

NOTES ON CHAPTER 9

BEST QUOTE

Paper newspapers, sadly, will become smelly, yellow antiques.

BY THE NUMBERS

22

Pages in this chapter

9%

Transforming pages

9%

Home page design

9%

Story page design

9%

Special project design

9%

Adding online extras

9%

Planning online packages

9%

Packaging a major news event

9%

Setting up your site

18%

Web design guidelines

5%

Web site checklist

Percentages may not total to 100% due to the addition of structural pages and exercises.

TRANSFORMING PRINT PAGES INTO WEB PAGES

It's easy to feel intimidated. But you don't need to be too flashy. Your Web site needs to be informative, easy to navigate, fast-moving and current. You need to guarantee freshness every day, every minute even.

The same basic design goals and guidelines apply whether you're creating a newspaper page or a Web page.

Home page — the gateway to the online newspaper; links users to inside pages; must be comprehensive and easy to navigate.

HOME PAGE DESIGN

Includes date/time, index, lead story, copyright/contact information, navigation bar, search bar, ads/promos and interactive extras.

STORY PAGE DESIGN

Establish a standard format for story pages. All story pages incorporate elements that need to be uniformly sized and positioned, including headers/navigation bars, headlines, text, bylines, time/date, photo links, text links, comments and ads.

SPECIAL PROJECT DESIGN

Enterprise stories explain current events, explore controversial issues or expose social injustices more in depth than routine stories.

- They look different.
- They require extensive planning.
- They rely more heavily on multimedia such as a photo slide show, a musical snippet, a clickable map.

ADDING ONLINE EXTRAS

Shovelware — headlines and text lifted from a print publication and dumped onto a Web site without adding anything extra. It's lazy.

Link to related material, previously run material, commentary, additional information, related organizations or individuals or other Web sites.

Use multimedia slideshows, video, audio, animated graphics or podcasts to add action and sound.

Online newspapers give readers a voice, providing dialog through reader comments; reader-generated content; online polls; contests and quizzes and even live chats.

PLANNING ONLINE PACKAGES

Producing a solid Web site is impossible without planning and collaboration. Share the workload, plan the package and delegate duties.

- 1 Select your targets, which stories warrant extra online attention.
- 2 Convene a meeting that includes editors, reporters, photographers, Web-content producers.
- 3 Think like a reader. "What's this story really about?"
- 4 Plan the package, discussing words and ideas for the headline/deck, photos/art, extras/sidebars and links.

Use the online package planning guide to work through your ideas.

PACKAGING A MAJOR NEWS EVENT

Often major news events allow for advance planning. Take advantage of the time, when you have it, to plan everything from story angles to interactive trivia.

SETTING UP YOUR SITE

Before launching or revamping a site

- 1 Take a tour of online newspapers over a period of weeks to get familiar with what other papers are doing.
- 2 Discuss your goals and ambitions. How ambitious will it be? Brainstorm.
- 3 Plan your site, especially the navigation. Think structure. Try to keep every page in your Web site within three clicks of the home page.
- 4 Evaluate your computer resources.
- 5 Design your page prototypes.
- 6 Test, test, test.

WEB DESIGN GUIDELINES

Your site will look different to every visitor depending on what type of hardware and software. To minimize problems, test on Macintosh and Windows platforms using a variety of browsers. Remember your text-only users.

- Organize your pages with a focus on navigation
- Use effective page grids
- Add color
- Size and save images for the Web
- Use type effectively

WEB SITE CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to evaluate online newspapers, including your own.