New Designs, New Formats

Is small really beautiful? The number of broadsheets switching to tabloid says it must be. With the help of many of the world’s top designers, we examine the benefits and the drawbacks of cutting your paper down to size — and what other trends you can expect in the next decade.
Shaping the Future of the Newspaper

A WORLD ASSOCIATION OF NEWSPAPERS PROJECT, SUPPORTED BY WORLD-LEADING BUSINESS PARTNERS:

WAN
A LEADING COMPANY FOR NEWSPAPER PRODUCTION SYSTEMS.

PUBLIGroupe
THE SWITZERLAND BASED INTERNATIONAL ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION GROUP.

UNISYS
A WORLDWIDE LEADING SUPPLIER OF MISSION-CRITICAL SOLUTIONS, SERVICES AND INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY TO THE PUBLISHING INDUSTRY.

UPM
ONE OF THE WORLD'S LEADING PRINTING PAPER PRODUCERS.

telenor
THE LEADING NORWEGIAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS, IT AND MEDIA GROUP.

SAMSUNG
A GLOBAL LEADER IN SEMICONDUCTOR, TELECOMMUNICATIONS, AND DIGITAL CONVERGENCE TECHNOLOGY.

© WORLD ASSOCIATION OF NEWSPAPERS 2004
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Size matters</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 The secrets of good design</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Making advertising work</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 The shape of things to come</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Responding to demand</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

NEWSPAPER design and format is now one of the most hotly debated issues in our industry.

On the one hand, there would appear to be an epidemic of “tabloiditis”, with dozens of newspapers across the world moving from broadsheet to tabloid, now often called the “compact” format. On the other, newspaper designers are all raising the need for more simply presented, more rapidly absorbed newspapers.

In most societies people are seeking newspapers that are easier to read. Research universally suggests that all things being equal, readers prefer smaller page sizes to bigger ones. But the evidence from hundreds of reformatting projects in the past shows that conversion to tabloid alone does little for newspaper sales.

More pertinent is the need to respond to readers’ demands for more and more specific content relating to their own personal needs, while at the same time taking into account that they profess to have less and less time available to absorb it all.

It is in this area that newspapers have a chance to improve their appeal, value and therefore circulation. Unlike broadcast media, which are generally taken for granted and acquired free of charge, printed media expect their consumers to pay for their content. It is therefore vital that newspapers, which are proving remarkably resilient against a bombardment of alternative information sources, and means of filling time, demonstrate ever greater value both for money for time.

This report provides insights from some of the world’s leading newspaper designers. Their fellow practitioners offer examples of good newspaper design.

We examine best practice, not only in newspaper design, but in the important area of advertising design and presentation, and suggest a ten-step plan for those publishers planning a move to tabloid.

Finally, we draw on the expertise of some of the industry’s leading suppliers to examine developments in content management, printing and newsprint.

Whether you are a newspaper designer or editor, or a publisher seeking guidance in how to take your newspaper to a higher, more appealing level, there is something in this report for you.
1. Size matters

By Jim Chisholm

Size, it appears, is big business in newspapers. Across the world, more and more publishers seem to turning to tabloid.

The broadsheet is dead may be the correct answer.

But whether to move to tabloid or not, is not the correct strategic question.

The newspaper world has been mightily impressed with the recent results of The Independent in London, but while such a transformation may have been beneficial in this case, the industry’s history is littered with hundreds of examples where such a move has had little or no impact on long-term circulation performance.

The Independent, the United Kingdom’s youngest and, in circulation terms, smallest broadsheet has enjoyed a radical and affectionate reputation since it was launched in 1986.

Following a tough few years when the paper lacked direction, it has been greatly revitalised by its new owners, the Irish Independent News and Media. But as the tenth player in the UK’s notoriously cut-throat market of ten national dailies, it has lacked the marketing muscle to exploit its steadily improving editorial service.

On September 30, 2003, The Independent appeared in London in both broadsheet and tabloid format. retailers and vendors presented the two differently sized but in terms of content identical products side by side, inviting the reader to choose between them. It was a brilliant move for a number of reasons. Firstly, the simple commitment to consistency signalled to the market that the product was the same, overcoming any implication that somehow tabloid represented a different set of values to broadsheet.

The provision of both formats not only minimised the risk of the new format failing, but also encouraged the market to choose between them, thereby providing a perfect piece of market research.

Coincidentally, it forced the retailers to present both versions to the market, thereby
improving the newspapers’ presence at the point of sale.

Since then, The Independent has opted for a solely tabloid format.

Sales results have been excellent, and while it is difficult to determine the base impact because of the various and ever-changing permutation of distribution and format. Suffice to say sales for the six months to March 2004 were 11 per cent ahead of the previous year in a market that was 3 per cent down overall.

No one seems to have been more impressed with this move than The Independent’s most formidable opponent, Rupert Murdoch, owner of The Times, perhaps the world’s most famous broadsheet. Mr Murdoch’s alleged message to his own team in London was simple. Copy what The Independent has done. And so The Times too launched a dual format strategy.

Mr Murdoch has been determined to dominate the UK’s quality newspaper sector as he does the popular tabloid sector. It has been suggested that he had long wanted to convert the Times to a tabloid in an effort to attract a more populist audience, but feared a backlash, that he was dumbing down one of the world’s great media institutions. The success of the Independent’s experiment gave him the excuse he needed.

Mr Murdoch is a consummate newspaperman. Readers want tabloid, so they should have it. But even within his empire we learn the first lesson of transformation strategies. Going tabloid is no panacea. Prior to its changeover, The Times was losing 8 per cent of its circulation a year. Today its year-on-year performance can best be described as “on par”, and its market share of the sector is declining.

The Independent suits its tabloid clothes. It is a lively newspaper with a young audience, a radical agenda and, despite its relatively meagre resources, an excellent team of writers. It’s straightforward modern design, with relatively low volumes of advertising, survived the presentation in two formats.

A second lesson from The Times experience, is that heavy quotas of advertising have to be handled well. The Times benefits from far higher volumes of advertising, and many of its supplements have remained in broadsheet format.

But what the experience of both newspapers has shown is, that from the readers’ perspective any notion that tabloid is in some way tacky, has been rebutted.

As George Brock, managing editor of The Times, put it: “What’s happened to the paper’s circulation since we launched the compact edition has shown us that we were needlessly nervous about reader reaction to offering both formats.”

Meanwhile a third player in UK quality market, The Guardian, has confirmed its intention to remain a broadsheet. “The tabloid Independent and Times have shown that the format change can lead to a different type of journalism,” said Alan Rusbridger, editor of The Guardian. “Our key priority is to maintain the integrity of The Guardian’s journalism, and we believe that will be achieved in the long-term through sustained editorial investment and remaining distinctive in an ever-converging newspaper market.”

Mr Rusbridger has a point. The transformation of The Times and Independent has taken the share of tabloid newspapers in the UK national market from 78 per cent to 87 per cent. Differentiation is clearly an issue.

In Australia, News Limited — belonging to Mr Murdoch — is thought to have considered a tabloid Courier-Mail in Brisbane, but shied away because it feared a switch would leave an opening for Fairfax to launch a Brisbane Morning Herald into the vacant broadsheet space.

Perhaps the most extraordinary outcome has been the way newspapers around the world have responded to The Independent’s success. To the World Association of Newspapers’ knowledge at least 20 major newspapers around the world, have announced that they either intend to change, have changed or are looking seriously at such a move.

Suddenly everyone seems to be talking about tabloid, or compact, as some sort of magical solution.

The reality is that The Independent’s move is simply another example in a 50-year tendency
toward tabloid. It was absolutely the right move, brilliantly executed, for The Independent. But this does not mean it is right for everyone. In addition, the concept of dual formats is also proving popular either as a means to an end or the end itself. The biggest-selling Swiss daily, Blick, is trialling a tabloid version. Its motto: “Two formats — same content.” Subscribers will continue to receive the larger format, but will also receive vouchers they can exchange for the compact size at a newsstand. At the end of the trial a decision will be made as to which size is most effective.

The Irish Independent has followed its UK sister, and it too appears in both formats. The Belgian quality newspaper, De Standaard, changed its format on March 8, 2004. Aftenposten in Oslo has also announced it will “renew” in early 2005, because the “majority of Aftenposten readers have expressed a desire for a newspaper in a more handy format”.

All things being equal, research consistently shows that most readers prefer tabloids. In focus groups they confess to being baffled why newspapers are produced in a format that requires a table on which to be read comfortably, that is impossible to fold on a train or plane. They claim that the connotations of tabloid that so obsess publishers and editors are merely within their own imaginations. However newspapers are, or should be, strong brands. And the imagery that is attached to those brands, relies to some extent on the format of the newspaper and this must be considered during any transformation. For The Independent the move was obvious. For The Times, it was harder to play, something that Mr Brock rightly alluded to his comment above.

There are also economic considerations to be accounted for. Tabloid formats have a diluting effect on advertising revenues. The changeover itself can be costly requiring expensive communications, new designs, and often staff retraining.

Below is a ten-step plan for moving from broadsheet to tabloid. It is based on this author’s experience of having worked on four such transformations over the past 20 years, and of course countless other examples.

1. Research before and after

Central to any successful development in the newspaper is research both in anticipation of any change and afterwards to measure reaction. Research should cover the following points:

- Readers’ reactions to any proposed change in format, both in terms of their potential changes in behaviour and their possible attitudes. In one transformation that this writer worked on, one day’s broadsheet newspaper was identically reproduced in tabloid format, with exactly
the same stories, pictures, graphics and advertisements. When the paper was shown to focus groups the respondents widely believed that the content was very different, more sensational, and with a different tone. During one focus group, when the readers were subsequently shown the original broadsheet as proof that the content was the same, they accused the researchers of having faked the broadsheet.

- Identification of those segments of the readership that will react negatively to a new format. Older readers, particularly men, are change-averse and require special communication to be convinced that the change is for the better. Equally there will be groups of infrequent or non-readers who will be encouraged to read more often by the change in format. Again, this group needs to be defined and targeted.
- Views about re-sectioning or new supplements;
- Advertisers’ opinions and likely reactions are also critical. Specific considerations are:

i. Regular front-page advertisers who are likely to lose their positions;

ii. Regular full-page advertisers who will take tabloid full pages instead, to determining their likely attitudes toward pricing;

After the new format is launched (either across all distribution or in a dual distribution like the Independent), it is important to research readers’ reactions over time. Of course it is arguably too late to reverse the decision (this should have been confirmed prior to the change), but pockets of negative reaction, or specific responses to key elements of the new paper can be identified and the paper tuned.

In-paper questionnaires are an excellent way of gathering reader attitudes, needs and concerns, both before and after the transformation. Many newspapers now run full-page questionnaires in paper. Another option is to encourage participation either via the Internet, email, or even mobile phone.

2. A means to an end, not an end in itself

Let’s face it. Transformation to tabloid is unlikely on its own, to provide most newspapers with the levels of improved circulation that The Independent has enjoyed to date. Experience suggests that newspapers see a benefit from their move to tabloid over about six months. This is partly due to curiosity, among casual and non-readers, and also in response to the inevitable promotional activity that surrounds the transformation. Sustained growth beyond this point is due to other factors, that often coincide with the change of format, such as improved content, better marketing, and so on. Unless the transformation is part of a radical repositioning down market of the newspaper, then it should be seen as a tactical rather than a strategic move. One that is utilised to signal product improvement or change of appeal. In the case of The Independent, its young audience and journalistic style was crying out for a tabloid presentation. This is why it has been successful.

Transformation is an opportunity to represent the newspaper’s content and value to a wider audience. The opportunity lies in the curiosity value and positioning message that the change creates. For this reason, it is important that everyone on the newspaper understands exactly why the newspaper is changing. Simply to change because readers seem to prefer tabloids is not enough. They may prefer the tabloid format but this is neither why they are reading the paper, nor why in many cases they are reading less often.

3. Anticipate the advertising implications

Moving from broadsheet to tabloid has major implications for advertising sales. Without attention to pricing policy yields are diluted in three ways:

- As the illustrations show, conversion to tabloid results in a loss of around 10 per cent of sellable space. This is because column centimetres are lost in terms of margins in the centre of the tabloid spread, and in additional header space.
- Another factor is that since advertisers tend to buy full pages, as multiples of the column centimetre rate, revenues from
broadsheet full pages are lost to their tabloid equivalents.

- The third factor relates to premiums enjoyed for front-page positions. Advertisements destroy the look and impact of front pages, and research demonstrates that they have a negative effect on readers’ perceptions of the newspaper.

However there are a number of ways of offsetting these negative factors:

- Straight conversion from broadsheet to tabloid results in a pagination that is (theoretically, marginally over) twice that of its broadsheet equivalent. Readers perceive the paper as being fatter (which it is), with more content (which it hasn’t). It is therefore possible to tighten pagination, reducing content, without the reader believing their content is being reduced. Advertising quotas are lifted but depending on the number of what were previously broadsheet full pages, this is manageable. This also should result in a saving in editorial costs, since they are producing less material.

- Some newspapers attempt charge a premium for full pages, and why not? As Thomas Axen, chief executive of Bonnier’s newspaper division points out, one wouldn’t expect to pay less for an TV advertisement appearing on a 40cm TV screen from one appearing on a 60cm TV!

- A fourth tactic is to exploit the fact that in tabloid newspapers, the fact that
different readers read different parts of the newspaper is accentuated. It therefore is possible to increase an advertisement's impact and frequency by advertising twice in the same newspaper. Just as TV advertisers pay to appear in different time slots on one channel on the same evening, so advertisers should be trained to treat the newspaper as a channel, with differing segments.

Unfortunately, too few newspapers produce page traffic research in order for them to exploit this opportunity effectively.

4. New format, new design

Another factor is that tabloid newspapers require different design disciplines to broadsheet. Tabloid newspapers, because they have higher paginations, and at any one time the reader has less content to choose from, require better sign-posting and navigation. Pictures tend to take up a greater proportion of the page; as does advertising. As a general rule, broadsheet designs do not transfer well to tabloid.

This does not mean that basic elements of the design, such as headline and body type, use of graphics, etc, cannot be retained, but work is always required to prepare the new tabloid presentation.

5. Communicate with readers, advertisers and distributors, retailers

Any well-planned change of format should be an opportunity for everyone. But there are a number of key communication issues that are essential if the outcome of the plan is achieved.

Communicate with readers

It is important to advise readers well in advance of the forthcoming change and encourage their participation in terms of views, concerns or ideas. Some editors run articles about their plans, and encourage readers’ participation through dedicated phone lines, email or even discussion groups with journalists.

On the first day that the transformed newspaper appears, it is a good idea to introduce readers to the changes with a guide to where to find key parts of the paper.

The editor who dared to listen

One editor, realising that there would be a considerable backlash among segments of his readership when he relaunched his newspapers as a tabloid, ran a panel in the newspaper encouraging readers to phone him. Over 1,000 did, and he responded personally over time to most of them. The fact that he went to this length in fact turned any concerns that readers had to the newspaper’s advantage. That an editor was willing to speak to readers about their concerns probably did more to overcome reader prejudice than any aspect of the relaunch.

Communicate with advertisers

Advertisers will also have their concerns. The issues relating to advertising raised above are a small part of this. As readers (which most advertisers are) they too will welcome the transformation, but they will also have concerns. A well-trained and well-briefed sales force will turn the change to tabloid to the newspaper’s advantage, exploiting changes in pricing, and position to increase rather than dilute revenues.

Communicate with distributors

The third group of stakeholders who must be communicated with are distributors and sellers of the newspaper. Format changes may affect the bundling of sections. There are also significant implications for how the newspaper is presented at the point of sale. It may be that racking for the newspaper may require alteration. Retailers should also be encouraged to attract non-readers to at least sample the new-look newspaper.

6. Anticipate and respond to criticism

Inevitably some sectors of the newspapers readership will not like the changes, particularly older, male readers. These groups should be identified, quantified and special
COMMUNICATION PROGRAMMES should be put in place in order to encourage them to overcome any prejudices.

7. Consider sections and supplements

One thorny problem of tabloid newspapers is what to do with sections. Because of the way broadsheet newspapers are folded, sections neatly stack behind or within each other. But with tabloids sections that are printed “on-the-run” all fall within each other as one seemingly massive bundle of sections within sections. This creates confusion for readers and frustration for advertisers. There are a number of possible solutions depending on the configuration of the printing press and the available technology in the mailroom.

- Stapling of sections provides an ideal solution for differentiating different parts of the newspaper.
- Bi-liner inserting enables sections to be placed side by side in the centre of the main jacket of the newspaper
- Printing some sections as broadsheets offers a nice solution that suits certain topics such as business or recruitment. This is favoured by The Times.
- Different paper stocks can also be used in some cases. These can be different colours or qualities.

8. Consider new web widths

One interesting option is to widen the web, on the press, thereby increasing the length of the tabloid page. Such a practice, known as Berliner format, provides an elegant compromise between broadsheet and tabloid, and many newspapers, particularly in Germany and Austria, have adopted it.

While the newsprint costs per page increase, newspapers with extensive classified lineage can spread their advertising over fewer pages, and again achieve improvements in quota.

In addition, page rates can be raised because there are more cms to the page.

9. Revisit the rate card

Another factor is examining the rate card. Because most newspapers only produce average issue readership measurements and do not provide measures by page and section it is difficult to demonstrate the value of various parts of the paper.

Readership levels vary dramatically from page to page, and this is more true in thick tabloids than thin broadsheets.
The removal of front (and often back) page
special positions means the need to identify
and sell high-traffic positions is even more
important.

Another tactic is to ban advertisements that
are over a certain proportion of the page.
Advertisements that take up say 65% of the
page, kill any good presentation of editorial
content, and some newspapers do not allow
these. Such a decision requires critical,
objective examination, but there are distinct
benefits to both editorial page design and
advertising yield from introducing such a
policy.

10. Don’t expect too much
The final issue when considering a
transformation to tabloid, is that of
expectation. In the absence of any other
factors, experience would suggest that you
should not be over-optimistic regarding the
likely improvement in sale.

Yes, readers prefer tabloid formats. Yes there
have been some very successful newspapers
that were once broadsheet and our now
tabloid, but format in itself is no panacea.

Few newspapers have seen significant
improvements in sale from their changes,
and those that have, have been excellent
newspapers in other ways.

Finally, do not believe that tabloid is the final
word in the debate on size.

Just as more and more newspapers are
looking to transform from broadsheet to
tabloid, so more and more newspapers are
appearing in even smaller formats.

Despite the fact that many of the world’s most
reputable newspapers – Le Monde, Newday,
El Mundo – are tabloids, our industry has
been hijacked by the notion that tabloids
somehow suggest tacky, and that magazine
format suggests comic strip, even though
both research and experience have shown that
readers clearly differentiate between content
quality and product format.

In Austria, many of the top-selling papers,
including top-selling Kronen Zeitung, are
similar to A4 in size. Another successful
example of this is “20 minutes”. This free
distribution commuter newspaper, the
brainchild of the Schibsted Group, is little
larger than A4 size. It has now been launched
in cities in France, Switzerland and Spain.
Aimed at high-spending young commuters,
it features a strong news agenda, and lively
graphical presentation.

It is more than likely that we will soon see A5
newspapers, following the line of magazines
into ever tinier formats.

Small, they say, is beautiful. Time will tell if
it is successful.

Jim Chisholm is Strategy Advisor to the World
Association of Newspapers and director of its
project, Shaping the Future of the Newspaper.

jim.chisholm@futureofthenewspaper.com
2. The secrets of good design

By Ally Palmer and Terry Watson

THERE are no secrets to newspaper design. Good newspaper design is not a card trick — there are no sleights of hand. All the cards are on the table, in the shape of newspapers from around the world, available to everyone in the industry every day.

Nor is good design something that is available only to a select few, the big national dailies in rich industrialised countries who can afford huge design departments. A small-circulation local newspaper can never compete with a big city daily in terms of lavish section covers and high-design glossy magazines, but it can be – and often is – a better designed product.

But there are a number of less obvious key points which every newspaper, whether a serious financial broadsheet, a downmarket gossip tabloid, an internationally-renowned flagship title of a multinational group or a tiny community weekly from a quiet rural backwater, should take on board.

These points will not on their own automatically transform a newspaper

Puls Biznesu, Warsaw: A small circulation, but voted among the world’s best designed newspapers in the 2004 Society for News Design awards.
from something that looked like it was thrown together in 20 minutes into a cutting-edge manual of cool. But without them, no newspaper can achieve a successful design – by which we mean a design that is functional for the newspaper staff, reflects the content and nature of the newspaper, and is appreciated (subconsciously) by the reader.

Respect typography

Type is the most basic of the design elements, but is frequently the most misunderstood. There are many newspapers which boast beautiful contemporary type which nevertheless look badly designed because the type is used wrongly or is inappropriate.

There are newspapers with a very good underlying design that look messy and old fashioned because they are using type that was designed in 1960 for 1960s presses and 1960s tastes. But there are also newspapers that use type you thought would have been thrown out with the Letraset sheets, but which use the type so perfectly and precisely that it looks wonderful.

These are the main issues regarding newspapers and typography:

- Be distinctive The desktop revolution means everyone has access to common typefaces. Do you want your newspaper to share a look with Mrs Smith’s family newsletter?

- Don’t be mean with type. Good quality, contemporary type is not cheap. But it is your newspaper’s outfit, and it will wear it every day for many years to come. Would you have a suit made from the cheapest fabric if you planned to wear it every day for 10 years?

- Respect the font. When you choose a font which has been designed for use in a newspaper, months and months of technical work will have gone into its creation to optimise its legibility and functionality as well as its appearance. If you then allow your staff to stretch it, squeeze it, tighten it, open it up and otherwise treat it like a five-year-old would treat an indestructible toy, you may as well have gone with a font from Mrs Smith’s family newsletter that was actually designed for a burger menu.

- Keep up to date. Type designers around the world are constantly improving their existing fonts, developing new versions of their libraries and, of course, creating new fonts, to take into account developments systems and press technology. Would you stick with an old bit of software if you knew there was a more practical and efficient version easily available?

Instil discipline

For all that doomsayers have predicted for decades that first radio, then television, then the Internet and now mobile technology would sound the death knell for print, readers still want newspapers because they, more than any other media form, can organise news and information into a cohesive package. They make sense of daily events.

Complex issues are best reported and analysed and explained within a newspaper format. As new media increasingly take over the job of newsbreakers, this will become an ever
more important aspect of the newspapers’ role. Increasingly, newspapers are no longer NEWSpapers, but THE NEWS EXPLAINED papers. Which means that it is ever more important that newspapers present themselves as cohesive, organised and easily followed. This is one of the chief tasks of design.

It is through the design that a newspaper is able to portray to its readers its function of gathering up the chaotic mess of a day’s random events and topics, arranging them, evaluating them, editing them, packaging them and reassembling them for its readers in a logical, structured and sensible way — illustrated, selected, analysed and commented upon.

It is through design that the newspaper can signal what is important, what is supplementary, what is entertaining, what is unusual, what is worthy. It is through design that a newspaper is able to take multi-layered, multi-faceted stories and present them in an accessible and easily digested package — a package that cannot be matched by any other medium.

The Herald. The Herald, based in Glasgow, Scotland, is a well-organised newspaper that packages complex stories in a way that is accessible for readers.

Without a strongly-regulated design, a newspaper will portray complex and often chaotic events in a chaotic manner, destroying the impression that they must be able to give — that of making sense of the news. This means that the design must above all emphasise consistency – there is no room for maverick tendencies in general newspaper pages.

- Similar stories must be presented in a similar manner.
- Similar aspects of stories must be presented in identical ways.
- There should be no deviation from rules governing the way certain elements of a page are dealt with.
- The design must be extensive enough to cope with anything that the newsroom can throw at it.

Every person involved in the production or visual side of the newspaper must be completely familiar with, and abide by, the design regulations. So, if the design stipulates that a commentary on a news story has a 14pt sans type capital two word label above a 3-line serif italic headline and an indented picture byline inset into a 12pt bold intro and set left type with a pull quote in 16pt grey type set on 18pt leading and all inside a 0.3pt panel with a 6pt top rule, then it MUST appear that way EVERY time.

No reader is going to notice it. But, if every time a commentary appears it is presented in a different way, however slightly, the subliminal message to the reader is that this is a newspaper that is not in control of its content. And if a newspaper cannot control its own content, how can it possibly hope to convince readers that it can manage the chaotic mess of a day’s news events?

That is not to say that newspapers must be static. They should surprise their readers now and again. But surprises must be planned; it must be clear when, why and how to break the rules.

Don’t get overwhelmed by the late news rush

One of the most venerable of newspaper traditions is the frantic pre-deadline scramble, that mad hour or two before the presses roll when most of the newspaper somehow comes together amid shouts and cursing and raised
blood pressure. It is a throwback to the days when newspapers really did break news and just maybe someone once did shout: “Hold the front page!” Of course, newspapers still do break exclusive news, and, of course, it is still vital that newspapers include information that is as up to date as possible.

But newspapers are no longer the prime conveyors of up-to-date information. If a story breaks at mid-day, it will be devoured by the 24-hour media for a full 18 hours before a reader finally opens his morning paper – the “breaking news” immediacy of a story, no matter how big or small the event, will have disappeared long before a page planner even begins to think about how to present the story.

Dagens Næringsliv. Dagens Næringsliv, in Oslo, Norway, has strict rules and regulations covering the presentation of every aspect of its content. This leads to a cohesive end product.

In most newspapers, the basic news agenda of the next day’s edition is decided at the morning meeting. It may be tweaked along the way, it may be overtaken by events, it may be disrupted by late advert bookings, but the basic shape will generally remain. Yet in so many newspapers, the page building process will not commence until that pre-deadline scramble is just around the corner. And the obvious results of too many pages coming together too late in the day are: hasty, ill-judged decisions and compromises on quality due to pressure of time. Mistakes are made, wrong choices made, bad pages passed - and generally the reason is: “We did the best we could in the time we had. It’s all we had time to do. We didn’t have the time to get it absolutely right, the page just had to go.”

In design terms, this means that a story which would be best illuminated for readers with break-out information boxes explaining side issues, infographics detailing the likely next steps, panels demonstrating the response from interested parties, an illustrative picture package and so on, will be shoved on a page as one big story with a headline and a picture.

Even if it does arrive on the desk as a package, how much time will there be to finesse the details and ensure that the approach to the page is right, if most of the precious hour remaining before deadline is taken up by actually constructing the page? It doesn’t have to be this way, and it shouldn’t be.

The three keys to effective management of the design and presentation of news are:

- Pre-planning
- Integrating design
- Use of templates

Introducing them does not require earlier deadlines for writers, or earlier page deadlines – it simply requires a different approach to the editorial process.

Pre-planning

After morning conference, when a decision has been taken about how to treat one of the main stories of the day, it should be possible immediately thereafter to transfer those decisions on to a page, with shapes allocated for every element. The design decisions can be taken at the very start of the day. Of course, these can be adjusted to any degree later if necessary, but it is always easier to adjust something that is already established than to create from new at a later stage when time is running short.

This can be done for all the main items in the news agenda, but equally when decisions are made that particular stories are not very important, but worth including, they should not sit around to be squeezed in somewhere are the last moment, but edited and placed in one of the “supporting slots” around the main stories. If things change, they can be lifted out into a more prominent slot, or dropped - but nothing has been lost by making early decisions, and if all goes according to the early plan, everything has been gained.
Cinco Días. Cinco Días, in Madrid, covers complex business and financial issues, but by planning the treatment in advance it presents them in an attractive, multi-faceted package that could not have been achieved in a rush against deadline.

Integrating design

Design has to become an integral part of the editorial process, not an end-of-the-line service which takes stories and tries to fit them into the page. When an idea is discussed at the morning meeting, the very next stage should be to give it a physical shape. The treatment is then reviewed by everyone involved – editors, picture editors, writers, graphic artists – and once agreed, everyone contributing to the story works to that masterplan. It is not a set-in-stone template . . . elements can be added, taken away and adjusted, or its position in the paper can be moved. But there is immediate clarity on the goals of the people involved.

The significant shift for many newspapers is in rethinking the role of design and layout in their daily process. The traditional model is for the first part of the day to be devoted to writing and news gathering, the second part of the day to production and design. In fact designers must be part of the news team alongside writers, editors, photographers and graphic artists — every step of the way.

Using templates

If you were to take a wide range of standard pages from a series of similar newspapers and analyse them for their basic structure, ignoring superficial aspects such as colour palette and typography and allowing for individual elements such as the use of labelling, you would find that most newspapers make the same decisions based on the same factors and arrive at pretty much the same conclusions.

There are of course many “special” pages where complete creative freedom is given to an individual, in which case the possibilities are endless, but for the vast majority of pages, the layout decision process is identical, and the outcomes are very similar.

The layout decision process is governed by:

- Whether it is a left or right-hand page
- Number of stories
- Size and position of adverts
- Number and shape of pictures
- Structure of the facing page

In fact, it is probably possible to build a simple piece of software which, if a layout journalist fed in the relevant data, would instantly produce the ideal layout. The fact is that the variations are very far from endless. Most newspaper pages follow simple standard rules. Yet many newspapers till function on the blank-sheet principle: pages are built from scratch every time, even though the person doing the building has compiled an almost identical page twice already that day, a dozen times that week, hundreds of times that year.

There are good reasons why many journalists are suspicious of templates; an overly-templated newspaper can feel functional and lifeless. Of course newspapers have to be fully responsive to the content. But it makes sense to deal with the mechanical aspects of the production of ordinary pages in a more efficient manner in order to allow more time and attention to be spent on the things that are important to readers — words and pictures.

It is a matter of turning round one aspect of the editorial process. Instead of design and layout staff manipulating the page structure
and the results of the news agenda to fill the page, news desk staff manipulate the news agenda to fit page structures. It sounds Draconian, but so long as it applies only to the ordinary stories that comprise two-thirds of every edition, and is done in a way that is flexible, it works.

The test is this: give a news boss the choice.

**One:** simply hand over your stories and leave them at the mercy of the news design team, who will have to manipulate them to fit their page construction.

**Or two:** work to predetermined templates, agreed in advance with editors and chief designers, selecting, placing and manipulating stories as the day progresses, giving writers precise instructions about the requirements of the page.

The second test is this: give the design team a choice.

**One:** spend most of your time churning out the same layouts over and over again.

**Or two:** let the editors and the template system deal with the humdrum aspects of your job, and then revel in the time to concentrate on making that big story really come alive and add those killer touches to that picture treatment.

Templates are the designer’s – and the news editor’s – best friend.

**Make your newspaper multi-timescale**

Much has been written about the fact that readers now spend significantly less time with their newspapers. It is probably the single most important statistic in recent reader research. Yes, on average, people are more time-pressed than ever before. Yes, on average, people are getting their news from more sources than ever before. Yes, on average, people read their newspapers for a shorter time.

However, one of the great advantages that newspapers have over rival media is their flexibility. You can flick through a newspaper in a way that you can’t flick through TV or a news website. You can choose to read a newspaper when and where you want, for as long as you want, and as frequently as you want.

A reader may have one minute to glance a his or her newspaper, then five minutes, then 15 minutes. Occasionally they may have half an hour. Once in a while, stuck in a waiting room or in a train, they may even have an hour. The important thing is that on each occasion, the newspaper must be able to satisfy the reader’s requirements.

The average time spent with a newspaper is decreasing – which means, however, that there are still significant numbers of readers with less time to spare than the average and significant numbers of readers with more time to spare than the average. And it will differ with every reader every day – nobody’s day is so regulated that they only ever have a fixed 12 minutes to spend on their newspaper. During the course of seven days reading, it may vary from five minutes one day to an hour and five minutes the next.

The significant point from this trend is that readers as consumers are less likely to persevere with a product that does not meet their constantly changing requirements, particularly when the competition from TV and the Internet is so intense.

It is no use catering purely for the 10-minute reader, because the day will very quickly arrive when that reader suddenly has an hour to spare with the newspaper, and the moment that reader realises there is nothing to read beyond the usual 10 minutes will be the moment he or she decides that it is no longer worth buying that newspaper. Equally, a solid core of every readership will be devotees, those who for varying reasons spend more

**HBL. Tabloid spreads such as these in Hufvudstadsbladet in Helsinki can be templated to ease the production process and leave editors free to concentrate on words and pictures.**
an hour and more every day devouring the content. Lose them, and you have lost your most loyal customers – never a good business idea.

But how (apart from a multi-format option of producing different versions of the paper for different market sectors) do you cater for such divergent requirements within a single product? The answer is to make your newspaper time-flexible – a key task of modern newspaper design. The way the newspaper packages and presents its content must be geared to satisfying the glance reader and the time-luxurious reader (and this may be the same person on different days).

You can produce a newspaper that would take four hours to read from front to back that will also satisfy the five-minute reader, if you make your design multi-functional.

If your design does not make use of all the easy-access and graphic digest techniques – labels, summaries, multi-headings, smart-boxes, digests, quick intros, fact-panels, quick commentaries and catch-up graphics – then you are essentially producing a newspaper on one timescale. You are producing a newspaper exclusively for readers with two hours to devote to your newspaper. And while that may be admirable, it is not practical.

If, through digests and summaries and teasers and quick extracts, readers can close your newspaper feeling that have acquired some value from it even in a couple of minutes, they will return to it, regardless of whether they would need half a day to read all the in-depth stories at length. If they get nothing more from a quick glance than headlines that tell them very little and a big grey expanse of text, they will not return unless they know they can commit enough time to make the purchase worthwhile.

If your newspaper is dominated by pages that have nothing but text, headlines and a picture, then your newspaper is one-dimensional, catering for readers with lots of time. There are few of those, and their number is decreasing by the day. You need a design that will cater for a fragmented market. Such a newspaper is much more complex to produce than the basic one-dimensional model, and probably more expensive, but if you question whether it is worthwhile, try to think of another mass market product which is available in only one format, and a very restricted one at that.

**Respect your customer’s design and lifestyle sensibilities**

There used to be a saying in the newspaper industry to the effect that no-one ever failed by under-estimating their readers. Within this context, whether that is true or not is immaterial. What is true is that a newspaper’s customers are more design conscious than ever before.

The new generation of readers are more brand aware than ever before. They have never been more alert to the fact that what they buy, what they carry, says much about them. Don’t underestimate the impact of the newspaper as a fashion statement. Newspapers are a hugely visible part of everyday life, like carrier bags and coffee, like shoes and portable music players. In 2004, you are what you consume, and people still consume newspapers in huge numbers. Your choice reflects your status.

![Dagens Næringsliv. Dagens Næringsliv, in Oslo, Norway, makes much use of subheadings, large introductions, labels, fact-boxes and simple graphics to cater for the time-pressed glance reader as well as the in-depth reader who will read every story.](image)

From a design perspective, it is safer to say that you will not fail by overestimating your readers’ design sensibilities. Underestimate them, and you may well fail. No matter what the product, if the design and packaging is poor, it will not appeal to a design-conscious generation which from pre-teen years has been brand aware. Newspapers are no different. And this does not exclusively apply to the 20-something generation that
Do’s and don’ts

DO: Redesign for a reason, with a definite goal in mind
DON’T: Redesign on a whim in an attempt to solve problems that are more deep-rooted.

DO: Invest in type. It is the single most important factor in your newspaper’s appearance.
DON’T: Bring in new type and then mess with it.

DO: Make the most of colour possibilities. Introduce mid-tone colours.

Newspapers have always relied on highlight colours and background colours. Now they can do more.

DON’T: Go mad with colour. Use it for a reason. A limited palette, and strict controls on its use.

DO: Aim for more variety: use flexible grids and multiple text options.

DON’T: Give production and design staff too much scope. Discipline and strict rules are crucial.

DO: Use all the design devices available to explain complex stories.

DON’T: Over-complicate it. Newspapers are information vehicles first and foremost. Design is just a conduit.

DO: Give pages pace and variety by mixing styles and bringing in graphic elements.

DON’T: Use superfluous design elements that add nothing to the delivery of a simple message to readers.

newspapers are so desperate to cultivate. Label sensitivity is just as prevalent among 40-year-olds.

Your future customers may know nothing about kerning or variable grids, but they will instinctively recognise poor design when they see it, having become accustomed to high-quality packaging from an early age. Sub-standard packaging will be a huge barrier to their acceptance of a newspaper as part of their lifestyle.

The message is simple. If your product has low design standards, it will not survive in the coming years. That means paying attention to type, colour, layout, story packaging – and investing in good designers.

Ally Palmer and Terry Watson are founding directors of Palmer Watson Ltd, the media design consultancy in Edinburgh, Scotland. They can be contacted at mail@palmerwatson.com
3. Making advertising work

By Eamonn Byrne

‘Half of my advertising is a waste of money, the trouble is I don’t know which half.’

THAT quotation – by the US retail tycoon John Wanamaker – suggests that only half of advertising works. If only that were the case. The truth is that we cannot guarantee a particular advertisement or campaign will work at all.

The problem is that advertising in general, and newspaper advertising in particular, has never really exchanged artistic endeavour for scientific certainty.

So to answer the question “What is the future of advertising design?”, it would be helpful to understand how it works today.

Let’s start by agreeing what advertising is. Here are some accepted industry definitions:

The means of making known, in order to sell goods or services (Advertising Association).

“Advertising is any paid-for communication overtly intended to inform and/or influence one or more people.” (Jeremy Bullmore, WPP).

Both of these definitions suggest that advertising is a means of selling, in fact advertising is one of only three ways to sell anything:

- Orally: face to face and telephone salesmanship.
- Display: visual merchandising and demonstration
- Advertising - newspapers and print, posters, broadcast and electronic media.

Simply put, advertising is a means of selling goods, services and ideas. And at the heart of any good advertising communication is the implication that persuasion is taking place.

In fact, the reality goes further. Not only does every advertisement inform readers, it also affects the brand identity, either by creating an understanding of the brand, altering the existing understanding, or reinforcing the brand’s existing values.

Like it or not, all newspaper advertising is brand advertising - and so all newspaper advertisements have the ability to create,
build or reinforce prejudice in the mind of the reader.

This is an uncommon view among advertising agencies and clients large and small who place advertisements directly with newspapers. There is a belief that newspaper advertising is drives consumers to the point of sale by informing them in detail of the offer and, in some cases, reminding them of the brand advertising lovingly and expensively broadcast on TV.

To correct this view, the Newspaper Society in the United Kingdom invested in research that demonstrates the value of newspapers in building brands. Its report, The Conversion Study (available at www.newspapersoc.org.uk) finds that:

“... as well as message delivery, the local press ads in the study can be shown to have the desired effect on consumers, significantly increasing brand health measures such as familiarity and consideration, which ultimately drive consumers towards purchase.”

It is underlined by the World Association of Newspapers’ newspaper advertising effectiveness study (www.wan-press.org). It was at a WAN World Advertising Conference in early 2004 in Amsterdam that Poul Melbye of Politiken in Denmark was able to show the effectiveness of newspapers promoting brands. In “The Ketchup Case” Melbye’s research team deliberately selected a ketchup brand, Mutti, which had zero awareness in the market. The brand was advertised solely in newspapers in the Politiken stable and achieved a fourfold sales increase and an increase in awareness from 0 per cent to 20 per cent. In summary, the results also showed:

- 87 per cent believed they had seen the Mutti advertising in a newspaper — 10 per cent on television.
- 35 per cent believed the advertising promoted a quality ketchup.
- 58 per cent would stop and look at the advertising, if they saw them again
- 53 per cent would like to try the product

The job of every newspaper advertisement has to be to project the correct brand values and create the “favourable prejudice” required to ensure that the newspaper advertisement not only informs but persuades.

Too many designers forget this and the history of advertising is littered with the disasters of advertising campaigns that have sacrificed the creation of favourable prejudice in favour of design that suggested “all publicity is good publicity”. Well, it’s clearly not.

### Advertising and design

So are great advertisements created by inspired design or by following a formula? If it’s the former we place ourselves in the hands of the ‘great designers’, whoever they are. Sadly this would also mean that the vast majority of newspaper advertisers would be denied their services by the joint forces of availability and economics.

If it’s the latter and great advertisements can be created by a formula, then why are there not more wonderful ads out there?

Unfortunately great newspaper ads are created by a combination of factors that include;

- An empathy with the newspaper medium
- An understanding of how readers read ads and the ability to write newspaper advertising copy
- A total understanding of the target’s needs and motivation
- Good design skills combined with the humility to accept the points above
How advertising works

The simple truth is we do not know! At least, we do not know enough to produce a fail-safe formula that works in one culture or market, let alone globally.

One thing we do know is that it’s complicated. There have been a number of efforts to explain how ads are read. For example, it is claimed that there is a tendency for readers to start at the top left and leave the ad at the bottom right. In other words, a logical progression that mimics the direction of reading a passage of text. If only it were that simple.

In a 1990s UK Newspaper Society research project (Colour Works) using eye-tracking equipment, it was discovered that readers do not follow a completely logical and predictable route as they navigate around a page or an advertisement. It was also found in this and a subsequent study (Advertising Works) that advertisements in the studies were looked at on average for just two seconds.

The study also revealed a further interesting and disturbing fact. It is apparent that readers have a mechanism that enables them to read a page without looking at the ads at all. They appear to form a “mental map” instantly when they view a page. The map allows them to navigate the page while avoiding potentially unwelcome areas, such as badly designed advertisements.

Further proof of a reader’s ability to miss or deliberately avoid poorly presented and visually unappealing content is available in a personal way to readers of newspapers everywhere.

Simply recall the last time you were forced to read a newspaper a second time. It may be that you were waiting for a bus or stuck on a train, which led you to read the newspaper again. This time you had to try harder to find appealing content and, to your surprise, the second reading revealed a number of interesting articles and ads that you simply had not seen the first time.

An experiment to test this idea was carried out by the author during the 1990s. Students on advertising design and copywriting courses were asked to read the paper — quite naturally the first time, then forced on the second reading.

• 68 per cent reported they found articles at the second reading that were “very interesting”.
• 14 per cent reported they found articles that were “interesting”.
• 19 per cent reported they found advertisements at the second reading that were “very interesting”.
• 42 per cent reported they found advertisements at the second reading that were “interesting”.

In both editorial and advertising, more than 80 per cent claimed they were surprised that they had missed interesting content the first time around.

An important conclusion of the eye-tracking study, combined with what we all know from experience, is that much content is not even glanced at. So the most important task of any advertisement is to get itself seen.

Without the basic pre-requisite of getting noticed all the effort that goes into the presentation of appealing offers is of no value whatever.

So, what gets advertisements noticed?

There are a number of factors to consider. Perhaps the most important stems from the way in which the eye and brain work together to process information. The eye works with the brain constantly to scan the environment — in fact, it’s genetically programmed to do so.

So what do we look for? We look for anything visually out of place or unusual in the context of the environment. It’s supposed that scanning of the environment takes place subconsciously and dates back to the early development of man when it was critical to notice threats and opportunities such as wild animals or the chance of food.

As a result, we see more than we look at directly, only if what we see stands out against our visual criteria do we look.

So how can advertisements stand out in the context of the newspaper?

One important way is to use contrast — either in colour or black and white. For example, use of white space in advertising is a key method of attracting attention.

For many advertisers, using white space
may be seen as a waste of money, a lost opportunity to squeeze in the last two or three product offers, or a chance to include that final starburst which they feel sure will attract the attention of the consumer.

An advertiser tempted to substitute content for white space should remember this.

• The eye-track study demonstrated that the more complex the advertisement is, the less likely it is to be read.

• If the advertisement is not noticed in the first place it is a total waste of time and money.

The Colour Project (by the Newspaper Society of the United Kingdom) demonstrated that the more times colour was used in an advertisement the less likely it was to be seen.

The study also suggested these broad guidelines for colour advertising:

• Less is best. Too many colours can be confusing. To create really memorable advertisements use fewer colours. As a rule: only use two colours, which is known as the “two plus black rule”.

• Be bold. Use big colour pictures and images and do not forget white space as an important way of gaining visual impact.

• Keep it simple. The best colour advertising is simple over complexity reduces readership

• Design for colour. Don’t use colour as an afterthought or just because you can.

• Make sure it sells. The purpose of colour is to attract and hold the consumer’s attention. Its purpose is not necessarily to please the designer, or even the advertiser. It should be used to sell products and develop the key brand values in the mind of the reader.

There is more to designing advertising than achieving visibility, but it’s a vital starting point.

One method used to evaluate advertising is the formula known as AIDCA. In one form or another, it has been in use since the 1950s with little amendment. Nonetheless it is recommended in an IPA (Institute of Practitioners in Advertising) approved book, Advertising — what it is and how to do it, by Roderick White (HarperCollins, 2000).

It provides a simple method of evaluating advertising, as well as a valuable check for would-be designers of successful advertisements.

Working on the premise that consumer
advertising will usually need to persuade the customer or potential customer to take action, it defines the process that must take place for an advertisement to achieve results:

- **Attention**: gain the attention of the maximum number of targeted prospects.
- **Interest**: maintain the interest while communicating the message.
- **Desire**: build a desire to buy into the product or idea.
- **Conviction**: convince the consumer that the promises are real.
- **Action**: encourage them to do something about it now.

The formula is only a small contribution in the process of achieving good results. Of course, excellent advertising copy and headlines, and effective layout are also important elements.

**The future**

The pressures that will force change in advertising design are beginning to emerge, albeit slowly. One such pressure is the fashion among powerful clients to force through PBR (Payment By Results) as a payment model for their agencies.

Agencies are increasingly required to demonstrate the results they are achieving against the budgets they are spending. This pressure will force agencies not only to look at the value of reach and frequency. They will have to look more critically at the achievements of the advertisements themselves.

For many years, the advertisement itself has escaped meaningful assessment. This is surprising considering that we know the success of advertising depends not only on the medium but also on the message. As Jim Chisholm, WAN’s Strategy Advisor, suggests, successful advertising is a function of “the power of the medium multiplied by the power of the ad”.

In the future, not only will clients and agencies rightly pressure newspapers to improve their explanation of reach and frequency, they will also come under pressure themselves to demonstrate that their advertisements are working.

This evaluation of advertisements is well established but infrequently done. One new and interesting idea is being tested in Sweden. Newspapers including Dagens Nyheter, are using SMS (Short Messaging Service on mobile telephones) in order to evaluate advertising. Mobile phone users are questioned by phone and advertisers are given real-time feedback.

Leif Widman of Bonnier, which publishes Dagens Nyheter, says of the initiative: “It enables us to track recall of the newspaper and the advertisement within. In this way, advertisers can understand the impact they are achieving.”
Widman agrees that in the future advertisers will have to pay much more notice to the performance of the advertisement as well as the medium.

In 1998 Publimedia launched PAM, the Print Advertising Monitor, a standardised research monitor to measure the efficiency of advertising campaigns in print media.

PAM focuses on the targets:

- Reach of the campaign in comparison with the reach, OTS (Opportunities to See) and GRPs (Gross Rating Points) of the newspapers and magazines carrying the advertisements.
- Is there an interest in the promoted product or service?
- Is the artwork of the campaign liked or disliked?

With these three questions, the PAM study analyses the success of the campaign in any target group on different levels of responsibility: the responsibility of the media agency; the responsibility of the producer (advertiser); and the responsibility of the creative agency.

Is there a new wave, a new trend in newspaper advertisements? There is no evidence that there is such a development but there is perhaps a genuinely new lesson to be learned from the Internet.

Mario Garcia, well known for his work in newspaper and web design, has this to say of the future.

“I believe firmly that the two revolutions taking place in newspapers today [aside from the debate over formats] are navigation and reinventing how we present advertising in print, and borrowing ideas that have become prevalent through the Internet.

“To that effect, we are beginning to see real revolutions taking place, even in the most traditional newspapers, with innovations on where ads are placed.

“But perhaps the most interesting phenomenon we are experiencing finally — and I give a deep sigh of relief here, as I never thought it would happen in my lifetime — we see the design of advertising and the design of the newspaper meeting somewhere to harmonise.”

Mario Garcia’s future may be a long way off for some. Many editors would be appalled at the idea of advertising leaking into their editorial columns. But there is no doubt that our content will change our shapes and designs are changing and the relationship between editorial and advertising on the newspaper will evolve.

Lessons for the future

In the future, individual advertisement designs must be more accountable for the results they generate. It will become important to evaluate advertisements methodically and change designs in order for the advertisement to work harder.

Advertising and editorial boundaries will blur, as Mario Garcia suggests.

The future of newspaper advertising will be rooted in the opportunities to understand how advertisements work, presented to us by the research tools available now. If agencies and publishers are to deliver the results that clients demand, we cannot entrust the future of advertising design to old, dogmatic, pseudo scientific models that predict an apparent logic to “eye flow”, or worse, to the tastes of the art director.

The tools exist to improve the performance of advertisements dramatically. All we have to do is to employ them consistently, monitor the results and alter our efforts accordingly.

Eamonn Byrne is deputy director general of the World Association of Newspapers. ebyrne@wan.asso.fr
VOLUME 3 REPORT Nº 3  NEW DESIGNS, NEW FORMATS

4. The shape of things to come

WAN asked four leading designers – Mario Garcia, Terry Watson, Lucie Lacava and Juan Antonio Giner - to look into the future and give their views on:

• What factors will most influence changes in newspaper design in the next 10 years?
• How will reading behaviour change?
• In what way will newspaper design, presentation or format be different in 10 years’ time?
• How will methods of newspaper content management and production change?

And in the pages that follow, 14 designers from around the world choose a favourite page and explain what makes it a success.
By Mario R. Garcia

Rethink, not redesign

IT IS a most interesting and challenging time to be in the newspaper business. Much activity is taking place as newspaper editors and publishers around the globe take a look at what they do and how they do it. The old word “redesign” has given way today to the more appropriate “rethinking”: newspaper editors rethink their strategies, analyse what they do and how they do it, and try to come up with new approaches and solutions.

THE LESS IS MORE PHILOSOPHY

We are witnessing a cleaner, more pure and minimalist design in newspapers today. The last two years have afforded many of us time to contemplate, and to review our practices. The result: an end to overly designed and decorated pages, more functional approaches to how the news and images are presented. The newspaper of the future is more direct and visually focused, with fewer unnecessary elements to distract the reader. We are, in a sense, returning to our roots. We have abandoned these formulas of the “too much” for the more accessible and faster to consume philosophy of the “less is more”.

By the end of the 1990s, with the Internet making its appearance, we inherited a group of readers who went from reading online to reading in print. Inevitably, influences of one medium passed on to the next, primarily in the area of navigation, but also in the fact that readers who read online do not particularly like clutter, or too many graphics, and they bring with them the same impatience and set of values to print, a fact that we have been able to ascertain through the Poynter Institute’s Eye-Track research.

BETTER NAVIGATION

One of the most important influences of the Internet, without doubt, has to be the demand on the part of the reader for better systems of navigation in their newspaper. The readers who reads his news on the web becomes more impatient when he comes to read on print. The old-style navigators of three boxes at the top of the page one is obsolete. Now readers want complete indexes with some summaries of stories. Many newspapers, such as The Miami Herald, have started interesting approaches to navigators, such as the Five Minute Herald, which allows a supersonic reader to get a sense of what is in today’s edition without having to flip through the newspaper. But, of course, the reader who wants to read the newspaper in the more traditional way — page by page — can also do so. Navigation does not stop on page one, and, in fact, it is necessary on every new sections, in case a reader began reading with the sports section, for example, and now we need to send him to the rest of the newspaper’s content.

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO ADVERTISING

Another important influence of the Internet on print is how advertising is displayed. For years, newspapers have approached advertising in a most conventional manner: most ads appear as staircases at the bottom of each page. Newspapers that are daring enough to use ads on page one do it without much integrating of the ads into the design of the rest of the newspaper. Well, this is changing and rapidly. We all are getting
used to seeing how ads have made their up
the navigators of websites. As you search
for politics or sports or culture, you might
hump into a small “silent” ad for a credit
card or for a beer or soda. These ads are
silent because they promote a brand ONLY,
not a specific message about the product.
Thus, American Express places its logo in the
middle of the navigator, but that is all that
one sees. In addition, we are seeing a greater
integration of ads on inside pages with the
rest of the architecture of the newspaper. One
of the real revolutions of newspapers today
and for the future will continue to be how
advertising is displayed. I believe we may
be saying goodbye to the stacked staircases
at the bottom of the page, and welcoming
advertising in more prominent places, where
reader traffic is heavier.

THE WORLD MOVES TOWARDS SMALLER FORMATS

It is not a surprise to anyone that one of the
most heated debates about newspapers has to
do with size. Yes, in terms of newspapers, size
does matter. More and more newspapers are
taking a look at the size of their pages. The
US newspapers have begun to move towards
the narrower 50-inch web format; newspapers
everywhere contemplate and ponder about
turning to tabloids, and many do, with great
success. And, some, such as The Times in
London, publish both broadsheet and tabloid
editions, giving readers a choice, although it is
no secret that perhaps this dual publication is
an interim step until the newspaper becomes
only a tabloid, as in the case of The Independent
in London. Newspapers from Australia to
Argentina and South Africa are making the move
to tabloid, and it is also no secret that readers
everywhere favour smaller formats, no question
about that. I have sat in countless focus groups
around the world, where readers were presented
options as to size. Unquestionably, smaller
formats are favored by most. Europeans have
been quicker to switch to tabloid or even smaller
formats, but Latin American newspapers are
doing it as well.

As readers want less to read Monday through
Friday, the emergence of the more compact
newspaper dictates that not only will there
be fewer pages, I think, but also a more
manageable format.

Younger readers prefer tabloids to broadsheets
anytime. By that I include not only the very
young, but also the 25-40 group. Less is best,
smaller is better, seems to be their mantra.

Of course, not all newspapers will be tabloid.
Some will maintain their formats. But even
those traditional ones that do, will have more
sections in tabloid formats (many do already).

So the trend to go small will prevail, in various
forms: total conversions, partial conversions,
evolutionary development of tabs. And, in 20
years, I foresee that many of the traditional
broadsheets will be tabloid or even smaller.

When the question comes up: why would
some papers want to go tabloid? I always
answer the same: they will because readers
(see above) prefer it (some love it, especially
the young). Advertisers like it too. And as
print and web converge more, it will be easier
to go screen to print and vice-versa with the
smaller formats.

Time is important too. Readers do not want
bigger packages at their doorsteps Monday
through Friday. Quite the opposite. Many feel
guilty when they cannot get through their daily
paper. A substantial but compact daily paper is
the answer. Tabloid format facilitates all of this.

And, it is important to notice, that the myth of
tabloids being flashy, down-market products, while broadsheets are serious, is only that.
Younger readers do not associate tabloid formats with less serious newspapers.

**READER BEHAVIOUR**

I think that we will continue to see readers who are more scanners than traditional readers. We will have to serve them with design techniques that expedite scanning; however, the real challenge is that these scanners also want substance, and they recognise it when they see it, and design must provide the signals through hierarchy for this to happen. A more impatient, more discriminating, smarter and more media-savvy reader is at our doorstep! We must let him come in, and make sure he can get out as quickly as possible as he visits us.

**DESIGN, PRESENTATION OR FORMAT**

No doubt about it: newspapers will be smaller. Yes, some will be electronic tablets, but there will always be a printed newspaper, and in smaller packages. The tabloid in its various sizes, and the A4 format, will command a lot of attention. Readers prefer it, now it is a matter of editors and publishers, especially in North America, realising it and considering new formats. As stated earlier, the less is more philosophy of cleaner and more functional design will prevail.

**CONTENT MANAGEMENT AND PRODUCTION**

The definition of news is already changing. The old concept of “news is something I find out today that I did not know about yesterday” is giving way to a second, very important definition: “news is that which affects me, my body, my lifestyle, and the people around me”. As a result, topics that have been relegated to “supplement status” for years, such as health, fitness, science and technology, relationships, are now top consideration for page one. Content will also accommodate three tracks of readers inside one newspaper: the traditional reader, the scanner, the supersonic reader.

*Dr Mario Garcia is President and CEO of Garcia Media.*

www.garcia-media.com
mario@garcia-media.com
By Terry Watson

Past, present and future

THE INTERNET

PAST AND PRESENT

The way websites made huge amounts of content easily accessible and digestible made newspapers aware of the value of more navigation and signposting. Newspaper design attempted to incorporate similar reader-friendly graphic elements to give readers a similar “browsing” experience.

THE FUTURE

Newspapers will be less inclined to follow web trends as they come to accept their role as a complementary media alongside the Internet. They will see the need to present themselves as a distinctive information outlet to the web, because they cannot compete with the web in terms of immediacy.

Specific areas of newspapers will use web tricks of easy navigation for quick information — TV, weather, stock prices, weather, entertainment listings and so on — but newspapers will distinguish themselves from rival media as purveyors of high-quality or exclusive content unavailable on the Internet or TV or portable device, and will rely on more traditional newspaper presentation.

INFORMATION GRAPHICS

PAST AND PRESENT

In some newspapers the presence of infographics went from virtually none to a surfeit in a very short time because they were seen as the future of newspaper design. This led to:

• the use of gratuitous graphics to justify the hiring of a team of infographic artists
• overly complicated graphics mainly for the purpose of demonstrating the possibilities of the latest versions of Illustrator and Photoshop rather than illuminating a topic for readers
• an over-reliance on graphics to illustrate stories which did not have strong pictures

FUTURE

The growth of infographics will continue. Newspapers know that while readers generally read less than 15 per cent of text in depth, the figure for graphically-presented information is about 70 per cent. Graphics will be used more often, but more simply. They will become more integrated into the editorial process rather than being seen as a standalone showpiece element. Infographic artists will become graphic journalists.

PICTURES

PAST AND PRESENT

• Level of use: In the 1980s the role of pictures changed from being subservient to text to being dominant. Every page apart from the births, deaths and marriages page had to have one huge picture and several others besides. To do otherwise was deemed to be old fashioned.
• Subject matter: News pictures were pictures of news events. Sports pictures were two men and a ball. Features pictures were more artistic portraits of people or objects. Occasional “art” shots are allowed.

FUTURE

Better presses mean that image quality (artistic, as well as technical) will be on a level with picture content in the selection
process. The acceptance of newspapers’ new role as reflecting news events and issues broken by 24-hour news TV, radio, the Internet and portable devices will change the way we select and use pictures. Nothing can compete with the lasting impact of a well-reproduced, high-quality still image in a well-printed newspaper (the power of so many stunning 9/11 supplements is testament to this), so newspapers will not waste that quality by repeating images familiar from other media. There will be a more magazine-approach to “images” — they will be more graphic and less straight-news driven.

More accessible design will reduce the need for huge pictures to enliven a page. There will be a greater role for “portfolio projects” as newspapers utilise improvements in press and pre-press techniques to present magazine-style photo-essay treatments of big stories and important issues.

**STORY LENGTHS**

**PAST AND PRESENT**

From being too long, the current trend is for ever-shorter stories in response to the decreasing amount of time people spend reading newspapers.

**FUTURE**

---

**By Juan Antonio Giner**

The future of newspaper design and the newspaper design of the future: 30 challenges

1. The future has one big name: COMPACT AND COMPELLING DAILY NEWSMAGAZINE NEWSPAPERS. Multi-Section Tabloids and Broadsheets will be dead: Classifieds, TV and Stock Market Listings will be gone (moving from print to the online editions of newspapers and to non-newspaper sites).

2. Readers love what INNOVATION calls “ACCORDION NEWSPAPERS”. CONSECUTIVE PAGINATION is right, inserts and supplements are wrong.

3. Fewer pages are IN. Intimidating newspapers are OUT.

4. Almost nobody will read 1,000-word stories. QUICK-READ-FORMATS will be a must.

5. The trend is to publish MACRO-STORIES (500 words) and MICRO-STORIES (250 words). And MACRO-BRIEFS (100 words) and MICRO-BRIEFS (50 words).

6. Black and white newspapers are history. Full colour newspapers (well printed!) are the present and will be the future.

7. Ninety per cent of today’s papers are yesterday’s news. The INNOVATION formula is: 50 per cent tomorrow’s news, 30 per cent today’s news and 20 per cent yesterday’s news.


9. Forget about the WHAT. Focus on the WHY.


11. Busy, busy, busy fronts are OUT. Selective and single-subject covers will be IN (see The Independent of London).

12. Mono-media newsrooms are obsolete, expensive and inefficient. Multi-media newsrooms will be timely, profitable and efficient.

13. Mono-media journalists are dinosaurs. Multi-media journalists will be the winners.

14. Parallel Online and Offline newsrooms are WRONG. Bi-Media (On and Offline) newsrooms will be RIGHT.

15. Soft news and feature-newspapers are WRONG. Compelling hard news will be RIGHT.

16. Daily-News-Magazines are the FUTURE. Deadline-driven Newspapers are the PAST.
The effect of free newspapers and the Internet will be to force paid-for newspapers to concentrate on the quality and depth of their content. Stories will not become longer; they will become more accessible. A 1,200-word story will be replaced by four 300-word pieces on different aspects of the story and an infographic, plus a 150-word digest for those pressed for time.

**COLOUR**

**PAST AND PRESENT**

- **LEVEL OF USAGE**
  After the first tentative steps in the 1970s, many newspapers embraced colour wholeheartedly, using it wherever possible for one simple reason: because they could. Today, still, too many newspapers use colour pictures and graphic elements on inappropriate subjects or on pages with a level of colour advertising that makes less editorial colour a more sensible option.

- **THE PALETTE**
  Press restrictions meant that two main “grades” of colour were used: highlight and background, which mostly meant red for highlight and salmon for background.

**FUTURE**

- **LEVEL OF USAGE**

17. **BAD PRINTING AND REPRODUCTION** (USA style) will be unacceptable. **GOOD PRINTING REPRODUCTION** (European style) will be a must.
18. **Staff photographers will be OUT. Freelance photographers will be IN.**
19. **Staff infographic artists will be OUT. Freelance infographic artists will be IN.**
20. **Ghetto newsrooms are the PAST. Walls-down newsrooms will be the FUTURE.**
21. **Readers will have more time to read, not less (Online and Offline). Readers will have also more options to read than ever (Local, Regional, National & International, free and paid).**
22. **Expect more JourAnalysm and JourAnalysts. And less old news-packaging.**
23. **Readers will be more selective. And more critical and more demanding than ever.**
24. **Newspapers will be smaller (like Time magazine) and sharper (like The Economist). And easier to read (no jumps, please!)**
25. **There will be a less cosmetic newspaper design. And much more content-driven design.**
26. **Newspaper Design is information. Newspaper Designers will be information architects.**
27. **Newspaper designers are OUT. Visual journalists are IN.**
28. **Are newspapers going to survive? YES. Are newspapers going to change? THEY MUST.**
29. **Are newsrooms going to change? DRAMATICALLY. Are journalists going to change? NOT SURE.**
30. **Is journalism going to survive? YES IF WE DO NOT WANT TO HAVE “CATHEDRALS WITHOUT SOUL”**.

**INNOVATION** believes that newspapers, newsrooms, journalists and journalism are here to stay as the “soul” and the “core” of the new media landscape in which all platforms will converge into 24/7 Multi-Media Digital Information Engines. The future for news designers will be better than ever.

Be ready! See you there!

*Dr Juan Antonio Giner (Norfolk, Virginia, USA) (innovationusa@att.net), partner director of the INNOVATION International Media Consulting Group (www.innovation-mediaconsulting.com), was the first European director of the Society of Newspaper Design (SND), founder of the SND Spanish Chapter and the Malofiej Infographic Awards. A former senior research fellow at Harvard University, he is the editor of the INNOVATIONS IN NEWSPAPERS annual reports for the World Association of Newspapers (WAN), and publisher of a World Media Trends Confidential Newsletter.*
Colour is now commonplace enough for newspapers to be more discerning in colour use. Newspapers will become more aware that limited use of colour within a black and white page is more effective than using colour wherever possible. Colour will become an integral part of newspapers’ complete design rather than something used for effect.

**THE PALETTE**

More sophisticated presses will allow newspapers to adopt mid-range colours in a broader palette, in the same way that magazines use colour to reflect a mood rather than simply highlight elements. Equally, press developments will allow the use of more subtle palettes.

**TYPOGRAPHY**

**PAST & PRESENT**

**Pre-desktop revolution:** Newspapers rarely strayed outside the confines of a narrow range of standard fonts judged to be safe for newspaper presses.

**Desktop revolution:** The arrival of the Mac and PC with a host of typefaces at the disposal of the design department often led to a multiplicity of fonts appearing.

**FUTURE**

**Post-desktop revolution:** Newspapers will increasingly attempt to use more distinctive typefaces, but in a significantly more controlled manner, to distinguish themselves from the plethora of publications using commonly available typefaces.

**LAYOUT**

**PAST AND PRESENT**

A large part of the function of sub-editors, page editors and desk journalists was and is the devising of layouts. The task of wrestling content into a manageable form is time-consuming, difficult and often unsuccessful.

**FUTURE**

As formats become smaller, layout options will become fewer. Coupled with increasingly sophisticated pagination systems, templates will play a greater part in the design and production process. As design becomes more integrated into the editorial process, layout will play a greater role in the editing and decision-making process. At the same time, the simplification of the technical aspects of page preparation will allow desk journalists to concentrate more on editing content.

**ARTWORK**

**PAST**

The advent of Macs led to “logo-frenzy”. Newspapers boasted a huge range of graphic elements displaying all the tricks and gimmicks available in the latest software.

**FUTURE**

Everyone has a cheaper, better version of that software at home, so no one will be impressed any more by those graduated tints. Newspapers will concentrate on simplicity, sophistication and consistency.

**WHITE SPACE**

**PAST AND PRESENT**

White space was anathema to newspapers for decades. Then it became “cool” and was the thing as newspaper feature pages played at being magazine pages.

**FUTURE**

Newspapers’ changing role alongside TV and the internet will blur the line between news and features, so white space, instead of being used for effect on “special” pages, will become incorporated in the whole design of newspapers and used in a sensible, controlled way for a practical reason: to make a lot of material less dense and more accessible.

**MAVERICKS**

**PAST AND PRESENT**

There have always been newspapers that through market or identity or history will flourish by bucking the trends.

**FUTURE**

There will always be newspapers that through market or identity or history will flourish by bucking the trends. Thankfully.

*Terry Watson is a founding director of Palmer Watson Ltd, the media design consultancy*
By Lucie Lacava

A bet on paper

INTRODUCTION

It is always amusing to play fortune-teller, especially when one is both the bearer and receiver of the prediction.

This is not the first time I have been formally asked to predict the future of newspapers, therefore I must remain true to my former predictions, to preserve my own integrity, and for the love of the trade, I confess I cannot be unconditionally objective.

Naturally my thinking has evolved since my first attempt in the book Design 2020: Visions of the Newspaper of the Future, published by American Press Institute. I do rejoice in the fact that at least one of my predictions has come true since. It was about media mergers, the following year the Tribune Company and The Times Mirror Company joined forces, in a historic merger. It does not take a genius to figure out that if several public companies are doing it, eventually media companies will follow. Just read the business section of your newspaper and fantasise.

My second attempt at predicting the future of newspapers was a far bigger eye-opener. Instead of simply philosophising about the future of the industry, I thought it might be more interesting and useful to get it directly from the horse’s mouth. Yes, why not ask the readers to reveal on camera what they thought the future had in store for the industry. To reassure you about the authenticity of this informal video, I set out to get international representation, the majority of the participants were interviewed at random in tourist areas in my own city, varying in age from 12 to 70, from a dozen countries. Not surprising the gloom and doom mantra was “no more paper, only online”.

Only one quarter of the participants believed newspapers would continue to exist the way we know them today. Small consolation.

THE FUTURE

Certainly movies like The Matrix and Minority Report let your imagination run wild on what the future has in store.
design quality. Let me elaborate more on this last point, because I hold this issue close at heart.

When I first entered the business of newspaper design, as a young eager university graduate, my first editor, who unknowingly was also my mentor loved to say that a real newspaper had to be rough around the edges, a little grit was good. I secretly disagreed, my mission was to iron out the grit and make it as perfect as I possibly could.

In the past, reader’s awareness of newspaper design was nil or non-existent. Newspaper designers would introduce their presentations at conferences with the line “my grandmother still does not understand what exactly I do for a living” and the audience would roar with laughter. I am not sure that line would still work today. Then, newspaper design was associated with advertising, or functionality at best, rather than aesthetic presentation of editorial content. When probed, most readers would describe newspapers as looking all the same, old fashioned or downright ugly. Today readers will identify a dozen fonts, name their personal favourite, and use design terms only a select few could understand a decade ago, thanks to personal computers. We are bombarded with sleek visual information from a variety of sources. The younger generations are growing more visually sophisticated. Even with the worst reproduction available today there is no excuse for sloppiness.

In the future, newspapers will have to be polished and state of the art in their presentation, include a small dose of tradition for the sake of gravitas, but should not appear as a relic of the past. Newspapers will change only if technology makes it possible. Those changes might include alternatives to the way the news is delivered.

As more titles move into the hands of fewer media proprietors, there will inevitably be fewer regional differences, set quality standards, and universal sharing of sources of information. We will buy the same international edition, navigate the same popular sites, watch the same movies and buy the same magazines. In addition, we designers, will enter the same international design competitions. It is inevitable that we will move towards an international standard of design.

Even today there are still thousands of unpolished newspapers around the world. We wonder why people are no longer reading newspapers. Yes many will argue that content is king, and it will sell newspapers regardless of the look. I am not convinced.

In the future, newspaper advertising will be far more attractive than its current deplorable state, and far more profitable as a result, everyone will benefit.

**READING BEHAVIOUR:**

Reading behaviour will adapt to lifestyle. Most newspaper readers will read the news in the morning but will certainly expect multiple updates delivered throughout the day, in the medium of their choice.

Customisation is the buzzword here. Core print newspaper readers will on average be fewer, older, established and highly educated. Still an interesting demographic group for advertisers.

To entice younger readers, print newspapers will have to publish a separate edition marketed exclusively to this group. The look and content mix will differ from the traditional newspaper. Today content that might appeal to younger readers is relegated to inside sections.

Unless they are reading their parents’ newspaper, they will never come across the inside sections designed especially for them.

The front page will feature an unorthodox mix of hard news, entertainment news and sport, but news nonetheless. The content will be smart, witty and visually polished, far from what we associate today with tabloid journalism.

Reality feature stories inside? Why are newspapers always lagging behind other media? Readers’ forums and interaction will take place on the web rather than exclusively on the editorial pages. An editor could monitor the debate to maintain decorum and give it credibility.

**DESIGN, PRESENTATION, FORMAT**

The print edition format will be thinner, smaller, such as the Berliner, even in North America. There will be full colour on every page.
Advertising design will be polished and attractive. Evening update editions will be delivered upon request. Design will be state of the art, content will be urgent, in depth, with lots of analysis and opinion. The presentation will be tight and dense, much the way it is today, because it is a feature newspapers have to offer that is superior to what other media can offer — facts in detail, in an easy to read format.

The electronic edition, will be delivered in different formats as an alternative, from cell phone to watch, format can be as varied as a projection, a paper-like scroll with electronic inks, updated on a regular basis, news clips will be shown in real time as projections.

Paper will be replaced by a slick, thin blue gel that responds to voice as well as touch command. There will be a socket in which to put a cartridge of the edition of the day, with customisation options. It will be updated in real time off the main server of the newspaper.

**CONTENT MANAGEMENT AND PRODUCTION**

Newspapers will be free. There will be more print editions updated several times per day.

Two editions of the newspaper will be marketed, one more traditional to the 35+ groups, the other more innovative/experimental to the 18-35 group. Both will be smaller and more colourful.

The traditional newspaper will remain as we know it, but richer in analysis, and detailed news content, as opposed to other media outlets offering snippets and briefs. We will still find business news and the lifestyle and sports sections, among others. However, minus the stock market pages, sport agate, entertainment listings, and classifieds, since all of this content will be more accurately updated on the web edition.

Print editions of newspapers as we know them today will not cease to exist in 10 years. News will be available from a variety of other sources, often owned by the same newspaper proprietors.

In 10 years there will still be a paper edition because one of my clients, a public company, has just invested millions to build a new plant which houses state of the art presses, and I would wager a million dollars that this investment will still be profitable in a decade.

*Lucie Lacava is a design consultant and president of Lacava Design.*

Lucie@lacavadesign.ca

www.lacavadesign.ca
METRO is 10 years old next year and my design for this international daily is quickly approaching puberty. Overlooking the pimples, some of the characteristics of the old design are, however, still worth emulating:

Portability is a decisive factor. This example (a now defunct edition of Metro from Zürich) is in Half-Berliner format (232mm by 308 mm). The current European trend towards tabloids or “compacts” will lead to even smaller newspapers.

What the readers want in the morning is not a heart attack. They need to know that nothing has happened — or at least nothing potentially dangerous. Metro tells them that in a calm voice, by keeping the size of headlines and photos down.

One format for all occasions. The front page of Metro uses the same grid, day after day. Easy to produce, easy to read: saving the paper money and the reader time.

A newspaper is meant to be read. The Metro text typeface is Swift, cut 1985 by Gerard Unger (www.gerardunger.com). Swift and Coranto, a more recent Unger design, are two of the best and most readable typefaces of our times. Headlines are set in Franklin Gothic, the workhorse of daily newspapers since Morris Fuller Benton created it 100 years ago. It’s still kicking.

The big-city dweller is the most elusive of newspaper readers. Mobility, time-efficiency and relevance are the qualities that Metro added. I hope they will survive future redesigns.

Pelle Anderson, A4
Stockholm, Sweden
pelle@a4.se
JOHN BARK

MY idea of a good front page is one that clearly communicates an overall thought in everything from the editorial choices to headlines, visuals and contrasts. You always need a good story, but it is up to the paper how to package it.

I chose this page because Borås Tidning is not only one of my absolute favourite redesigns but it was also one of the most radical redesigns that I have been involved in. When asking if I was interested in working with the paper, the managing editor declared that he wanted a “daring change”. Such a challenge would inspire any designer.

We changed everything: not just typefaces, grids, and colours but also how the editorial material was organised. A truly big change for the staff — and for the readers as well.

The only visual part that remained intact was the logo, which was fine-tuned and flushed left. The staff have continued to develop the design, and this is one of many fine front pages they have produced.

John Bark, JBGB
Saltsjöben, Sweden
john@barkdesign.se
ROGER BLACK

THIS front page wouldn’t win awards today: there is not a single picture on it, and the layout has no grid, except for the columns. (No doubt the judges would scoff at its slightly reckless “news judgment”.)

But this page — from February 8, 1905 — smells of news. It was the New York Journal’s tenth edition! There are 11 or 12 stories on the front, plus a banner reefer. The stories are laid out as far from “modular style” as could be. But, don’t they get your attention? Look at the lede, with its astounding headline wrapped around the flag and set in three different typefaces! And that’s not all. There is a boxed kicker at the top, a huge deck, a sidebar jammed in on the side. And then the story starts out with big type flourish.

And, if that is not interesting enough, there is an off-lede, placed discordantly alongside. And note the myriad “points of entry”.

One hundred years ago, William Randolph Hearst’s newspapers created a design form with strength, spontaneity, and fun. Our institutional dailies today might learn something from the old man.

Roger Black, Danilo Black, Inc
New York, USA
roger@DaniloBlackUSA.com
Svenåke Bostöm

When Sundsvalls Tidning was first published in January 1841, it was an eight-page newspaper in A5 format. With our new e-paper, we are back to basics, back to A5 format. That format and the technique for the e-paper will be a really great challenge for newspaper designers.

In Sweden 2005 is dedicated as Design Year—design from all kinds of perspectives. Sundsvalls Tidning has been printed in broadsheet since the late 1800s. At the start of next year our newspaper will change format, from the European standard broadsheet into tabloid. But that’s the only first step towards a smaller format.

At the same time as we plan for the tabloid design we are preparing for the next generation newspaper, the E-paper. The new technique is going to change the newspaper industry dramatically. When the E-paper is established on the market, ink on paper will start to decrease.

The benefits are many in this product that combines the best of the traditional paper and the web.

- It’s not as power-consuming as computers.
- It eliminates a great part of the distribution costs.
- It saves a lot of trees in our forests.

The great challenge is to create a user-friendly interface. The first task is to make this new device as simple as possible to use. It must be as easy to open and read as a traditional newspaper. No need for computer skills.

Secondly, an even greater challenge is to design the pages in a way that makes the navigation as intuitive and easy as possible. As a reader, I would like to be able to have an overview of the content and be able to navigate easily through the pages and view pictures and movies.

In my design for Sundsvalls Tidning on E-paper I have worked a lot with a special system of indexes as the navigation tool. With the front page, you get a quick overview of the content. Going into one of the sections you can see how many pages are available in that section. Highlighting a section puts up a new index with headlines. If you chose to read one of the articles it fills out the entire page. At the bottom of each page you have page numbers for that section. Adopting a usual colour coding from the web makes the navigation easier and intuitive. Red pages have been read and blue pages are to be read.

Is this all in the designer’s mind? No, it could be reality faster than you imagine. As a matter of fact, we will go on to develop the design for E-paper and have the first edition ready to publish at the end of this year. Ready for the revolution when the first device is on the market.

Svenåke Boström, Sundsvalls Tidning
Sundsvall, Sweden
Svenake.bostrom.@st.nu
**GAYLE GRIN**

The National Post is an upscale upstart in Canada, only five years old. Its arrival made the competing papers try harder. From the beginning, our new national daily has been called innovative, intelligent, irreverent, and full of attitude. We dare to experiment, to take risks. In this way, we differentiate ourselves from our competition.

It is difficult for me to choose just a single page from the past to encapsulate my vision of a compelling and well-designed newspaper page. The National Post did groundbreaking poster front pages for significant news stories before they became the norm after 9/11. When appropriate, we also have great fun on our front pages. But in the end I chose a stunning inside page, which to me exemplifies the ultimate in fun, simplicity, elegance and sophistication.

It was a page I designed on the anniversary of the Wright brothers’ first flight. I had the model of the plane close cropped and then asked for a very small story, actually a deck, to put on a curve to suggest a flight curve. The reader needed to turn the page sideways and upside-down to read it, but I knew they would. It was inviting, but not intimidating! I had the idea and executed the page in one hour. To me, this page feels like a simple elegant jewel, polished and shiny. Many readers liked it so much they wrote and asked for printouts to give away as Christmas gifts. I like that . . . a newspaper page becomes art!

By the way, let me provide you with the words that ran on that page: “One hundred years ago today, near the village of Kitty Hawk, N.C., Wilbur and Orville Wright changed the course of history with the first power-driven, heavier-than-air machine in which humans achieved free, controlled and sustained flight. One of the few witnesses was a boy named Johnny Moore, who ran into town yelling, ‘They done it, they done it, dammed if they ain’t flew!’”

The page flew too.

Gayle Grin, Assistant Managing Editor, National Post
Toronto, Canada
Ggrin@nationalpost.com
HANS PETER JANISCH

Le Quotidien is a new newspaper on the small Luxembourg market. As a news designer, one usually redesigns existing papers and rarely has the opportunity to create a completely new paper. What do you look at first in such a case? With the masthead, you create a new logo that will last for a long time. Today such a logo should be strong, clean and modern.

I chose Thesis as a basic font for the masthead of Le Quotidien, mainly because of the extravagant Q of this typeface. It looks strong on top of the page and works well in a combination of red, black and grey.

Legibility should be one of the main topics in every redesign – the body copy of Le Quotidien is set out of ITC Stone in 9.5pt and extremely legible. This font works well with Thesis as a sans serif for sub-decks, and with Concorde Nova for headlines.

The pages usually show one single big picture: the general appearance is clean and structured by the white space. Typography and visual elements work well together, neither one dominates the design. Le Quotidien is a modern newspaper, not a magazine in a different format.

Hans Peter Janisch, Pressedesign
Grossenlüder, Germany
janisch@pressedesign.de
LUCIE LACAVA

The page I have chosen to encapsulate my vision of the newspaper of the future is a prototype created during the redesign of La Presse, a Montreal daily.

The mandate was to design for a new generation of readers and drive the look as far as possible. By taking a few well-calculated risks, the results are unlike any other newspaper on the newstand. The redesign included adopting new sans serif fonts to provide a non-traditional, more contemporary look.

A unique feature of page one, is the sky blue inverted L-shape reefer space. The shape is adjustable moving up and down the page. This provides more room to sell the inside sections without interfering the news hole. In the Saturday edition, the L-shape can be stretched to accommodate more pointers to its many sections.

The story count is high, the headlines are urgent, using a clear hierarchy.

The design relies on a strong horizontal stress to facilitate reading. Side-saddle heads, a staple of traditional newspaper design, lead the page in a fresh unique way. The choice and use of photography is compelling, and strategically anchors the page.

The analysis piece is distinctive with its custom-designed italic font.

Lucie Lacava, Lacava Design
Montréal, Canada
lucie@lacavadesign.ca
I STILL love it. This piece has been hanging in my bedroom since 1994. I swear it’s true. After having enjoyed this feature about Donald Duck in the legendary weekly, Die Woche, I took the page and pinned it on the wall, where it has remained.

But what makes it special? I confess that I’m a connoisseur of good Donald Duck stories. And this page really hit me.

First of all, the well-known duck jumps right in the face of the reader — a carefully selected illustration. Second, the play on words in the headline, the fact-box title and name of the section contribute to the humour. On top of the page it’s not Culture, Literature or Comics. It simply says “Enten”, the German word for ducks. And the word-creation “Bewusstseinsverenterung” in the title could be translated as “ducks changing your mind”. “Duckumentation” as the fact-box heading is international, simple and ingenious.

The same with the whole layout. A five column-grid allowing a symmetrical orientation along the vertical axis provides a clear and easy-to-look-at background for all the fun in it. Besides the big colourful, eye-catching Donald, the smaller sketches around the elegantly light-shaded fact-box add warmth and life to the page — plus the necessary balance at the bottom. And what’s more, they express what the author talks about. His best friend Donald Duck.

And that’s the convincing thing about it. Every detail, every part of the page fits perfectly. They all play together, and not only to tell a story. It’s also the emotional approach. You can feel the fun both the author and art director had when they created this page. As Die Woche’s founder, Manfred Bissinger, put it: “We love our work, it has turned out to be extremely satisfying.”

Here’s the lesson we should learn: if we start exceed ourselves as writers and artists and put more personality into our work, sparks may fly and inspire our readers to do more than read our pages. They may just start loving them.

*Walter Longauer, APA-Infographics*  
*Vienna, Austria*  
*W.Longauer@apa.at*
OLE MUNK

I CHOSE this page from the Danish morning daily, Politiken, in spite of its shortcomings from a purely aesthetic point of view. In newspaper design, the most important quality is not beauty but effectiveness. This front page demonstrates how design and content are two flips of the same coin.

The main story is about a former intelligence officer standing up against the Danish government, saying: “When you tried persuading the parliament to decide to join the US coalition forces in Iraq, you were lying about the contents of our intelligence reports on Iraqi WMD.”

This paper is from the day after a number of intelligence reports had been declassified. The former intelligence officer is pictured on the left, the Danish Prime Minister on the right. The words in red are quotes from the two men, one says: “Our Prime Minister is extracting soundbites from the reports and omitting important details.” The other: “Now please stop! These reports prove that we did NOT abuse intelligence.” The main headline says: “Nuance becomes war’s first victim”.

Above the photographs, the paper promotes a four-page supplement containing all the declassified material.

By presenting the story like this, the newspaper sends a very clear message to its readers, saying: “Feel free to make your own judgments. All men are created equal. So do you believe the Prime Minister or the man on the ground?”

Ole Munk,
Ribergaard & Munk Graphic Design
Espergærde, Denmark
ole.ribmunk.dk
I have chosen a page that I designed for The New Paper in Singapore 12 years ago because it has many “firsts”.

Today, not a week passes without us hearing or talking about young readers and newspapers specially published for them. The New Paper was launched in July 1988 — a full 16 years ago — and I believe it was the first newspaper targeted at 15- to 34-year-olds, as well people who didn’t usually read newspapers. Its circulation rose from 35,000 to 120,000 copies within three years and made its first million dollars a month in less time than that!

Secondly, The New Paper set the trend in using that now-familiar narrow column that so many papers all over the world use for white space, quotes, mugshots and little bits of information. I came up with that idea through a need to sell advertising at a rate that was both cheaper and more appealing than a rival broadsheet.

Thirdly, the paper was the first to publish 3-D pictures in colour throughout the newspaper on December 26, 1992, thanks to a special arrangement with a Japanese camera supplier.

Fourthly, the design and the content at that time were considered revolutionary. We employed artists full-time just to colourise daily comics because none was available. We hired the best infographics talent (including the late Peter Sullivan) to turn stories into visual information on a daily basis.

We restricted all stories to no more than 12 paragraphs. We used words that were so simple yet elegant that anyone could read the paper, and if the words were considered difficult, there was a daily glossary!

But most revolutionary of all, we became the first daily newspaper that committed journalistic heresy. There was no editorial — and not one single reader missed it!

Peter Ong, Newspaper Consultant
Sydney, Australia
peterong@bigpond.net.au
LUIS ADRIAN ALVAREZ SALAS

WHY do I like this page? Because it is not run of the mill. It’s not boring. The readers can quickly learn about some of the many activities and competitions events at the Olympic Games. And although there’s not a lot of text, there is a lot of content with 12 entry points for readers.

We asked our editors for only the words that were absolutely necessary. They understood perfectly. The colour palette, use of typography and photographs are excellent. We gave emphasis (see the promo above the flag) to the real-time news available on our website (elnorte.com) because of the time difference between Monterrey, Mexico, and Sydney.

That’s why we had the main headline “No one will sleep”. The Olympics were shown on television at dawn in Mexico.

The designer took care with even the smallest details of this page. He spent time planning it. He got the editor involved, negotiated and convinced him it was a great idea. It seems easy, but we know it isn’t.

In addition to good newspaper design, the confidence, understanding and intelligence of a team working together shows through. It is unusual to find all these talents in just one newsroom.

Luis Adrian Alvarez Salas, El Norte
Monterrey, Mexico
ladrian@prodigy.net.mx
The headline — It’s All True, three electrifying words in black sans type, three inches deep — confirmed everything.

South Africa’s Nationalist government, led by the prime minister, John Vorster, had secretly spent millions of dollars buying and trying to buy newspapers and magazines (including the one I edited) in South Africa and around the world to influence reporting of its apartheid policies.

In its massive coverage of the scandal, the Rand Daily Mail also confirmed that the rival Johannesburg morning paper, The Citizen, had been funded secretly by the government in an attempt to capture the hearts and minds of the country’s white, English-speaking voters.

The immediate impact of the front page and the story it unfolded was astonishing. The government was outraged, liberals rejoiced — the Mail had won a famous victory against an unscrupulous opponent, convincing many that the government must surely fall as the revelations continued to unfold.

The euphoria turned to wishful thinking, however, as the government survived the storm and won the next election by an even bigger landslide than usual.

Then, in a final irony, the Rand Daily Mail was closed by its owners six years later, while The Citizen survived the scandal. (It still lives today.)

What lessons do we take from the Rand Daily Mail of November 3, 1974? Good design sells great stories, but great stories don’t keep newspapers alive; and journalism still has the power to make politicians sweat, but that’s little consolation when we’re dealing with such immoral and deceitful leaders as Vorster in South Africa 24 years ago and Bush and Blair today.

Tony Sutton, News Design Associates
Georgetown, Canada
tonysutton@newsdesign.net
JACEK UTKO

I WANT to present a page that is perhaps not very sophisticated design-wise but tells the story well and is perfectly in tune with emotions of the event. And that’s what visual journalism should be about.

I picked Puls Biznesu’s coverage of results of European Union referendum in Poland in June, 2003. Poles, like all the new members, voted to join EU.

Here’s why the presentation works:

• Newsy: the newspaper avoided the temptation to use symbolic and pathetic solutions like everyone else did. It covers an historic moment in a clear, newsy way.

• Emotional: it manifests emotions that reader can identify with.

• Visual: it has a tabloid's power – very visual (big pictures, few words) but is highly informative at the same time and reliable. It tells the story fast but remains as elegant as a serious paper.

• Dynamic: lively photography plays the main role.

• Well integrated: the page shows a high level of integration of text, photography and design. Headline and picture work together well.

• Brave: designers dared to change the colour of logotype from red to blue for this occasion. A signal to the reader: this is a special day.

• Simple: the message is clear and the solution is simple ... and the headline is really, really good.

This kind of journalism serves the readers well. And the designer’s job is all about clear communication.

Jacek Uko, Puls Biznesu
Warsaw, Poland
j.utko@pb.pl
THE 1991 Persian Gulf War was a defining moment for many designers — and I count myself as one of them.

It enabled the Portland (Maine) Press Herald to install a dramatic breaking story into the chassis of a new design. Our redesign, with Virginia consultant Alan Jacobson, had been launched on the eve of the hostilities in Kuwait and incorporated principles we had developed in the renaissance of our regional daily (circulation 72,000 daily; Sunday 140,000) — principles I still preach today as a teacher-journalist at the American Press Institute.

At the time, I was managing editor and in charge of a developing project that allowed us to refine our look and catch up to better and more sophisticated coverage that was at the heart of our Editorial Directions news improvement program. We had created new beats and new patterns of reporting to meet the growing sophistication of our readership, which extended along the Maine coast down to the New Hampshire border in Boston’s booming northern suburbs. The design would later earn us the honour of one of the best designed newspapers in the world in the annual SND Best of Design competition.

Our page of February 25, 1991, showcased the news of the long expected Allied ground invasion of Kuwait. The page included a strong, active-voice lead headline, a superb info graphic by artist Tom Peyton (featuring the now famous left-hook military manoeuvre), and a dramatic horizontal photograph of Iraqi prisoners being led away by US troops. The page told the story of the lightning war.

The three major elements harmonised, giving the page an almost-magnetic appeal. That day’s design, using the words of author and teacher Jan White, truly was a tool to make things clear.

We were not encumbered by the kind of static skyboxes that compromise many a design. Our design built from the news, with versatile Berkeley Old Style headlines working down in hierarchical fashion.

I look at the page today and see features that were modelled by other newspapers over the next decade: our use of the environmental colour brick red (the colour and look of our old city, a former mill city); showing the news in different forms and in varying levels of depth; and storytelling graphics.

We were at our very best that day.

Warren Watson, American Press Institute
Reston, USA
WaWatson@americanpressinstitute.org
5. Responding to demand

By Anneli Kunnas of UPM

The paper chase

THE trend towards more compact newspaper formats has not come as an overwhelming surprise in Scandinavia or Central Europe where tabloids already dominate.

At UPM we are following developments closely and considering what they mean in terms of paper.

The main motivators in the move to smaller sizes appear to be similar — a decline in advertising and circulation, as well as readers’ preference for tabloids, especially among the young, commuters and women.

New opportunities

“It seems natural that newspapers are evolving in order to attract readers. We all know that the competition for readers, especially young ones, is tough. The trend towards compact formats goes to show that papers are able to change and serve today’s readers,” says Dr Ainomaija Haarla, vice-president of business development for UPM’s Newsprint Division.

The trend for compact newspapers does not change the challenge facing the paper supplier, just the perspective.

“As before, our challenge is to help support newspaper publishers and printers in the quest for more readers and greater revenues. But we do follow this development, among others, closely and adapt our product portfolio accordingly.”

The popular new format creates new opportunities when it comes to choosing paper.

Coated coldset paper

Improvement in coldset print quality through the use of higher added value paper grades has been an important requirement towards meeting the needs of advertisers and increasing existing press utilisation.

An interesting and fairly new innovation in
the paper business is a special, coated coldset paper — UPM Matt. Excellent printability and the possibility to print top-end products help make coldset web offset a high quality printing method. One of the advantages this paper has is the very low tendency towards set-off, which helps to create the high quality image.

“UPM was among the first to start developing this kind of paper in the mid-1990s,” explains Dr Haarla. “With coated coldset paper, users gain the best print quality possible in coldset web offset (CSWO) printing.

“The surface of the coated paper provides a uniform substrate to reproduce a very clear and clean print image. The dominant eye-catcher is high brightness that provides the basis for good contrast in print. Coated coldset paper also offers the biggest colour space and finest screen ruling available in the CSWO field, and these properties further enhance the print quality. Not to mention the smallest dot gain among CSWO, which provides the sharpest print images.”

Visually, coated coldset paper enables tabloids to compete with products printed in heatset. And this means clear value for money as it opens up new possibilities in terms of the kind of advertisements newspapers can attract.

Dr Haarla adds: “In Germany, some luxury product advertisements, such as watches and jewellery, have been printed on our special coated coldset paper.”

In newspapers, one solution could be using coated coldset paper grade to differentiate special sections from the main product. When considering the usage of coated coldset paper, it is worthwhile to remember that coated substrate has a longer shelf life than uncoated mechanical paper grades, and this, naturally, gives more end use options than on uncoated grades.

A brighter option

One choice for smaller newspapers could be bulky and bright machine finished speciality (MFS) papers. Compared with newsprint, these papers are brighter, which helps in the reproduction of colours. In addition, their bulkiness makes the paper more rigid and easier to handle, especially for commuters.

There are also coloured papers among MFS grades. A product printed on a coloured paper, be it a whole newspaper, a section or an independent flyer, is distinctive. At UPM, there are several shades to choose from and special colours are made on request.

“We at UPM are more than willing to work with partners to add value. After all, it is easier to enhance mutual goals and contribute to continuous improvement of the industry together,” Dr Haarla concludes.

ainomaija.haarla@upm-kymmene.com
paul.maksimow@upm-kymmene.com
By Davide Garavaglia of Unisys

The keys to speed and simplicity

BECAUSE an editorial system is conceived and used to make people’s jobs in editorial departments easier and more efficient, in recent years Unisys has developed several features in its flagship software program Hermes aimed at improving performance when dealing with the design and formats of newspapers.

What has been developed and implemented so far is targeted to the general needs of newspaper publishers of any size that wish to streamline editorial production by adopting standardised layout designs and limited sets of formats.

The Unisys editorial system, with its integrated editor, allows the use of standard layout templates that can be placed on blank pages and combined together in order to build a full-page layout very easily and quickly.

This methodology, widely adopted by clients worldwide, has already brought consistent benefits in terms of cost reduction and ability to respond quickly to last-minute changes.

In some countries, it has also been a key milestone for downsizing graphic departments by supplying design aids to everyone, including journalists.

Our current research activities include two main topics:

• The first aims at developing a more advanced integration between the editorial system and the design criteria chosen for that particular newspaper title. In other words, the editorial system should be able to automatically select which formats and/or layout templates are best for that particular area of the page or box, given that the rest of the page or article has already been designed in a certain way.

• The second research topic is wider and looks more at the future of newspapers, which, as many industry experts are suggesting, may see more and more publications look like full-colour daily magazines rather than traditional, black-and-white broadsheets. Taking this fact into account, current researches at Unisys try to identify new, smart functions able to speed up the page design and format process, based on the experience made at some customers worldwide, especially those who are already adopting magazine-style layouts, coloured display titles and special graphic effects on texts and pictures. Examples of concepts being explored are the interactive and fast adjustment of kerning and spacing for letters in display titles according to their colour or transparency and the inclusion of enhanced formats (such as shadowed letters) in the available styles list.

Unisys Italia S.p.A.
Via Benigno Crespi 37
20159 Milan, Italy
Tel: +39-02-6985832
Roberto.Antoniotti@it.unisys.com
pedro.dacunha@gb.unisys.com
THE PUBLISHER

World Association of Newspapers
7 Rue Geoffroy St Hilaire
75005 Paris, France
Tel.: +33 1 47 42 85 00
Fax: +33 1 47 42 49 48
E-mail:contact_us@wan.asso.fr

THE AUTHOR

Jim Chisholm is Strategy Advisor to the World Association of Newspapers and director of its project, Shaping the Future of the Newspaper.
As a consultant, he advises many of the world’s leading media organisations on strategic planning and business development.

Email: jim.chisholm@futureofthenewspaper.com
Tel.: + 44 777 581 7797

THE EDITOR

Andrew Lynch is Editorial Director of the SFN project.

Email: alynch@wan.asso.fr
Tel: + 44 7977 501396

World Association of Newspapers
© WAN June 2004