

WHY WE DESIGN HOW WE DESIGN

First and foremost, newspaper design must serve the reader. An exciting design that the reader cannot follow is a design that fails.

Proper design techniques serve to ease and speed the reader's way through the newspaper. They provide balance, order, focus, proportion and unity.

Those techniques assist both kinds of readers:

1. Skimmers, who breeze through your newspaper, looking only at headlines, pullout quotes, informational graphics and photos.
2. Devoted readers, who benefit from improved typography, better illustrations, graphics and photography.

A good design uses type that is legible in a form that is most readable. It pays close attention to page architecture, type texture, internal spacing, type size and length.

It is also consistent. The choices made for the typography of the newspaper apply to all sections, for all pages — the only exceptions being those pages where rules are broken to provide the reader a surprise. On those pages where you wish to appear different, typography and design immediately and clearly make that statement. But throughout the paper, most typographic elements are the same, reassuring the reader that the design is crafted to provide unity.

Design is flexible, to respond to demands of the news. A paper that adheres too strictly to formula makes it difficult to put the reader first: the formula tends to become more important than the reader it was developed to serve. In the case of extraordinary events or extraordinary enterprise by the newspaper's staff, we put into play a design that also is extraordinary.

Your readers come to you for your content. They want to know the day's news and they look forward to your enterprise reports and the daily features your newspaper provides.

Good design must serve to illuminate and work in concert with content. It is a basic of any type of design: form follows function. The news function is to deliver information and meaning to readers. And design helps to deliver: sometimes as a long story, sometimes as a small graphic, sometimes a map, sometimes a chart — often a combination of forms and elements. Each is carefully chosen to place the information before the reader in a way that is pleasing and easy to understand.

Fine design also is exactly what the word implies: designed. It is thought-out. It is crafted. It is based on a firm knowledge of design techniques and the principles that underlie those techniques. It allows for the breaking of design rules — but not without an understanding and appreciation of those rules.

The application of fine design can impart an abiding beauty and elegance to a newspaper. It can become refined without being snobbish. It can show high-class taste without turning its back on its working-class roots. It can go for the bold, especially in feature pages. It can be creative and stylish while keeping in mind a design fundamental: styles change, style doesn't.

Your design approach must reflect your community to your readers. Those readers should be able to see in your newspaper an image of what they are and what they are striving to be — as individuals and as members of their community.

Design, graphics, typography, illustration, photography, color — each is a means to an end. Each is a tool which, used properly, helps the reader assimilate and comprehend the news.