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NAAC ACCREDITED GRADE – 'A'



Topic: Page Layout and Make-up

Course Title: Reporting & Editing

Paper: CC-3

Unit: 1

Semester: 2

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Page Layout and Make up

The layout, also known as the make-up, of a newspaper is closely related to its typography and both together account for the presentation of the newspaper. The layout of a newspaper means the manner and style in which the name plate of the newspaper, the news, the headlines, sub-headlines, pictures and their captions, advertisements in boxes, features, editorials, cartoons and all other elements including the blank space, which go to make a newspaper and are arranged page after page for visual effectiveness.

Typography means the study of the various print types, their different sizes, the spaces they occupy on the page, and of their use for creating the most beautiful and pleasant appearance. [Note: In terms of computer it is the font shapes and font sizes. The layout and typography together contribute to the effective, pleasant and attractive presentation of the newspaper.

The following are the main objectives and functions of the layout and make up :

- To present the day's news in accordance with the relative significance attached to each news item by the editors or by the editorial policy.
- To provide meaningful pattern to the news items and the pictures with the help of typography.
- To provide good and easy readability, so that the reader need not strain his or her eyes for finding what he or she wants in the newspaper.
- To make the newspaper look attractive and interesting
- Finally, to provide a personality to the newspaper so that it becomes recognizable and identified by its very looks.

The layout of a newspaper is always planned by preparing a 'dummy' of each page of a newspaper. The dummy means a blank white sheet of paper of same size as the newspaper page with vertical lines drawn on it to indicate the various columns. The dummy is filled in with the composed material, which is required to be printed in the newspaper. The advertisement desk first fills the dummy with the advertisements and then passes it on to the sub-editor who fills with the news items, photographs with captions, feature articles, and all other material that goes to make the newspaper. It is the responsibility of the sub-editor to indicate the space for each news story, features, pictures, cartoons, etc., by the use of a special set of lines, marks and symbols.

Purpose of Layout Design

The main purposes of the layout or page design are:

- The sole objective of the layout is to help the reader locate and peruse the day's news with absolute ease.
- The sub-editor should know what elements are there at his disposal to achieve the layout he wants.

- The sub-editor must know how to use the elements he has to reach the make-up goal he sets himself.

Kinds of Layout Design

While the designers of newspapers all over the world are constantly working to perfect their layout styles, a system of layout designs is gaining popularity for its ease of reading. This system is basically made of grids. Based on the principles of classical architecture in Indian, Chinese, and Egyptian civilizations; the characteristic principles of applied mathematics are applied to work out architectural proportions. Le Corbusier, the renowned architect of Chandigarh developed it into an elaborate but very simple method of working it out on architectural proportions. He named the grid “the modular”.

About 44 ways have been drawn by Le Corbusier, the famous architect, as the modular grids. These were very flexible and especially suited to newspapers which are basically rectangular. This system gives the pattern in which the layout of the newspaper is drawn.

The two advantages of these grids are:

1. The Corbusier grid is basically a system of dividing the space in a common rectangle- and the newspaper page is rectangle which needs to be divided into display blocs.
2. The system enables newspaper designers to achieve their primary goals such as neatness of appearance, ease of reading and flexibility.

According to this system, the page is divided into a grid of squares and rectangles. By arranging text, headlines and pictures to fit the grid, the designer achieves a cohesive, balanced and streamlined make-up. The elements of the make-up are turned into rectangular units that are the headline; the body text and the picture that go with it may together form one unit in the shape of a rectangle. The various rectangles thus formed are then put together to form the total page in a pleasing pattern.

The Hindu was the first newspaper in India to go modular. “The Telegraph” was born modular. They use the system in its totality with attendant details receiving full attention. Some other papers follow the grid style in part, squaring up some times and striving for some kind of streamlined look generally but not paying attention to details.

The Hindu sometimes uses the horizontal make-up too. The modular horizontal make-up can look confusing unless the column rules and or the corresponding white space are selectively used. In fact the modular system, be it vertical or horizontal, cannot be properly used without white space.

Not all well laid-out newspapers use designer grids. For example, The Sunday Times of London in the days of Harry Evans adapted ordinary newspaper layout sheet, yet produced many outstanding pages. It relied on boldness and simplicity to achieve that end.

The soul of newspaper design is news and its communication to the reader. Therefore the approach to the design has to be communication-oriented and not decoration-oriented.

Attempts have been done to classify these layout styles into three broad divisions. They are:

- 1) The Balanced Layout
- 2) The Panel or Streamline Layout
- 3) The Circus Layout

1) The Balanced Layout:

In this layout or make-up style, headlines are arranged in a sequence which suggests balance. Moreover, if two pictures are required to be printed on one page, the sub-editor may decide to print one picture on top-half of the page, and the other on the lower-half of the page, and thus the 'weight' is balanced. But, the balanced layout is not necessarily the ideal make-up mainly because it gives a uniform but dull and monotonous appearance to the readers.

2) Panel or Streamline Layout:

This design or make-up has "flush headlines" and the style is characterized by the following three features:

- a) a brief summary of news stories on the front page, generally known as the 'index panel',
- b) departmentalization or categorization of news stories in the inside pages; and
- c) often violation of column rules.

3) Circus Layout:

The circus make-up style or design is an extreme type of unbalanced layout in which news stories are presented helter-skelter without keeping symmetry in mind. This style of page-design does not pay attention to the principles of symmetry, regularity, balance or order. However, the distinct advantage of this layout style is that the sub-editor can give the page a prominent and vigorous appearance by providing variety to it. Moreover, certain news stories are always blown up, according to the importance attached to them by the sub-editor. Conservative papers generally opt for this layout style.

Usually a layout style is decided for a newspaper depending upon:

1. The type of the newspaper;
2. Its place in the society i.e. the kind of newspaper it has been projecting itself as or developing the kind of image about itself among other competing newspapers;
3. The kind of readership it serves; and
4. The kind of news it prints.

Planning Layout Design

For precise page – planning i.e., planning the layout, sealed miniatures make-up blanks also called "dummy" are usually available in most newspapers (See figure 3.1). With these dummies Chief Sub-Editor will draw up the page as it should finally emerge, knowing beforehand what news stories have broken for the day or are due to break and how they should be positioned on the front page.

It is customary to give the lead where people are used to look for it the most, i.e. at the top left. If the lead is for the top story bigger and deeper headlines are required. Once the first lead is positioned, the second and third leads could easily be placed. If a picture or cartoon has isolated the main lead, the second lead would be on top right.

This follows the non-Arabic reading habit - from left to right. The third lead could be placed immediately below the picture with scaled down type-face.

In planning a layout, there are two main possibilities:

1. The Symmetrical
2. The Asymmetrical

In the symmetrical layout, the eye does not wander as much as in the asymmetrical layout which, if well-executed could be very exciting and pleasing to eyes. Such a layout would include pictures, cut boxes, deep multiple column intros, and flushed large type subheads. One of the advantages of this kind is any change can be made at the last moment without disturbing the main design. An asymmetrical layout does not have any symmetry in its overlook. This also poses one major problem: sudden changes cannot be made in such layouts. Besides, contributing to a good deal of time being wasted on the grid sheets trying to adjust the news stories of the day. But this kind of layout is rapidly going out of fashion.

Sometimes a newspaper is composed entirely of single column-tops which is the vertical make-up or layout.

Today The Hindu has a more attractive and certainly not less dignified layout keeping up with the times.

The Principles of Page Layout

There are certain principles that guide the designing of a page.

The main principles of Page Layout are:

- 1) Balance
- 2) Weight
- 3) Eye Movement
- 4) Contrast

1) Balance:

Balance is one of the two overriding principles of make-up. The other is the Contrast. This can be considered as equivalent to the composition as used by a painter or a photographer. Balance along with contrast provide a page a pleasing design and easy to read design.

Balance is to try to use all the elements or constituents of a page in such a way that the page looks pleasant and the readers can easily focus on the story of his interest without being garish or some out-of-place picture, photograph or headline distracting him or her.

Some newspapers earlier achieved perfect balance through perfect symmetry (refer fig. 3.5). The columns and even pictures and boxes would be sized precisely and placed in symmetrical patterns. That is, the left part of the page was identical in appearance with the right half of the page. But things are changing now. Though symmetry is balance, the newspapers considered that balance is not necessarily symmetry. Now, more and more importance is being given to the pattern of news and their significance for the day. Sometimes symmetry is deliberately avoided and yet balance is created on the page. This can also be described as balanced imbalance.

2) Weight:

The key to achieve the balance whether it is a perfect symmetry or a balanced imbalance or informal balance, is 'weight'. This weight is not related to grams and pounds, it is 'optical weight'. In other words the thickness or blackness of the elements used on the newspaper, i.e. the blackness of a picture or of type or font gives its weight. So does colour with respect to coloured photographs.

E.g.: A 60 pt. font has more blackness and therefore more weight than a 24 pt. type or font and has less blackness than a 72 pt. type or font. Similarly, a two-line heading is heavier than a single-line heading of the same type size. A three-column picture gives more weight than a single column one. A picture of a dark street is a contrast against a white snowscape (refer fig. 3.7 below). The picture in itself is a balanced photograph and also balances the rest of the newspaper page.

Some studies show that people have a tendency to pay attention to the upper half of the page. That is, the readers start reading from the top and they read from left to right of the newspaper page. Based on this the upper half of the page usually has more weight than the lower half.

Similarly, display elements like headlines, pictures, boxes at the top of the page have more weight than the same elements at the bottom. A horizontal picture has slightly more weight than a vertical one of the same area. Colour adds about 25 per cent to the weight of a display element.

Conversely, the above aspects are used by the page make-up men as considerations to place the important stories in such way that their positions itself will speak loudly about their importance.

3) Eye Movements:

There have been extensive studies on the habits of reading and the eye movements that the reader does while reading the kind of format of a newspaper. Some findings have established that the eye enters a newspaper page at the top left corner. The Americans call this the Primary Optical Area. After the entry, the reading eye moves downward at a southeasterly incline until it reaches the bottom right of the page. The line from the top left to the bottom right is called the Lines of Reading Gravity. You can see the average reader's eye movements in the following figures:

A diagrammatical representation of movements. The readers' eye progresses diagonally through the page from the Primary Optical Area (POA) in the upper left corner to the Terminal Area (TA) in the lower right corner. The remaining two quadrants on the page are called fallow corners. Strong design elements are placed in fallow corners so that it follows a Z- pattern across the page.

This is why the day's main story, the lead, is usually at the point of entry at the top left. Only occasionally, for what is perceived as a 'change', do subs place the lead at the top right corner. Individual habits, of course, differ. There are many sports buffs who read their newspaper backwards. But as in all scientific studies, we should not only go by the habits of the average reader, but accept them as the norm.

4) Contrast:

Contrast is the juxtaposition of dissimilar elements. It is the opposite of monotony. Amidst the huge sea of texts the different headlines provide the necessary contrast. Individual pages have

given the variations of mood and tempo. All of this is done without disrupting the overall unity of the paper.

Correctly employed, contrast contributes substantially to the attractiveness of a page. It also helps emphasize stories and thereby guide the reader along the page.

These principles guide the various components of a page in a newspaper.

Elements of a Layout

The functional design of a page layout consists of many elements. They are designed on the basis of the principles of page layout. Some of them were invented as ornamentations so as to break through the monotony of the flowing text matter.

These elements of a layout are:

- 1) Length of the paragraph
- 2) Cross-heads
- 3) Datelines
- 4) Intros
- 5) Drop Letters
- 6) Column rules and white spaces
- 7) Headlines
- 8) Graphics and Pictures

These elements can be described as follows:

1) The length of the paragraph:

Some studies have shown that short paragraphs have greater impact on the minds of the readers. The smaller lengths hold the readers' attention than the longer ones. Breaking longer paragraphs into smaller paragraphs allows each thought, idea, news to be put in a separate sentence. This helps to provide a fast moving sequence of thoughts.

2) Crossheads:

Cross-heads are also known as sub-heads. Though shorter stories have reduced the usage of these cross-heads, they provide eye relief and also direct the reader's attention to the highlights of the paragraph.

3) Datelines:

Datelines have remained a newspaper perennial in one form or another. Some newspapers in the West do not use dateline at all. Similarly some use dateline which consists of the place name only. Their argument is that the date is published alongside the logo and there is no need to repeat it with every story.

Indian newspapers by and large belong to the full-dateline school. Each story is headed up by the name of the place from where it originates, the month and the date and, in most cases, the agency credit.

4) Intros:

This practice was to start the news story with the lines covering the main story. This practice is not much seen now-a-days.

5) Drop Letters:

Also called the Drop Caps, they are another ornamental breakers. They are 'dropped' or raised initials to start-off paragraphs. Until the 1960s the drop-caps were set in a 2- or 3- column in a font or type bigger than the body, which is usually 10 or 11pt. And the newspapers competed in coming up with imaginative letters to be used as the drop letters. But over the years the practice of using drop caps has progressively reduced. One of the important reasons is that in modern newspapers the decorative drop types look out of place and hence the drops are used mainly in feature pages where they perform the function of a graphic in balancing the page. Eg.: Statesman sometimes uses such drop caps.

6) Column rules and white spaces:

Column rules were being drawn in between the columns. This was to break the monotony of the flowing text. It was also used to separate different news stories. This practice is seen in some newspapers as part of their regular layout design itself.

But now-a-days, the newspapers are following the 'rulelessness'. The column rules are being replaced by white spaces to demarcate the adjacent columns from each other. Thus white spaces are a part of the design too. For example, The Hindu does not use the column rules at all. Yet the newspaper's typography is easy on the eyes. This effect is possible because they use the white spaces judiciously. Just like any other element the white spaces must be used sparingly and appropriately. If too much white space were left the newspaper would look as if the news has been scattered all over the page and the newspaper does not have much news to tell. If white spaces were sparingly used then the news would look cluttered and overflowing out of the page.

7) Headlines:

Headline is another element of a layout. A headline summarizes the essential facts of a story. It makes the look of the newspaper attractive and advertises the contents.

8) Graphics and Pictures:

Graphics and pictures are becoming a necessity for the newspapers. A picture is worth a thousand words and even a poor quality picture is worth a hundred words. They add meaning to the news reports. The pictures themselves can become news items on their own without any accompanying body text.

Thus, with a range of elements of layout and design, it is finally as an editor said, "The design and design elements are meant to orient and signal the readers' eye, prioritize the news and ultimately, provide easy entry points into our stories and packages."

Source: Internet