

Art Director & Accessibility Advocate with 15+ Years in EdTech & Educational Publishing

Summary

Strategic, CPACC-certified design leader with 15+ years in educational publishing and EdTech, specializing in visual communication, editorial and publication design, information design, and print and digital experiences. Experienced in translating complex content and ideas into clear, compelling, accessible visual communications for diverse audiences. Skilled in leading projects from concept through final production, developing scalable design systems and templates, managing production workflows, and coordinating internal teams and external vendors. Known for combining strong visual storytelling and creative problem-solving with exceptional attention to detail, efficient production processes, accessibility, brand consistency, and strategic communications goals.

Core Expertise

Visual Communication & Information Design:

Editorial & Publication Design | Visual Storytelling | Typography | Visual Hierarchy | Infographics | Presentations | Print & Digital Communications | Complex Content & Data

Design Leadership & Creative Strategy:

Art Direction | Creative Concept Development | Design Reviews | Visual Standards | Brand Consistency | Cross-Functional Collaboration | Vendor & Freelancer Management

Production Management and Workflow:

Scalable Visual Systems | End-to-End Production | Scheduling | Templates | Design Systems | Style Guides | Workflow Optimization | Production Handoff | Quality Assurance

Accessibility & Inclusive Design:

Inclusive Design | Accessibility Audits | Accessible Templates | WCAG | CPACC Certified

Experience

Cengage, remote

April 2021– present

Art Director for EdTech company

- Own visual design and art direction for complex educational publishing programs spanning print and digital learning experiences, partnering with Editorial, Learning Design, Production, Technology, and other cross-functional teams.
- Designed a high-profile prototype for a **National Geographic Learning** U.S. History high school program, establishing visual direction for the book and related instructional components. Art-directed an external vendor through typesetting of the entire book and all ancillaries. Reviewed and gave feedback on all maps.
- Custom designed multiple special features across high school and middle school programs, translating complex instructional content into clear, engaging visual experiences.
- Created inclusive, scalable design systems used across covers for all print and digital components.
- Crafted efficient workflows for 5 complex Art titles where layout and color accuracy were paramount to their success. Managed a color correction specialist and designer. Reviewed all pages and worked with the printer to ensure contract proofs were accurate.
- Served as the Accessibility lead for Creative Studio (26 people). Shared accessibility best practices, created accessibility audit guidelines, and presented to 4 different business units to educate colleagues on the importance of accessibility and clarify their role in ensuring products meet accessibility standards. Represented the Creative Studio on a task force to create accessible templates for commonly used HTML activities.
- Accepted into an Aspiring Leaders training program where I collaborated with colleagues across the company on best practices for building talent, empowering colleagues, and acting as a company ambassador and cultural steward.
- Trained and mentored 3 new hires on workflows and processes.
- Initiated a monthly meeting with other art directors from different business units to discuss best practices and foster a sense of community within Creative Studio.

Skills

Design Tools:

- Adobe InDesign
- Adobe Illustrator
- Adobe Photoshop
- Adobe Acrobat
- Canva

Accessibility Tools:

- WCAG guidelines
- CPACC Certified

Web and UI Tools:

- Adobe XD
- InVision
- Sketch
- Figma
- HTML5
- CSS

AI/Project Tools:

- ChatGPT
- Claude
- Firefly
- Box
- Jira
- Microsoft Office
- Workfront
- Smartsheet
- Dropbox
- InCopy

Education:

International Association of Accessibility Professionals (IAAP)
Certified Professional in Accessibility
Core Competencies (CPACC)

Boston University, Center for Digital Imaging Arts
Web Design Certificate

University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Bachelor of Arts; English major, Art minor

Volunteer & Leadership:

Read to a Child
Mentor, 2015–present

Medfield Coalition for Public Education
Board Member, Publicity & Graphics Team, 2024–2027

International Association for Accessibility Professionals (IAAP) Marketing & Communication Development Committee
Project Team Member, 2026–2029

Sarah Cole

www.sarahcoledesigns.com | sarahrakcole@gmail.com | www.linkedin.com/in/sarahcoledesigns

Art Director & Accessibility Advocate with 15+ Years in EdTech & Educational Publishing

Cengage, Boston, MA and remote

October 2014– May 2021

Senior Designer for EdTech company

- Designed and art-directed print covers, textbook interiors, and interactive educational products across 10+ disciplines, balancing instructional objectives, visual engagement, production requirements, and business needs.
- Conducted accessibility audits for new editions and recommended design improvements to increase usability and accessibility.
- Led design launches and presentations, articulating visual concepts and design rationale while incorporating input from Marketing, Content, and Learning Design.
- Created workflows and templates that improved efficiency and consistency across complex publishing programs.
- Developed a Visual Design Plan template that streamlined the handoff of content requirements from Content teams to Design.
- Led a team of 10 colleagues from different business areas to create a more efficient HTML5 workflow.
- Hired and art-directed 10+ illustrators, production artists, and photographers to create compelling covers and interiors.
- Provided creative direction and design guidance throughout projects from concepts through final production.

Textbooks.com, Boston, MA

March 2014–September 2014

Senior Designer for Textbook eCommerce company

- Redesigned the look and feel of the company's email and advertising campaign.
- Conducted a website audit and recommended improvements to design, content, usability, and visual consistency.
- Collaborated with the Creative Director, Copywriter, and Marketing staff to create a social media strategy.
- Prepared final digital files for handover to production for coding.

Six Red Marbles, Boston, MA

2011–February 2014

Senior Designer for EdTech company

- Designed, managed and art-directed large print and digital educational programs for colleges, non-profit organizations, and publishers across multiples disciplines.
- Managed designers, Photoshop artists, and art buyers while maintaining quality, schedules, budgets, and project requirements.
- Led design pitches and presentations for clients, explaining design concepts and recommendations.
- Collaborated with Design and Production teams in the New Delhi office, providing creative and technical guidance.

Vista Higher Learning, Boston, MA

2009–2011

Senior Designer for Higher Education World Language Publisher

- Designed and art-directed language textbooks, establishing visual direction while maintaining consistency with templates and standards.
- Reviewed pages for quality, consistency, accuracy, and compliance with templates.
- Managed two junior designers and off-site vendors while collaborating with Design, Production, Editorial, and Marketing to meet deadlines and quality standards.
- Provided creative and technical guidance to Design and Production teams in the South American office.
- Commissioned and reviewed illustrations, maps, and photography, ensuring visual appeal while remaining sensitive to the cultures represented.

Sarah Cole

www.sarahcoledesigns.com | sarahrakcole@gmail.com | www.linkedin.com/in/sarahcoledesigns

Art Director & Accessibility Advocate with 15+ Years in EdTech & Educational Publishing

Brown Publishing Network, Waltham, MA

2006–2008

Senior Designer for Full-Service Educational Development House

- Designed covers and interiors and art-directed illustrators and photographers for a K–2 leveled literacy program.
- Directed photo shoots and managed photo researchers while maintaining design and production quality.
- Designed prototypes for science, math, and history books spanning K–college.
- Managed a large vocabulary card program, defining workflows, creating templates, monitoring schedules and budgets, acquiring art, and managing a junior designer and photo researcher.

Educators Publishing Service, Cambridge, MA

2004–2006

Designer for Educational Publisher

- Managed and designed grade 2–12 vocabulary programs with multiple components.
- Managed internal and external staff while ensuring schedules, budgets, and quality.
- Designed covers and interiors, acquired art and photography, and collaborated with illustrators, Editorial, Marketing, Production, and Digital teams to create books from concept to final files.

Williamson Publishing, Charlotte, VT

2001–2004

Designer and Illustrator for Children's Book Publisher

- Designed and illustrated interiors and covers for multiple series, from pre-K to grade 8.
- Created marketing collateral including ads, pins, posters, trade show signage, and packaging.

Charlesbridge Publishing, Watertown, MA

2000–2001

Production Assistant for Children's Trade and Educational Publisher

- Designed books and marketing collateral for the School and Trade departments.
- Assisted with scanning, inventory, and reprint corrections.