis and representation. Materiality (and material culture) is not only a rapidly growing research topic in a number of disciplines (anthropology, archaeology, evolutionary biology, linguistics, philosophy, psychology), but a central focus of an emerging new paradigm in the sciences of cognition and communication. The core theme of this issue will be the way in which “things” (objects, the material world) function as signifiers, and not just signifieds. We shall thus emphasize the semiotic dimension of extended, situated and distributed cognitive processes; and the material basis of meaning as more than a merely “mental” phenomenon. The role in cognitive development and evolution of artefacts and material culture is of great importance in this respect, and is increasingly emphasised in anthropology, archaeology and psychology.

Materiality has been neglected by traditional approaches in all the disciplines we mention above, and in all of them it is receiving renewed attention. In archaeology, although material culture has always been the primary source of evidence, it has tended to be treated as a basis for dating sequences or as indicative of social organisation independently of cognitive considerations. More recent approaches, however, emphasize the “agentive” status of objects in cognition and its evolution. Anthropologists have tended to counterpose material to symbolic culture, identifying the latter with ideational and ideological systems. More recently, the notion of the “cognitive artefact” emphasizes the material foundations of cognitive schematization. In biological theory, the question is increasingly being raised of the status of the artefactual world as a niche constituting an integral part of the phenotype; from this perspective, semiotic systems (including language) can be seen as both organismic and artefactual. In linguistics, the material world has traditionally been relegated to the

status of “context of situation”, whose role is to disambiguate utterance meanings. More recently, we see demonstrations of how objects are recruited into communicative interactions as semiotic resources in their own right. In philosophy, pragmatist and phenomenological approaches emphasize the importance of the extension of agency and the body by artefacts, and the distribution of cognition in the material surround of the body (“extended, situated embodiment”); and the notion of intersubjectivity is being complemented by that of interobjectivity.

In psychology, the traditional view has been that “representation” is a mental category, and the materiality of objects has been dissolved into their identification with their “mental” counterparts. The role of objects in communicative development has concomitantly been reduced to their being “objects of attention”. Important exceptions here have been J.J. Gibson’s concept of “affordance”, and L.S. Vygotsky’s notion of semiotic mediation, which are central to contemporary attempts to integrate ecological and socio-cultural psychology with cognitive-functional linguistics and situated embodiment philosophical theories. In all the above approaches, an analysis of materiality in meaning goes hand in hand with an emphasis on the social nature of meaning and cognition.

The status of materiality remains problematic in semiotics itself. While there is traditionally a consensus on the material nature of the signifier, there are serious problems with identifying what exactly constitutes “materiality”, and how this is to be reconciled with other aspects of signification, such as temporal sequentiality, which are difficult to qualify as “material”. And if we extend the concept of semiosis to include (for example) the affordances of objects, does this mean that “everything is a sign”?

Our intention in this volume of is not only to provide a window on work in progress in a key area of research, but also to produce a unique interdisciplinary work of reference that will have significant influence on the development of interdisciplinary cognitive semiotics. We invite the submission of:

- Empirical and theoretical research reports on specific aspects of meaning and materiality
- “State of the Art” reviews of changing views of materiality in disciplines relevant to cognitive semiotics
- Explorations of artefactuality and semiosis in human development and evolution, including cultural evolution, science and technology
- Explorations of the role and implications of materiality in cognitive semiosis for artistic work, education and other areas of professional practice.

We welcome multi-authored submissions.

THE EDITORS

The editors of this inaugural volume of the *Companion to Cognitive Semiotics*, which will appear in December 2008, are:

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Potential contributors are encouraged to contact any of the editors in advance of submission. Submitted publications should follow the same style instructions as for *Cognitive Semiotics* (<http://www.cognitivesemiotics.com>).

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Deadline for submissions: May 5th 2008.

ABOUT THE COMPANION TO COGNITIVE SEMIOTICS

The *Companion to Cognitive Semiotics* is an annual electronic publication which will complement the printed journal *Cognitive Semiotics* published internationally by Peter Lang Publishing Group. Starting from December 2008 it will be available free of charge at the journals' website: www.cognitivesemiotics.com. As such it serves several purposes: 1) to present high quality research to a larger audience, 2) to allow for direct online debate of its articles (special forums will be set up), and 3) to introduce readers to the discipline of Cognitive Semiotics and, consequently, to the printed journal as well.

All submissions to the *Companion to Cognitive Semiotics* will be peer reviewed using the same double blind protocol as submissions to *Cognitive Semiotics*. Copyright in articles in the *Companion to Cognitive Semiotics* will be vested in the author(s), who will agree to its electronic publication by the *Companion to Cognitive Semiotics*. The *Companion to Cognitive Semiotics* will provide a publication outlet for universally accessible, high impact and high quality original articles, with the same Editorial standards as *Cognitive Semiotics*.

Further details can be found at <http://www.cognitivesemiotics.com/>.