

Books by Rutgers Faculty

### A visual history, illustrated in book covers

Archived article from Feb 20, 2006

By Kathleen Brunet Eagan

While their book "By Its Cover: Modern American Book Cover Design" (Princeton Architectural Press, 2005) has received wide attention, including a lengthy review in *The New Yorker* by John Updike, there is another story Ned Drew and Paul Sternberger, associate professors in the department of visual and performing arts in Newark, like to share.

The book, they explain, began as a project to provide students with easily accessible examples of graphic design. Drew first began collecting book covers for his "History of Graphic Design" course. As he and Sternberger shared ideas and thoughts about the covers, they soon realized they could write an interesting history. Adding to the appeal: One of today's top book cover designers is John Gall, a Rutgers-Newark graduate, who designed the book's cover.

With the idea launched, Drew and Sternberger began scouting used bookstores and the Internet for covers to exemplify the evolution of book covers from protective jackets to visual communication. Yes, you can often judge a book by its cover. But more than that, says Drew, "[Covers] ask the observer to interact with the book." "They compel you," adds Sternberger, "to become an analytical observer rather than a passive recipient."



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Last Updated: May 30, 2006

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