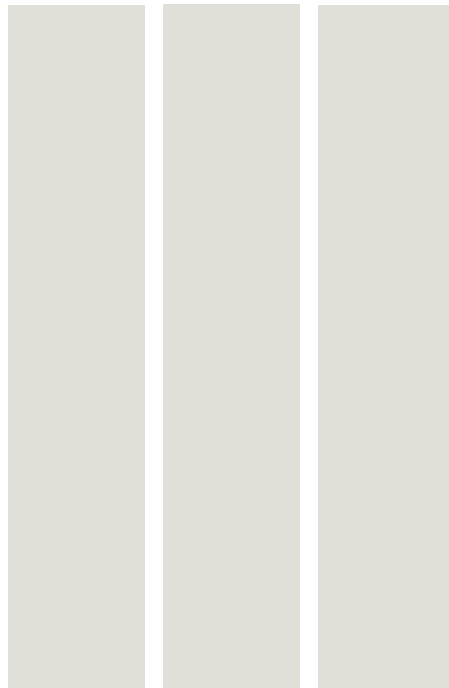


PREFACE

A long, long time ago, people actually loved reading newspapers. Imagine. They'd flip a nickel to the newsboy, grab a paper from the stack and gawk at headlines that screamed:

SOLONS MULL LEVY HIKE BID!

They'd gaze lovingly at long, gray columns of type that looked like this —



— and they'd say, “*Wow!* What a lot of news!”

Today, we're different. We swim in a media stream of Web sites, smart phones, giant TVs and tiny iPods. We collect data in a dizzying array of ways. We don't need long, gray columns of type anymore. We won't *read* long, gray columns of type anymore.

In fact, when we look at newspapers and see those long, gray columns of type, we say, “*Yow!* What a waste of time!”

Let's face it: Today's media consumers are spoiled. They want their news to be stimulating. Engaging. Easy to grasp. Instantly informative.

And that's where you come in.

If you can design stories that are inviting, informative and easy to read, you can — for a few minutes each day, at least — successfully compete with the relentless digital media drip we're drowning in. You can keep a noble American institution — the newspaper — alive for another day.

Because let's face it: To many people, newspapers are dinosaurs. They're big and powerful, but they're clumsy and slow-witted, too. And though they've endured for eons, it may be only a matter of time before they either:

- ◆ become extinct, which happened to other popular forms of communication (remember smoke signals? The telegraph?). Or else they'll:

- ◆ evolve into a new species — a portable, interactive video newsgizmo tailored to your own tastes and interests. This has actually been headed our way for decades now, but most newsroom dinosaurs were too slow-witted to see it.

PREFACE

Yes, the days of *ink-on-dead-tree* journalism may be numbered, but it's not dead yet. It's still a bazillion-dollar industry with tremendous influence and importance. So while the wizards at Apple and Google dream up slick new technogadgets, we'll continue to do our best with the basics: Ink. Paper. Lots of images, letters, lines and dots. A good designer can arrange them all smartly and smoothly, so that today's news feels familiar and yet new.

But where do newspaper designers come from, anyway? Face it: You never hear children saying, "When I grow up, my dream is to *lay out the Opinion page*." You never hear college students saying, "I've got a major in rocket science and a minor in *sports infographics*."

No, most journalists stumble into design by accident. Without warning.

Maybe you're a reporter on a small weekly, and one day your editor says to you, "Congratulations! I'm promoting you to assistant editor. You'll start Monday. Oh, and . . . you know how to lay out pages, don't you?"

Or maybe you've just joined a student newspaper. You want to be a reporter, a movie critic, a sports columnist. So you write your first story. When you finish, the adviser says to you, "Uh, we're a little short-handed in production right now. It'd really help us if you'd design that page your story's on, OK?"

Now, traditional journalism textbooks discuss design in broad terms. They ponder vague concepts like *balance* and *harmony* and *rhythm*. They show award-winning pages from The New York Times or The Wall Street Journal.

"Nice pages," you think. But meanwhile, you're in a hurry. And you're still confused: "How do I connect *this* picture to *this* headline?"

That's where this book comes in.

This book assumes you need to learn the rules of newspaper design as quickly as you can. It assumes you browse newspapers once in a while, but you've never really paid attention to things like headline sizes. Or column logos. Or whether pages use five columns of text instead of six.

This book will introduce you to the building blocks of newspaper design: headlines, text, photos, cutlines. We'll show you how to shape them into a story — and how to shape stories into pages.

After that, we'll look at the small stuff (logos, teasers, charts and graphs) that make more complicated pages work. We'll demonstrate attention-grabbing gimmicks like subheads, that help you break up long, gray columns of type —

YO! CHECK OUT THIS ATTENTION-GRABBING SUBHEAD

— not to mention bullets, to help make short lists "pop" off the page:

- ◆ This is a bullet item.
- ◆ And so is this.
- ◆ Ditto here.

We'll even explore liftout quotes, which let you dress up a quote from somebody famous — say, Mark Twain — to catch your reader's eye.

Yes, some writers will do *anything* to get you to read their prefaces. So if you made it all this way, ask yourself: Did this page design have much to do with it?

Many media experts insist that, no matter how advanced future civilizations may become, humans will still enjoy the look and feel of newspapers in their hands. Think it's true?



“
I AM
NOT THE
EDITOR
OF A
NEWSPAPER
AND SHALL
ALWAYS TRY TO
DO RIGHT
AND BE GOOD,
SO THAT
GOD
WILL NOT
MAKE
ME ONE.
Mark Twain
”

MORE QUICK HISTORY

THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

By about 1900, newspapers began looking more like — well, like *newspapers*. Headlines grew bigger, bolder and wider. Those deep stacks of decks were gradually eliminated to save space. Page designs developed greater variety as news became departmentalized (*Crime, Foreign, Sports* and so on).

The '20s saw the rise of the big-city tabloids — those half-sheet papers packed with photos and sensational sledgehammer headlines.

As the years went by, papers kept increasing the traffic on each page, using ever more photos, stories and ads.



By the 1930s, most newspapers had the ability to run cartoons, photos and wide headlines, as we see in this 1932 edition of the *Los Angeles Times*. Note the number of stories on this page. For decades, American front pages commonly displayed 15-20 story elements. With those all-cap headlines, these pages gave readers a strong sense of urgency.

THE NOT-TOO-DISTANT PAST

By today's standards, even the handsomest papers from 50 years ago look clumsy and old-fashioned. Others, like the page at right, look downright ugly.

Still, most of the current trends in page design were in place by the late '60s:

- ◆ more and bigger photos;
- ◆ more refined headline type (except for special feature stories and loud front-page banners);
- ◆ a move from 8- and 9-column pages to a standardized 6-column page;
- ◆ white gutters between columns instead of rules.

As printing presses continued to improve, full-color photos became common in the early '80s, thus ushering in the modern era of newspaper design.



This 1966 sports page from *The Oregon Journal* is astoundingly bad — but to be fair, it's a typical example of mid-'60s design. The bizarre shapes of its photos and stories collide in a distracting jumble. After printing pages like these for years, editors finally realized that taking page design seriously might not be such a bad idea.

CURRENT TRENDS

Compared to the newspapers of yesteryear, today's news pages look lively and sophisticated. That's partly due to technological advances. But today's editors also realize that readers are inundated by slickly designed media, from movies to Web sites to TV commercials. Sad to say, most consumers judge a product by the package it comes in. They simply won't respect a product — or a newspaper — that looks old-fashioned.

To look modern, newspapers now use:

◆ **Color.** Full-color photographs have become standard on section fronts across the country. Throughout the paper, color is applied both decoratively (in ads and illustrations) and functionally (in photos, in graphics, and in logos and headers that organize pages to help guide readers).

◆ **Informational graphics.** Papers don't just report the news — they *illustrate* it with charts, maps, diagrams, quotes and fast-fact sidebars that make complex issues easier for readers to grasp.

◆ **Packaging.** Modern readers are busy. Picky. Impatient. So editors try to make every page as user-friendly as they can by designing briefs, roundups, scoreboards, promos and themed packages that are easy to find and quick to read.

◆ **Modular layout.**

We'll explain this later. In a nutshell, it simply means all stories are neatly stacked in rectangular shapes.

In the past, newspapers were printed in a variety of sizes. Today, virtually all newspapers are printed either as *broadsheets* (large, full-sized papers like USA Today or the Detroit Free Press, shown above) or *tabloids* (half-sized papers like The National Enquirer — OK, maybe that's a bad example — or, say, The Christian Science Monitor).

In the pages ahead, we'll examine examples of modern American newspaper design. Most of these are broadsheet pages, but remember: Whatever your paper's format, the same basic design principles apply.



On this front page you can see examples of modern news packaging at work: the bold color and typography; the appealing graphics and promos; the variety of ways in which editors summarized the news.

CURRENT TRENDS



This page from the San Jose Mercury news provides an appealing example of front-page formatting. The centerpiece iPhone story fills half the page with a dramatic, magazine-style layout. Though just three stories start on Page One, briefs and promos send readers inside.



Big news stories demand big play. After U.S. troops invaded Iraq, it took months to capture ousted dictator Saddam Hussein — but when it happened, the Virginian-Pilot ran the story BIG. Note the loud headline, the giant photo and the guide to all the stories running inside.



Some newspapers use the front page as a menu that teases readers to look inside the paper. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution prints this version of Page One for its street-sale Saturday edition. There are no complete stories here — just lively highlights designed to tweak your curiosity.

PAGE ONE DESIGN

Today's Page One is a blend of traditional reporting and modern marketing that seeks to answer the question: What *grabs* readers?

Is it loud headlines? Big photos? Juicy stories? Splashy colors? Or do readers prefer thoughtful, timely analyses of current events?

Hard to say. Though newspaper publishers spend fortunes on reader surveys, they're still unsure what front-page format reaches readers the best. As a result, most papers follow one of these Page One design philosophies:

- ◆ **The traditional:** No fancy bells or whistles — just the top news of the day. (For tabloids, that means 2-4 stories; for broadsheets, 4-6.) Editors combine photos, headlines, and text — usually lots of text — in a sober, straightforward style.

- ◆ **The magazine cover:** These pages use big art and dynamic headlines to highlight a special centerpiece. In tabloids, this package dominates the cover (and may even send you inside for the text). In broadsheets, a front-page package is given lavish play, flanked by a few subordinate stories.

- ◆ **The information center:** Here, the key words are *volume* and *variety*. By blending graphics, photos, promos and briefs, these fast-paced front pages provide a window to what's inside the paper, a menu serving up short, appetizing tidbits to guide readers through the best of the day's entrees.

But the options don't end there. Some papers run editorials on Page One. Some add cartoons. Some print obituaries, calendars, contests — even ads. Almost anything goes, as long as readers respect it, enjoy it and *buy* it.