Desktop publishing process

Earlier you learned about some basic design principles and some of the nuts and bolts of design. When you apply these design principles, as well as others you will learn throughout your careers, you will create publications that people will want to pick up and read. But how do you take those principles from the concept stage to the actual page? In this lecture we will discuss the process of actually creating a page.
Design pitfalls

Knowing what makes a good design is equally as important as what does not make a good design. Let’s take a look at some design pitfalls.

Don’t break headlines from bylines
When designing a page, make sure you don’t separate the headline of a story from the story’s byline. This could lead readers to become confused. For example, don’t place a photo between the headline and the beginning of a story. If you want to place a photo above a story, the preferred arrangement is photo, cutline, headline and story.
Whispering headlines

Don’t let headlines become an afterthought. The size of a headline is generally determined by the amount of text that accompanies it. Headlines that are too small appear as if they’re whispering.

In this example, the headline does not have sufficient contrast between the byline and text. The headline should be more prominent.
**Claustrophobic boxes**

If you box a story or a photo, make sure you give it some breathing room inside the box. Don’t run the text or photo to the inside edge of the box. This will give it a claustrophobic appearance. Instead, allow a bit of space (1 pica) around the inner margin of the box to give it some breathing room.

In this example, the columns of text and headline crowd each other at the edge of the page. The solution is to add more white space between the box and elements of this story.
Uneven columns
Columns of text within an individual story should be aligned. Avoid stair-stepping your columns.

In this layout, the third column of text is not aligned with the other two columns. To fix this, shorten the first two columns to make all three columns even.

The first two columns could be shortened (approximately where the red line is above) to extend the text in the third column (aligning it properly with the first two columns.)
**Too many typefaces**

The key to a good design is simplicity. When you plan the style of your publication, choose a single typeface family for things such as headlines, text, cutlines, etc. A page that has too many typefaces begins to look like a circus poster. The key to typefaces is consistency. Keep your publication styles consistent throughout.
**Inconsistent spacing**

Inconsistent spacing between elements on a page gives it an amateurish appearance. Having set column lengths and keeping your elements within these columns will help keep a page in order. Consistent spacing makes your pages look sharp and professional.

Both of the pages below are inside feature pages. The left page has no set columns. The right page uses six columns and constrains the size of its largest photograph to the “grid.”
Lack of contrast

Be careful what you place behind the text on a page. The best contrast is black letters on a white page. Often times, novice publication designers try to make a page look snazzy by placing graphic elements behind text. In most cases, this looks cheesy and makes the text difficult to read because of the lack of contrast. It is best avoided.

In this example, the graphic makes the text difficult to read.
Too much gray
Every time you write a story, you should think about possible photos or graphics that could accompany the story. Readers are quite sophisticated, and they expect artwork to help interest them in a story and help them comprehend it.

A page with little artwork is boring, and readers will often be tempted to skip that page. On the other hand, you should not make matters worse by placing just any artwork on a gray page. This page has too much text and may intimidate readers.
**Unnecessary or cheesy clipart**

If you have not planned photos or artwork with each story, you may find you don’t have enough graphic elements to interest readers. Many novice designers fix this problem by filling a page with clip art. To make matters worse, they often use outdated clip art, or they enlarge the clip art. Generally, you should use clip art to create information graphics or logos. An information graphic is any visual presentation of information, such as a fast-facts box or a box that offers instructions or directions.
Bumping headlines
Avoid placing headlines next to each other. This may confuse readers because they don't know where one story stops and one begins. You may be able to fix this problem by placing a box around one of the stories and its headline. However, this should not be your first choice. It is generally better to redesign the page to avoid bumping headlines. Remember, boxes should be used sparingly.
Photos jutting into columns
Generally, photos should align vertically with the text they accompany. Photos that jut into columns of text give a page a sloppy and unfinished appearance.

The general rule of thumb is if the layout makes it difficult to read -- then it needs to be redesigned.
Lines of text are too wide or narrow

How wide or narrow should your columns of text stretch? Generally speaking, text becomes hard to follow if it’s set in columns (legs) narrower than 10 picas. It’s tough to read, too, if it’s set wider than 20 picas.

To explain this, let’s look at the pictures below. The first example page is a tabloid (11 x 17). Five columns is common in tabloid layout. The ruler is set in pica length. Each column is approximately 11.5 picas wide (11p2.4 to be exact). The second example is in letter format (8.5 x 11). Three columns are approximately 14.5 picas wide (14p4 to be exact). By removing or adding columns on these pages, the width of text will become smaller or larger. The key is to keep it between 10 and 20 picas in length.

Column Length

Tabloid layout (11 x 17) with five columns.

Letter format (8.5 x 11) with three columns.
**Text too wide**

In this newsletter example, the designer ran the text across the whole page. This makes it very difficult for the reader to follow. It also makes the design less than desirable.

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Soldier and Family Assistance Program News

By: Patrick Bochenek
Office of Soldier and Family Assistance Program Manager

ORGANIZATIONAL DAY (Company Picnics)
Mark your calendars for Friday August 4th, 2006. 6th Recruiting Brigade sets aside the 1st Friday in August as the date for all units to conduct Organizational Day Activities. The day is designed to enable Recruiters and their families the opportunity to get together as a group and enjoy each others company, have some food and drink and some fun. Check with your Family Readiness Group (FRG) Representative(s) and/or your Company Leadership team (CLT) to find out where your individual Company Organizational Day Activities will be held this year.

SEASON FOR CHANGE
The summer season has officially begun. Traditionally, this is a time of year when most military families make their Permanent Change of Station (PCS) moves, plan family vacations, and enjoy the warmer and (hopefully) drier months in the Pacific Northwest. It is also a good idea to keep in mind a few other items that you and/or your family must do upon arriving at a new duty location. First, you must update your new address in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS).

You can accomplish this in any number of ways:
(1) Email info to addinfoAosd.pentagon.mil,
(2) Call the DEERS Support Office @ 1-800- 538-9552.
(3) Fax your address change to DEERS at (408) 655-8317 or
(4) Mail your address change info to DEERS Support Office,
ATTN: COA, 400 Gigling Road,
Seaside, CA 93955-6771.
When text is too narrow, readers may have to strain their eye muscles as they rapidly read from left to right over and over again. Generally, this is not a problem. However, this design pitfall is frequently seen in cutlines and special display text.
Measuring in design

We just looked at a few pitfalls you may come across when you begin to design your pages. You will find others as you gain more experience. Next, we will take a look at the measurement system newspaper designers and editors use.

There are three units of measurement we use in publication design – points, picas and inches.
Measuring in Points

The point is the smallest unit of measure used by publication designers. There are 72 points to an inch. Points are used to measure the size of text, spacing between lines of text, the thickness of rules and borders, and the height of headlines. Because there are 72 points to an inch, you will not use a ruler to measure points. For example, if you want a one-point line, you will set the size of the line by using your desktop publishing program. This also goes for text size and the space between lines of text, which is also called leading. As you may remember from a previous lesson, leading is actually the space between one baseline and the baseline below it.
Measuring in picas

Picas are used to measure the width of objects on a page and internal spacing of elements. The width of photos is always measured in picas and the column width of text is measured in picas. Finally, the space between headlines, stories, photos, columns of text and other items on a page is measured in picas. There are six picas to an inch.

1 inch = 6 picas

Width of items

Width of columns of text

Spacing between elements
Measuring in inches

Inches are used to measure the depth of objects on a page. Photo depth is always measured in inches, and the depth of headlines and text is measured in inches. We don’t measure things to a degree below 1/8 of an inch. In other words, you won’t likely have to measure 1/16 or 1/32 of an inch.

Depth of objects on a page
Don’t measure below 1/8 inch

Depth of headlines

Depth of text (column inches)
Design process

So far in this course, you’ve learned several creative skills in creating a publication, including writing, photography and graphic design. Now it’s time to learn a process that will take these creative skills and put them all together on a page. For our purposes, we will call this desktop publishing.

Some people would argue that desktop publishing is strictly the mechanics of placing text, photos and graphics on a page using a computer program. But the entire process of DTP involves not only the mechanical aspect but the creative aspect as well.

The process, in this course, will begin with a design package. You will use and submit a two-page design package (pictured below) for each of your three graded assignments (front, inside news and feature pages).

The first page explains what elements you will use and the reason why you chose them. The second page is a rough sketch of your layout.
Let’s take a look at your approach to planning a newspaper page. Before we can even begin to layout a page using a desktop publishing program, we must first have a plan. In this course, this plan involves the use of a design package. The package includes writing down your center of visual interest, a story inventory and a rough sketch. First let’s look at the center of visual interest.

**Center of visual interest (CVI):**
As you may already have guessed, some stories are more important than others, and some visual imagery, whether it’s a photo or graphic, are simply better than others. Readers expect newspapers to make decisions for them, rather than lumping everything together as equal. When choosing your page’s center of visual interest you should consider a strong photograph that will anchor a story or an entire page. Two evenly sized photos that are run side by side will clash and work against each other, creating two dull lumps.

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**DESIGN PACKAGE**

**CENTER OF VISUAL INTEREST (What is your main attraction?):**

*What will grab your reader’s attention?*

**STORY INVENTORY:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story Slug</th>
<th>Story Length (inches)</th>
<th>Order</th>
<th>Graphic Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Subhead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Subhead</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Subhead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Subhead</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Infographic Options:**

- Story Box
- Fast Facts Box
- Bio Box
- Photo Cutout
- Sidebar Story
- List
- Summary Box
- Contact Info
- Diagram
- Timeline
- Pulled Quote
- Map
- Glossary
- Chart
- Drop Cap
- Quiz
- Q & A
- Step-by-Step

*Top section of first page of the design package.*
**Story inventory:**

After you have selected your CVI, the next step is to choose which story or stories you will put on your page. This will depend largely on your CVI, the commander’s intent and the reader’s interest. On your design package you need to write your story slug, the length of the story, the order and what graphic support may accompany the article(s).

*How to measure your text:*

In order to effectively design your page, you need to know the approximate length of your text. Many times you will be faced with a story that is too long or too short to fit the space you want.

We have provided you with a tool to measure your text. Inside your downloadable DTP File (located in Blackboard under Course Content Week 23) you will find a file folder named “Resources.” Inside this folder there is an InDesign template file named “Copyfitting.” This template will allow to measure your text, in the appropriate column length, by placing your story. In order to do this correctly, you must be sure to remove any story formatting such as page numbers and the -30- line.

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**In your downloadable DTP File folder, locate the “Resource” folder and use the “Copyfitting” InDesign file to measure your text. Annotate your story measurements in your “Story Inventory” section on your Design Package. Knowing the story length will help you when you make a thumbnail sketch on Page 2 of your Design Package.**
Explain why you did what you did:

You must begin to evaluate and edit your choices by asking yourself questions.

- Do you need multiple photos? Does this story or page require extra graphic information?
- Which of my photos has stronger content? Does one of my photos capture a key moment of drama?
- Does one of my photos need to be run bigger, or will it pack the same punch in a smaller space?
- Does one of my photos have superior quality?

After choosing which photo is your CVI, run that photo big. Use the photo to anchor the page and provide it with impact and interest. You’ll want to begin designing your page with your CVI.

PHOTOS / ART:

Explain why you chose dominant photo:

Tell us why you chose your art and supporting infographics. If you don’t know why, your reader will not know why!

Explain your infographic choices:

Do you need to explain complex numbers in a infograph?

PACKAGE AUDIT:

☐ Do your layout priorities reflect your audience’s preferences?
☐ Does your layout reflect the elements of modular design?
☐ Does your page have a center of visual interest or impact?
☐ Does the tone and mood of your layout reflect your content?
☐ Have you made this page as appealing as possible to your readers?

Can you answer all of these questions? If you can, you’re ready to start your sketch.

Always know your deadline!

Bottom section of first page of design package
The thumbnail sketch or rough layout

When Leonardo da Vinci created the Mona Lisa, he did not just pick up his brush and start applying the paint. He first created a detailed drawing in one of his many notebooks. This is true of any artist or designer. In publication design, we call this a thumbnail sketch.

Thumbnail sketches are rough drawings used to explore layout options. These quick pen or pencil sketches allow you to try out several ideas and zero in on the most likely layouts before beginning a project.

Creating thumbnail sketches is a crucial part of the brainstorming aspect of your design work. When you first start, don’t fret over details and don’t worry about making pretty pictures in the thumbnail sketch of your design package. Use thumbnails to establish approximate locations for major elements. Try for an approximately proportional page size, but don’t get out the ruler. You’re aiming for a general idea of how the page might look.

You may have to make lots of rough sketches. You’ll rule out many design ideas quickly this way before wasting time in your page layout program. Don’t try doing these initial rough designs by using your software. It is timely, and you’re apt to get caught up in things like changing the fonts or doing perfectly aligned graphics.
Thumbnail sketch symbols

To create your thumbnail sketch, you must know what symbols to use. The following information will help you create your rough sketches for your assignments:

Artwork (Photographs, graphic artwork, newspaper flag and pulled quotes)
- Draw a box with crossed diagonal lines.
- Write the slug.

Cutlines
- Draw a horizontal line 1/2 inch below the photograph.
- Within the box, write the story slug the photo goes with and the word “cut.”

Headlines
- Determine headline depth (See your Desktop Publishing Workbook, pg 28.)
- Draw a line horizontally to the width of the headline. You will use the hash marks on the sides of the dummy sheet to help you determine where to draw the line.
- Within the box, write the story slug the headline goes with.

Text
- Copy set at the standard column width, 11.5 picas, is shown on the thumbnail sheet as straight vertical lines connected by diagonal lines that show the pattern the reader will follow with his eyes. An arrow or a slash mark shows where the text ends.
- Write the slug of the story where the text begins. Just below the slug, write the width of the column followed by a J or RR. J stands for justified text, and RR stands for ragged right text.
- Circle this information.

Boxes
- Simply write the word “Box” in the margin of the dummy sheet near the item you want to box.
- Draw a circle around the word box and draw a line to the item you want boxed.

Page 2 of the design package
Once you have your thumbnail draft, the next step is to use desktop publishing software to place the elements on the page. Stories don’t always fit the way you want. You will find out that your thumbnail sketch will have to be fine tuned.

This means you may have to increase or decrease the size of your photographs in relationship to your story text or add additional elements on your page such as a photograph or pulled quote to make everything fit. You might even have to shuffle everything around, write a bigger headline or cut an inch or two from the story. Or you may even have to start over.
Conclusion

As this course progresses, you will get to practice this skill by reviewing and designing several tabloid newspaper pages, such as a front page, a news page, and a feature page. These are basic pages you will create in typical publications at most military installations. Because desktop publishing is a process, it is important for you to understand each step of the process.
References