A GUIDE TO

Newspaper Page Makeup

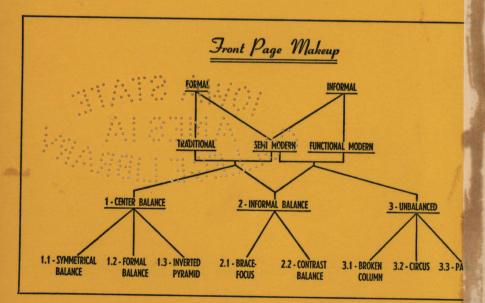
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The Iowa State College Press

A GUIDE TO NEWSPAPER PAGE MAKEUP, prepared for use with the MAKEUP EDITOR'S KIT, by Harry E. Heath

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Newspaper Makeup

N EWSPAPERS, like people, have personalities.

What a newspaper stands for, and the manner in which it supports its beliefs, help shape the newspaper's personality. But the paper's

physical characteristics-how it looks-are important, too.

Some of your friends dress conservatively, while others choose flamboyant, noisy attire. Makeup does for the newspaper and its personality what clothes often do for you and your friends. For the *clothes* a newspaper wears—the headlines and pictures which bring life to its pages—contribute much to its personality.

Let's take a look at the "wardrobe" from which you, as makeup editor, may choose. Studying the chart on the opposite page will give you some idea of the possible combinations.

Formality and Informality

We'll examine the specific makeup patterns under Groups 1, 2 and 3 in greater detail later, so for now let's consider the more general categories at the top of the chart. Formality and informality contribute greatly to the three major personality classifications among newspapers: (1) conservative, (2) middle-of-the-road and (3) sensational.

A good example of conservative personality is the *New York Times*. The *Times'* consistent use of balanced makeup, with a type dress that matches the business-like attitude of the paper in dealing with signifi-

cant news, conveys that conservatism.

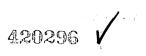
The *Oregonian*, of Portland, Ore., is a middle-of-the-road personality. Makeup of the paper consistently is fresh and modern. However a certain dignity and reserve is apparent, even though the publication is not strictly conservative.

Some papers are sensational in nature. They strive for mass circulation through emotional appeals. Certain of the Hearst newspapers as well as the old *Denver Post* may be classified this way.

In each case, the arrangement of stories and pictures subtly conveys

the personality of the paper.

Thus, formality generally means a conservative makeup pattern. Informality may range from pleasingly-planned informal balances, to the most bizarre of the unbalanced patterns. In the latter, there is



a tendency to over-display insignificant stories, dulling to a certain extent the public's discrimination as to what is important and what is trivial.

The terms formal and informal suggest another classification in addition to that of personality. Newspapers generally may be identified as vertical or horizontal, depending upon which optical lines predominate. Those featuring single-column, multi-decked heads, with double-column and broader spread heads used only occasionally, may be classed as vertical. The Kansas City Star and the Cincinnati Enquirer are examples of this vertical emphasis.

However, the trend in newspaper makeup today is toward horizontal news display, with a more liberal use of spread heads and pictures throughout the paper. The horizontal emphasis has been a natural step in the evolution of newspaper page makeup. Until 1871, because of the limitations of early press equipment as well as the temper of the times, metropolitan editors used a formal news presentation which called for a conservative, vertical makeup. As more versatile press equipment came into use, this formality began to give way. Editors awakened to the possibilities of spread heads as the nation's role in world affairs took shape. Thus horizontal display came into frequent use during the Spanish-American war period.

The horizontal makeup of that period often was badly overdone. It was more a reaction against the extreme conservatism of vertical pages than an effective mode of expression in itself. But the result of this extreme horizontal display was good, for as editors searched for a middle ground between the two extremes, they discovered that informal, as well as formal, makeup could be effectively employed. Horizontal makeup rarely is balanced formally, and this method of achieving freshness and informality in page appearance is more popular today than ever before.

Makeup Principles

Now take another look at your makeup chart. Let's examine the makeup principles which Barnhart¹ calls traditional, semi-modern, and functional-modern.

Traditional makeup, as might be expected, emphasizes vertical masses. It has a real or apparent vertical balance. In traditional makeup, the nameplate always is centered at the top of the page, and the top-of-column positions are considered the most desirable. Primary

¹Thomas F. Barnhart, Weekly Newspaper Makeup and Typography, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1949).

importance is given column eight, secondary importance to column one. The rule big heads highest is followed consistently.

Semi-modern makeup introduces into the traditional pattern one or more of the modern principles described below. It's a combination of the new and the old, and hence might be called *transitional*.

Functional-modern makeup, sometimes called streamlined or unconventional, combines vertical and horizontal elements, features informal balance, and strives for motion in the page pattern. It generally depends upon one- and two-deck flush-left headlines and disregards traditional makeup patterns. "Function is of prime imporance, and such factors as form and structure are modified so that they contribute the utmost to the effective functioning of the finished product." ²

Often the nameplate—two or three columns in width and perhaps with a screened background—is *floated* on the page. It may be at the top of the page one day, in the extreme upper left-hand corner. On another day it may be more nearly centered, with one or more banner lines over it. However, even in this extreme modernism it always must appear above the fold.

Modern makeup often eliminates the column rules, using white space between columns instead. Some newspapers, such as the *Christian Science Monitor*, eliminate column rules only between the columns of a story wrapped under a spread head. Many modern papers also eliminate all dashes between stories and headline decks.

The Monitor, incidentally, is proof that modern, horizontal makeup can maintain its dignity and offer the reader a pleasing page, informally balanced. The Monitor is modernism in a restrained form. Perhaps a more typical example of functional-modernism is the Fort Worth Star-Telegram.

Your response to this discussion may be: "Well, yes, big newspapers can do almost anything with their makeup. They have the facilities." Getting back to the parallel between makeup and clothes, the well-dressed man is not the exclusive by-product of the large-city fashion centers. Neither should the well-planned, expertly designed newspaper be found only in metropolitan areas. A formula that will work in the average weekly shop as well as it works for the makeup editors on large newspapers is this one:

CAREFULLY SELECTED TYPE FACES + LOGICALLY PLANNED HEAD-LINE SCHEDULES + GOOD PICTURES + KNOWLEDGE OF MAKEUP TECHNIQUES = INTERESTING PAGES

And interesting pages mean greater readership for your paper.

²Ibid., p. 4.

Some Specific Categories

Let's examine some specific makeup patterns. At least eight kinds may be outlined in the three major groups which follow:

- 1. CENTER-BALANCE MAKEUP
 - 1.1 Symmetrical balance
 - 1.2 Formal (but unsymmetrical) balance
 - 1.3 Inverted pyramid
- 2. INFORMAL-BALANCE MAKEUP
 - 2.1 Brace or Focus
 - 2.2 Contrast and Balance
- 3. UNBALANCED MAKEUP
 - 3.1 Broken column
 - 3.2 Circus
 - 3.3 Panel

This list is not all-inclusive, of course. Some of the most successful modern makeup fits no particular pattern. However, for the makeup editor who chooses to use them, the outline does contain those types of makeup which may be clearly defined.

CENTER-BALANCE MAKEUP

1.1 Symmetrical Balance. The symmetrically-planned page may be referred to as a true balance page. In symmetrical makeup, headlines, boxes, and cuts are arranged to balance each other perfectly, with equality of weight in corresponding positions across the page. The balance must be exact in size, tone, and style.

Such a system produces a page too obviously planned, one lacking in naturalness. News is too virile, too widely different in scope and interest to pour consistently into such a precise mold. It is not a com-



modity which can be reduced to mathematical balance without the sacrifice of some principles of relative interest.

If absolute symmetry is to be maintained, there is no way of avoiding tombstones (two headlines side by side so they may possibly be read straight across as one headline) in an eight-column page, and papers such as the *New York Times* do not try to get away from them. Papers of five and seven columns can use symmetrical makeup without tombstones.



1.2 Formal Balance. This makeup is not as extreme as symmetrical makeup, for there need not be precise balance between display elements. In symmetrical makeup every story must be exactly equal in length to the one it balances and every cut must be balanced by a cut of exactly the same dimensions in an opposite column. In formal balance, however, there may be slight differences of story length and cut size. The balance still is readily apparent, but is less rigid.



HOUSE OK'S POSTAL PAY HIKE



1.3 Inverted Pyramid. In this makeup, an optical fulcrum is established in the page's center near the fold, and heads or cuts are arranged to create the lines of an inverted pyramid. Often a two-column box or cut in columns 4 and 5 helps produce this effect. Pyramid makeup sometimes is formally balanced, and occasionally may be symmetrical. While these hybrid combinations are possible, most makeup editors prefer to use the pattern as a distinctive one.



The Philadelphia Inquirer

LATE CITY



INFORMAL-BALANCE MAKEUP

2.1 Brace Makeup. Sometimes called focus or corner balance makeup, this pattern is especially effective when one news story is more important than all the others. It is popular with papers that prefer to use three- or four-column spread heads instead of banners. Best-known paper using brace or focus makeup regularly is the New York Herald Tribune, which has been cited consistently for its excellence in typography and makeup.

Brace makeup directs the reader's attention to the upper right-hand corner of the page, from which his eye can easily travel to other sections of the page. Secondary heads are arranged diagonally across the page to form the hypotenuse of the display triangle. Most fre-



Students Arrange Excellent '49 Homecoming Celebration BBY MORPHEW SE WINDER OF ORDER OKNIEST SE WINDER OKNIEST SE WINDER OF ORDER OKNIEST SE WINDER OF ORDER OKNIEST SE WINDER OKNIE

quent brace patterns are formed by three- or four-column spreads with two- or three-column cuts tied into the spreads.

2.2 Contrast and Balance. Heavy masses are weighted against each other not only across the page but diagonally from top to bottom on each side. With the center of the page as a fulcrum, uneven weights are balanced by placing them at varying distances from the center. This type of makeup often divides the page into quarters, each with a focal point. Called by some authorities counter balance makeup, this pattern is careful to offset the weight of a heavy area in one quarter of the page with one of similar weight diagonally across the page.



UNBALANCED MAKEUP

3.1 Broken Column. In making up the broken page, the editor tries, by the use of single-column heads alternating with double- and triple-column heads, to break up the columns on the page so that none, with the possible exception of 1 and 8, extend in a straight line to the bottom of the page. This method is a studied effort to avoid balance of any kind, either formal or informal. One of the characteristics of this front page is the large number of stories and heads it enables an editor to display. One of its weaknesses is that it is hard for the reader to pick a starting place.

DES MOINES PLAIN TALK



3.2 Circus. Circus makeup is broken-column makeup carried to an extreme. The entire page is a jumble of headlines, boxes, and cuts of all sizes and shapes. It is so eccentric as to attract too much attention to itself, and to detract from the subject matter treated. It defeats its own purpose by over-display. Heads are all large and black, all shouting loudly for attention. Most of the heads are at least two columns wide. The page is broken up with no thought to regularity, symmetry, or apparent order.



3.3 Panel. The panel pattern usually is achieved by a news summary or an index in two-column measure, or by a vertical display of pictures of the same width. Sometimes an editorial is part of the panel. Practice favors columns 1 and 2 for the panel.

Panel makeup is a functional modern pattern, one of the few modern patterns which can be categorized. The panel generally runs the full length of the page, with the remainder of the page made up independently. Occasionally eight-column papers prefer to use a single-column panel because of the ease with which the remaining columns may be balanced.

The various center-balance patterns and brace makeup are preferred by many conservative newspapers, directed to home circulation rather than street sales. Today, however, as more and more newspapers attempt to mirror the restlessness and conflict of our times, contrast-and-balance makeup with strong horizontal emphasis is becoming increasingly popular even in areas where street sales are nil. This modern makeup affords an informal balance which permits more variety and more interesting effects than the traditional patterns will allow.

Few editors knowingly use broken-column and circus patterns. Perhaps this is because they feel, as Malcolm W. Bingay of the *Detroit Free Press* once said, that such front pages "give the reader the impression that he is being spoken to by a scatter-brained woman who is trying to talk about everything at once." Broken-column and circus makeup are best adapted to those newspapers which play up so-called sensational news.

Inside Page Makeup

Makeup admittedly is important to the newspaper's show case—the front page—but it is of nearly equal importance on the inside pages. This is a fact which many editors tend to overlook. While most dailies give some attention to the makeup of their inside pages, too few week-lies show sufficient interest in this problem.

The makeup editor should have two closely related objectives for his inside pages. Their makeup should:

- 1. Display the news in such a way that the reader's attention is drawn to the stories that might interest him, thus building readership.
- 2. Expose the advertiser's sales message to enough potential readers to assure the advertising a fair audience.

The first objective must be accomplished before the second can be realized. And the first objective largely is dependent upon successful makeup patterns.

In the newspaper which lets the inside pages take care of themselves, a certain dullness is readily apparent. There is less challenge to read, no interest-compelling display of news and pictures. Thus the reader too often skips over these news pages . . . and the advertiser is cheated.

Various studies have shown that there is a real correlation between readership and appearance. The page which is pleasing in appearance both in tone and design—will attract more readers than the page which is unattractive. And the ease with which the inside pages may be read when stories are properly headlined and arranged is a factor which the reader subconsciously appreciates as he develops either a reading or a non-reading attitude.

Inside-page makeup may be classified broadly in two ways: (1) by the arrangement of stories and news illustrations, and (2) by the arrangement of advertising matter.

Classified by advertising arrangement, inside pages may be:

- 1. Pyramid—Generally built from the lower left to the upper right-hand corner of the page, with no news under an ad and no news to the right of an ad.
- 2. Well—An arrangement similar to No. 1 but with the pyramids on each side of the page, forming a well in the middle. No news is under an ad, but there naturally is news to the right of the left-hand ad bank. In this system, more advertising is in direct contact with news matter than in the pyramid system.
- 3. *Island*—This plan is used to favor certain advertisers with selected positions. The page is broken up with advertising islands surrounded by news matter in one or more parts of the page. Most editors consider this arrangement ill-advised.
- 4. Helter Skelter—A disorderly arrangement of advertising to give each ad a preferred position, with the news seemingly thrown in as an afterthought. This system is an extreme form of island makeup. This is sometimes called hit or miss arrangement, and is frowned upon by most publications.
- 5. Columnar—In which the advertising matter occupies the full depth of certain columns (generally 1 and 2 and 6, 7, and 8 in a standard-size newspaper; 1 and 2 and 5 and 6 in a six-column paper, and 1 and 4 and 5 in a five-column tabloid). This produces a clean, vertical break between editorial and advertising content similar to that found in leading magazines.
- 6. Double-page Well—This plan involves the pyramiding of ads on two pages, to the left on the left-hand page, and to the right on the right-hand page. The effect created is the same as in plan No. 2, except that it extends over a broader area.

The most frequently used plan is the pyramid, generally built from lower left to upper right. This is true because on all pages except Page I, the upper left-hand corner is considered the most vital part of the page, and the display of news is built from left to right. A news triangle with the apex in the upper left-hand corner is created by the pyramid arrangement of ads.

Next in importance is the well, which is used frequently, and the double-page well, which is similarly popular. The other arrangements are rarely used by leading newspapers.

In any pattern, it is considered poor practice to place a cut in contact with an ad.

Classified by news-story placement, inside-page makeup may be:

- 1. Balanced—The same principles previously discussed for page-one makeup apply here.
- 2. Descending Order—The headlines become gradually smaller from left to right across the top of the page.
- 3. Down and Up—The heads go from large in the top left corner to small at top center, and back to large in the top right corner. The heads on the right and left sides are similar in size and weight.
- 4. Ribbon or Band—This system is used when there is very little space open on the page, and short stories with small heads must be used to fill out the scant editorial openings. The editorial display in the upper right-hand half of the page generally is a shallow horizontal band.

Descending order makeup most frequently is used inside, with a starter head (that is, one that immediately attracts attention because of size or form) in the upper left hand corner. This head may be a fairly strong secondary news head, or it may be a double-column feature head. If enough editorial space is open, and the paper favors horizontal makeup, even a three- or four-column head may be used as a starter. The starter, incidentally, might just as well be termed a stopper, for that is its intended purpose—to stop the reader as he turns through his paper. If possible, to stop him at least momentarily on every page.

A reasonable number of top heads—even an occasional banner—plus a fair ratio of pictures should be used inside to carry reader-interest through.

Let's sum up what you, as a makeup editor, ought to know. First, you should know how to *dress* your paper—formally or informally—to best reach its audience. You should have a knowledge of basic makeup principles, and know the various patterns which can help shape your paper's personality. Along with this, you should have a *feel* for typographic effects, and an awareness of type's limitations as well as an appreciation for what it can do.

Your philosophy should be flexible enough for you to appreciate new makeup techniques, and to challenge traditional devices when a change is needed. But you finally must add to this creative ability another vital ingredient—news judgment. The purpose of makeup is to make reading as easy as possible, and to help the reader judge roughly the relative value of news items. Anything that interferes with this, regardless of design, is foreign to the purpose of the newspaper.

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