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Newspaper Design : Infographics

By

Peter Ong
Newspaper Design:
Infographics

presented by
Peter Ong

paper presented at the
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Visual Thinking

What readers expect of their papers

1. News (Of course, stoopid!)
2. Accuracy (Not just some of the time)
3. Credibility (Trying to hoodwink us, eh?)
4. Professionalism (I'm paying you good money)
5. Consistency (I demand it)
6. Respect for their time (Please, please, please)

Findings of Urban & Associates
Visual Thinking

Respecting readers' time takes many forms. It demands crisp, clear writing, of course, as well as treating page make-up and packaging as an inherent part of the communications process, and not just a cosmetic application after the fact.

- Chris Urban, market researcher
Seeing is a visual process connected with images. We see the landscape; we see a painting. The process is intuitive, emotional and simultaneous. We experience this process involuntarily.
Reading is connected with the verbal process. We decode the written word. To do this we must know the code. The process is cerebral, rational, deliberate and linear.
Seeing anew

Thinking visually means we have to see things in a new way. It requires associative thinking. Creative thinking. Lateral thinking. Patterns and dots, rather than logical and rational. Therefore when writing a story it means the shape of information (such as a graphic) rather than length.
How readers process a page

- Text: 25%
- Captions: 29%
- Briefs: 31%
- Advertising: 52%
- Headlines: 56%
- Photos: 75%
- Artwork: 80%
US newspapers dull, difficult to read, says study
Call for change in writing style

BALTIMORE — American newspapers are dull and difficult to read. But different ways of writing news articles could help newspapers attract some of the readers they have lost.

That was the conclusion of a major study made public in Baltimore this week at the annual convention of the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

The study suggested that newspapers must challenge many of the rules which had governed journalism for generations.

It was prepared by the group's literacy committee, which was formed partly because of growing alarm that young Americans did not read well enough to understand newspapers and were abandoning them as a result.

The literacy panel challenged the fundamental form used for newspaper articles, the "inverted pyramid", in which the top is heavy with important facts and trails off into less-significant information.

The panel's work is part of growing efforts by news professionals to grapple with the effect of limited literacy and try to re-invigorate newspapers.

The study's conclusions appear to bolster efforts by some newspapers to increase the quality of writing and to vary writing styles.

In addition to aesthetic reasons which had been advanced in the past as reasons for these changes, the report added an economic incentive: Survival.

The study cited newspaper writers and editors who, it said, relied habitually on approaches to writing which were "daunting and difficult to understand for readers".

It said: "The basic conservatism and frantic pace of our profession keep us from enlarging our repertoire of forms. So, year by year, we keep boring and confusing our readers and driving them away."

Experimenting with articles published in the St Petersburg Times in January, researchers had reporters try four different writing approaches (See box above).

Each of the four differently written articles about the same event was printed in some copies of the St Petersburg newspaper and researchers then interviewed readers.

Younger and less-frequent newspaper readers favoured techniques other than the common inverted-pyramid-style article, the study found, suggesting that newspaper writing could be altered to attract new readers. — NYT.
Colour will be a standard feature in most newspapers
  ➔ Editor & Publisher survey
  ➔ New York Times
  ➔ Wall Street Journal
  ➔ In the UK

Colour printing will be of a very high standard

Greater use of information graphics

More distinctive use of typography
The Future

- Pages will be designed rather than laid out
- Tighter editing because readers have less time
- Advent of the quickie paper with many, many editions
- Advent of the fax paper
- Phenomenal impact of desktop publishing
DESIGNING WITH READERS IN MIND

1. Organise information for him
2. Use visual signals to guide him
3. Package the information for easy access
ORGANISATION
Find sequence and rhythm

SIGNPOSTING
Use visual signals to direct readers into the page with the help of the following:

• Logos, symbols
• Graphics, maps, at-a-glance boxes
• Labels, straps, subheads
• Summaries, standfirsts
• Colour and typography
THE DECADE AHEAD

5 things a paper must do to stay relevant

§ Become more efficient to read.
§ Respond to different levels of interest.
§ Become personally useful to readers.
§ Become more accessible and engaging.
§ Target niche audiences more effectively.
PACKAGING

1. It calls for decision making. Should story be long or short? How should it be played? Length and depth are not synonymous.

2. It calls for design. How can you package the contents into an integral whole?
THE DECADE AHEAD

Be personally useful

§ Give better play to topics that affect readers most directly. For example, houses, personal finance, relationships, etc.

§ Tell them where to get information.

§ Focus on impact of stories on readers.

§ Provide context for readers.

§ Run lots of calendars and listings

§ Explain, explain, explain.

§ Update coverage to recognise the way we live.

§ Put government coverage to the test: Does the story affect our readers?
Friendly takeover
U.S. Canadian relations soared to an all-time high in January following the election of the new American administration. The key agreement: What's in it for Canada?

Oil spill
2 million gallons hit coast
California marshes are threatened by the spread of the spill. A10

German Elections
Schmidt wins by slim margin
In Communist rounds, Honecker's candidate, Honecker, was narrowly defeated to become the next leader of East Germany. A2

World Cup Games
Tension is high to avoid an incident like today's Asian game. A11

Panama
Proposes ban on deadliest weapons
U.S. proposes a ban on deadliest weapons. A7

Toxic waste disposal
Permits to store toxic waste at sites.

Pollution czar bans all dumping as other efforts fail
In a move to reduce pollution, the new president has signed a law banning dumping of toxic waste. A11

Bad News
- Brand new public relations firm to provide the public with accurate information. They've got a new man in charge.

Good News
- U.S. environmental organizations report an increase in public awareness.

Navigation
- The new wave of navigation systems is making life easier for drivers everywhere.

Sports News
- The Australian Olympics team has won several medals in the recent games. A7

Thrift Villages
- When Federal regulation was lifted, an incentive for developers was set. People are flocking to the new developments. A11

Technology
- The breakthrough in technology is changing the way we live. A11

Outside Services
- The new service is now available for the convenience of our customers. A11
The Decade Ahead

Be more accessible

§ Liven up mix of stories on the front page.
§ Get reader participation.
§ Familiarise readers with reporters.
§ Use more colour.
§ Use more graphics
THE DECADE AHEAD

Target your audience

§ Go after women readers
   Run more pictures of women
   See how the competition reaches
   out to women. Examine Women's
   magazines

§ Make the same effort with the
   elderly

§ Make the same effort for younger
   readers
The entire design process always begins with writers.

Reporters should:

1. Integrate themselves fully into the design process

2. Learn to think graphically

3. Look for graphic potential in every story

4. Collaborate with sub-editors and artists in the final packaging of their stories