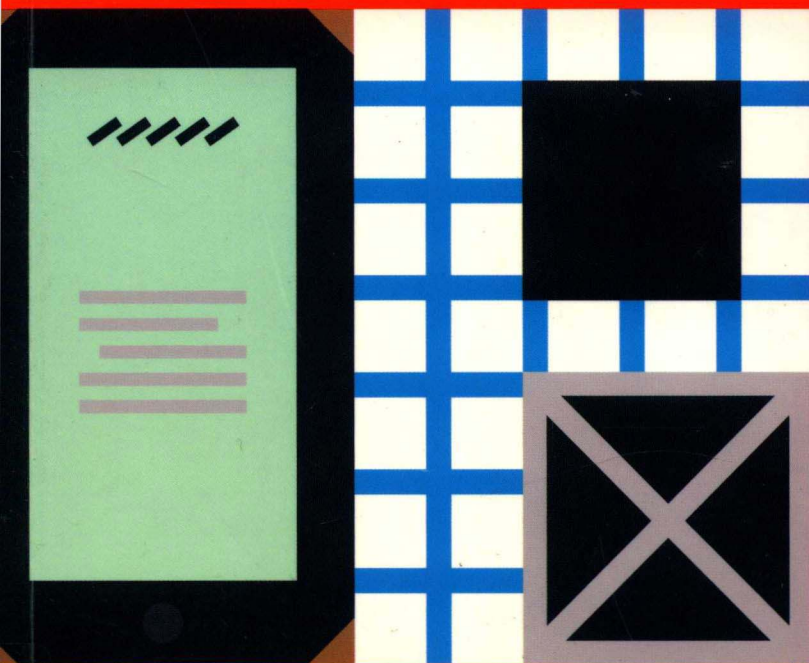
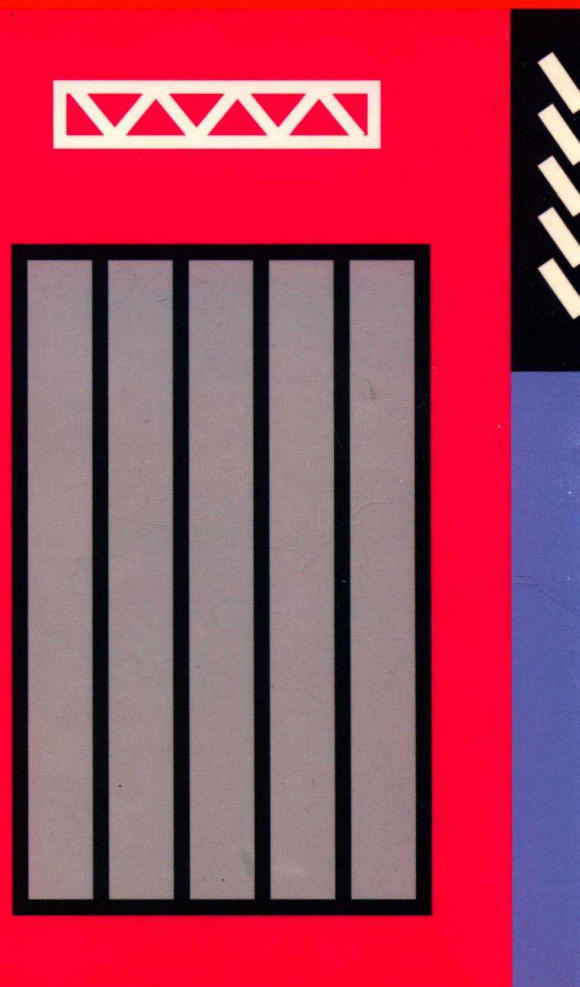


Designing th Editorial Experience



A Primer for Print,
Web, and Mobile

Sue Apfelbaum



Juliette Cezzar

There's never been a more rewarding and challenging time to be designing reading experiences than the present.

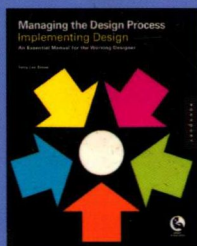
Creating magazines, newspapers, journals, blogs, or any other periodical, print or digital, is as much influenced by time-tested principles as by recent trends and behaviors. How do we design continuous experiences across media as technology continues to evolve? And in this new landscape where information is everywhere at all times, what are the new opportunities for print?

Through conversations, case studies, and elementary principles, authors Sue Apfelbaum and Juliette Cezzar offer an essential guide for both advanced design students and working designers seeking to broaden their practice. The book combines the wisdom of experts, visual examples from publications taking dynamic approaches to the contemporary publishing landscape, and a straightforward set of elements essential to editorial design on any platform.

Case studies include **BuzzFeed**, **The Huffington Post**, **The New York Times**, **The Guardian**, **USA TODAY**, **Bloomberg Businessweek**, **Rookie**, **Pitchfork**, **New York**, **Vanity Fair Italia**, **The New Republic**, **It's Nice That**, **The Awl**, **Weekend Companion**, **Letter to Jane**, **Paper**, **Gather**, **Anorak**, **Apartmento**, and **WAX**. Also included are eighteen interviews with designers, art directors, and creative directors at these publications, plus interviews with **Paul Ford**, **David Sleight**, **Jeanette Abbink**, **Mandy Brown**, **Stella Bugbee**, **Jeffrey Zeldman**, **David Jacobs** and **Natalie Podrazik**, and **Justin Thomas Kay**.

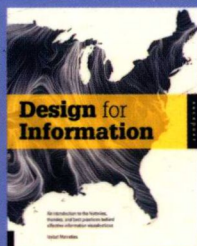
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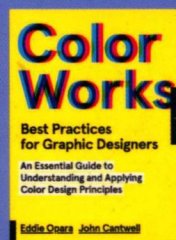
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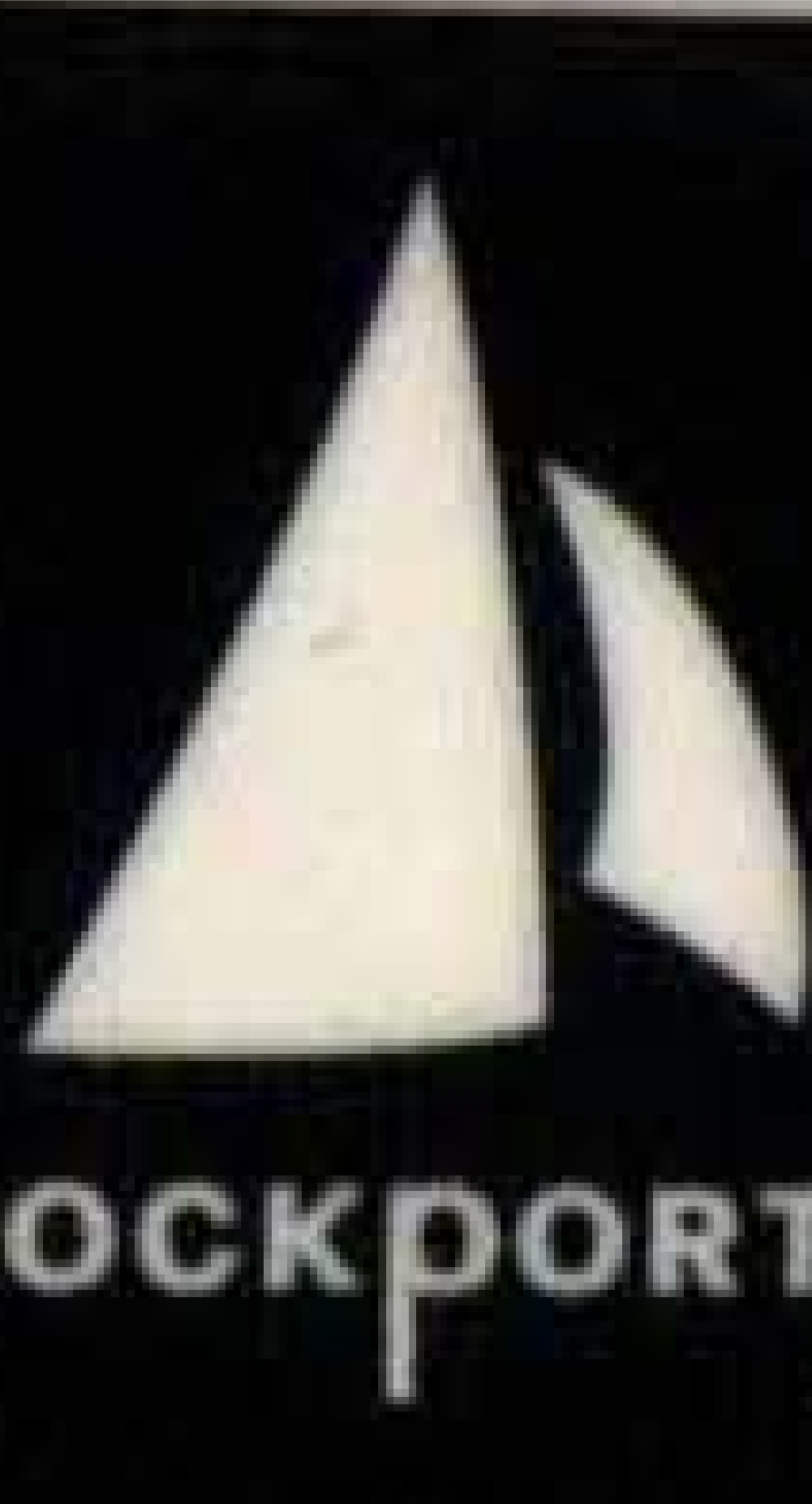
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A Primer for Print, Web, and Mobile

Apteff



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A Primer for Print, Web, and Mobile

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Preface

When we were first presented with the opportunity to create this book, it seemed perfectly obvious that it would be a collaboration between a designer and an editor. We first met in 2005, as an editor (Sue) and art director/designer (Juliette) for *RES* magazine, a publication that, over its decade of existence, moved from covering the world of digital filmmaking to a more general magazine that covered music, art, film, video, and new media. The magazine's edge was that it came packaged with a DVD, an idea that sounds impossibly quaint several years later. Despite having a unique niche, the magazine failed to realize its online potential and folded in late 2006 as YouTube was taking off.

Through all of this, we both learned an immeasurable amount and moved through many successive projects and roles. We also remained determined readers and enthusiasts for the new ways of reading and communicating that arose in the seven years since our time working together, meeting for many conversations about the changes that have come about for writers, editors, and designers. Putting this book together now has been an enormous challenge, partly because as a field, editorial design is in near-constant transition. In the time that we have been writing this book, a half-dozen or more well-known publications have gone through major redesigns or gone digital only; web type and mobile design have gone beyond beta status; readers and content producers have turned their time and resources toward longer-form storytelling; and the advertising and branding world has invested more in editorial and original content as a way to reach audiences in the current age.

This attention to content should not come as a surprise. As the divide between the digital and the physical narrows, it becomes apparent that our need for these forms of communication transcends technological limitations and economic forces. We need to share what we know and what we've seen with each other—in the present, the past, and in the future.

A note about this book

This book is written for the advanced design student, the editorial designer who would like to move beyond print, and the interaction designer who already has some expertise in creating branding, advertising, or product experiences online and would like to move toward shaping editorial content. The Elements chapter is mostly intended to bring design students or non-designers up to speed, while the Interviews, coming from many different viewpoints, seek to deepen the conversation and open up questions about where the discipline is headed and what it may require from a designer. In between are the Case Studies, presenting ways in which various publications do what they do well. And for all audiences, this book seeks to drive home the idea that making something of value transcends categories such as *digital* and *print*, *designer* and *author*, and is the result of empathy for a reader combined with the desire to create beautiful and moving experiences.

Introduction

What Is Editorial Design?

Editorial design is a discipline of communication design that specializes in publications of a serial, periodical nature, which are unified by a distinct editorial or creative vision, are produced at a predetermined frequency, and are made available by subscription and/or strategic distribution.

A more tangible way to define editorial design would be to say it is the design of magazines, newspapers, and journals. But what is a magazine, newspaper, or journal in an era where the form reading takes is not tied to a single medium such as paper? Is a magazine defined by its physical properties or by its content? Is a blog any different from an online magazine? And if we were to decide that a magazine or newspaper is something that exists in print only, what would we call the periodical reading experiences being created for the web or for devices such as smartphones and tablets?

After leaving his post as the director of digital design at *The New York Times*, Khoi Vinh wrote an entreaty on his blog called “Where Are All the Ed Ex Designers?” (Subtraction.com, October 27, 2011). He was referring to what he perceived to be a shortage of designers who can both “create a highly effective, truly immersive architecture around the way real users interact with software and . . . know how to enhance and even maximize an audience’s understanding of published content . . . [and are] comfortable working with writers and editors to help shape what we read.” At the same time, he recognized that there would be an increasing need for designers with abilities in both areas. Smartphones, for example, are used as much, if not more, for reading than for communicating. A designer who applies the rigorous thinking that comes from user experience to editorial experiences is a true “ed ex designer.” In Vinh’s formulation, ed ex designers have been weaned off of thinking of magazines and newspapers as print objects first, that are followed by

a digital offshoot. He writes: “You must understand users and their expectations, and you must also understand authors and their expectations, and somehow, by hook or by crook, you must reconcile these wildly divergent worldviews into a single, coherent whole that looks and feels effortless.” All editorial designers would benefit from seeing themselves as designers of editorial experiences.

Just as the phrase itself is slippery to define, editorial design is not easy to do well. The good news is that, every time we publish—whether it’s by the minute, hour, day, week, month, or season—we get a fresh opportunity to do it again and even better the next time. Still, periodicals are both of a moment and indefinite. The content could have a limited shelf life, or it could resonate with readers and last for the long haul. With constant competition for readers’ attention spans, design cannot simply fill in a template with new words and images for each issue. Strong editorial design has always acknowledged its content, its context, and its readers, and is responsive to the ways that audiences engage with it. And as time goes on, designers have to consider the editorial experience of the contemporary, social reader, who has a new set of habits and patterns that move across platforms and across time.

In that spirit, we’ll talk about what it means to design for the editorial experience, which goes far beyond arranging type, graphics, and images on a page. We’ll talk to people on both the design and editorial fronts—and digital strategists, too—about what is constant and what is changing in the field, and show examples of the best editorial design being produced today, many of them across multiple platforms. We will explore who reads the content, how it takes shape, what forms the content takes on, and offer a primer on the elements of editorial design that result in rich, thoughtful, and rewarding editorial experiences.

Who Reads It?

The Reading Experience

Designing the editorial experience begins and ends with the reader. There are two somewhat contradictory thoughts to keep in mind when designing. First, the way that people read at the micro level is fundamentally the same as what it was 100 years ago. Readers' preferences and delights do not change according to the whims of designers or content producers, and they read in a similar way whether it's a paragraph in a novel, on a wall, or in a chat bubble.

Second, with the vast availability of meaningful content everywhere, at all times, reading habits have changed. Many people are alarmed that the tablet or mobile phone will replace the printed page, but really what has happened is more complicated than that. Readers have not maintained their old habits, simply switching out their paper magazines and newspapers for iPads. Instead, everything from how they discover content, to how they sort, save, and consume it, has changed. Most of all, their expectations have changed. If you can discover an article on a desktop computer, tablet, or phone, you fully expect to also be able to read it right there, without any friction. You may also start reading on one device and expect to continue on another. You may want more information about how far along you are in the content and how it relates to other things. These are really important cues that a sensitive designer responds to.

For an avid reader, the present moment brings an embarrassment of riches. Good, thoughtful written and visual content is abundant and often free. There are also a number of platforms that have been developed that help readers find, prioritize, and consume content. Flipboard, Feedly, and Byline are some of the current tools that allow readers to subscribe via RSS (Rich Site Summary, though also called Really Simple Syndication), a standardized XML format that many sites use to export their content. Many articles or essays make their way to readers through feeds and

social sharing through Twitter and Facebook, platforms that are developing their own news readers as well. While the reader is often presented as a hunter looking for good material, it may be more accurate to think of the reader as a giant whale with its baleen spread wide, filtering through a rich stream of thoughts and images.

So where does this leave print? While many print publications have closed down or gone digital only, there's been a wave of new print publications that are more beautiful and thoughtful than ever. That ocean of online content has changed what readers expect from a print magazine. Frequency, affordability, and immediacy have given way to careful curation, higher print quality, and more book-like experiences. Readers approach printed publications (and, to some extent, tablet magazines) differently, hoping instead for an uninterrupted immersion in the ideas and images laid out within.

Who Makes It?

Staff and Workflow

Publishing has always been something that could be accomplished by a single person or a coordinated army of hundreds, with visibly different results. While many traditional publications, in the name of efficiency, still quarantine design as a last-step dressing before production, they are not the publications that will survive well into this century. Thriving and influential publications at every scale integrate designers into every step of the process, and encourage communication and rapport between the creation of content and form-giving. This is, of course, not new—designers have often sat alongside editors, and the quality of the final production has always mapped itself to the quality of that relationship. But now, more than ever, roles themselves will blur, especially since publications have faced ever-tighter budgets. Many publications are made by people wearing multiple hats, and designers

that are limited in the scope of what they do may find themselves shut out of all but the largest, most traditional contexts.

The same generalization is also starting to happen in the making of publications across multiple platforms. When the iPad first came out, for example, publishers made their initial tests by temporarily hiring people from outside, with money set aside for research and development. As publishing on these platforms is becoming the norm, continually using specially earmarked resources is not sustainable. For people just starting to publish, learning or hiring this expertise is usually out of reach. Increasingly, the same number of people with the same amount of time and financial resources has to sort and publish the content across as many platforms as they can with what they have.

Any publication created, modified, and edited by multiple people has always had a system for managing and tracking content, whether using a paper system, shared drives, or enterprise software. In the mid-2000s, bloggers popularized the use of web content management systems, especially WordPress. For any publication seeking a content management system (CMS), there are dozens to choose from, though all have their strengths and idiosyncrasies, and often any publishing operation finds itself duplicating work across several different systems and software.

These days, you're likely to find an editor or writer using Microsoft Word, a print designer using Adobe InDesign, and a web producer or interaction designer using a CMS for web and mobile. As these distinctions between roles fall away, these multiple systems will fall away as well. New editorial products such as Editorially (see our interview with Mandy Brown, page 126) promise to break the divide between writing and editing and marking up copy with HTML tags. Adobe has been making efforts to bring editors, writers, and digital designers into InDesign through products such as InCopy, while expanding designers' abilities to export to multiple digital formats through XML

export and its Digital Publishing Suite. Enterprising writers and programmers are using versioning systems such as GitHub for documentation and revision. Large organizations such as newspapers tend to use custom enterprise software for both the editing and publishing process, though these are notoriously difficult to change and usually not very user friendly. At the time of this writing, we are a long way from a coherent system that can move content from a writer's mind to printed and digital pages without cutting, pasting, and importing. Each publication—depending on its size, its habits, and the programming mettle of its staff—is forced to create and re-create its publishing systems on a continual basis, using and learning what they can to best serve the reader.

Roles and responsibilities

There are as many different scenarios as there are publications. Following are some common roles found in medium- to large-scale publications. In smaller publications, multiple roles will fall on a single individual, while in others, multiple people may share the same title.

The **editor in chief** is responsible for overseeing the quality of the publication as a whole and often serves as its public face.

The **managing editor** oversees the publication internally and is responsible for staffing, scheduling, and resourcing.

An **editor** assigns and oversees writing from staff or freelance contributors. An editor's scope may be narrow or broad, depending on the size of the editorial staff, and could be specialized by subject (e.g., sports, arts, music) or length (features, front of book).

A **copy editor** is attentive to the mechanics of grammar and punctuation and ensures consistency of style and voice.

A **fact checker** or research editor verifies facts that appear in the text.

A **photo editor** sources and chooses photographs to be used with stories.

A **creative director** is responsible for the quality of the design as a whole and is often part of the team that makes major decisions for the publication.

A **design director** often oversees a specific area of design. For example, some publications still have separate design directors for print and digital.

An **art director** makes day-to-day design decisions, sources and manages illustration and photography, and is often the contact point for the editorial team.

A **graphics editor** is responsible for the production of informational graphics and illustrations.

A **print designer** designs the print publication to the content, often using preexisting guidelines.

A **typesetter** or paginator adapts the design for production in cases where a publication has a proprietary content management system.

A **web producer** adapts and inputs written and visual content for the web.

An **information architect** spatially maps content to web and mobile pages.

A **content strategist** works with editors to plan how content is published, structured, and consumed over time.

A **user experience (UX) designer** is responsible for how a reader navigates and consumes online content.

A **front-end developer** writes code for pages, features, and products that determine what a user sees and how they interact with it in real time.

A **back-end developer** writes code for underlying systems used for content management and delivery to users.

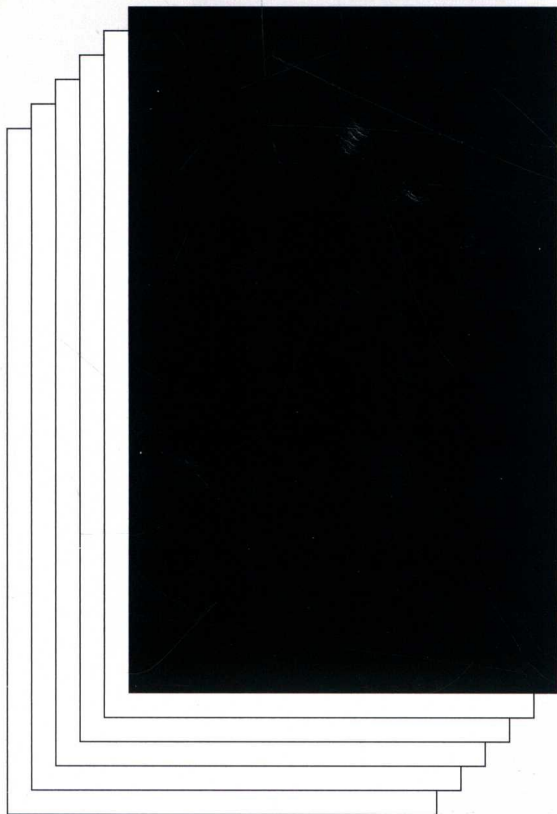
A **publisher** oversees the publication as a business, ensuring that resources are in place for everything from staffing to fulfillment.

Elements of Editorial Design

Formats

Successful editorial design begins with understanding and selecting the most appropriate format (or formats) for publishing your content. Before the twenty-first century, most periodicals existed in a single medium—content was either printed or published digitally on a blog, as a PDF, or in an email newsletter. Today, it's just as likely for a publication's material to appear simultaneously in print, on a smartphone, on a tablet, and on a website sized for a desktop monitor. The type of content, publication frequency, and expectations of readers all greatly influence what, where, and how we publish. Just as there isn't simply one way to print, screens are not one size fits all. While technically infinite in variety, print formats communicate an array of content and often respond to the limitations of printing, distribution, and display. And while screens may become more standardized, differences in physical size, ratio, and screen resolution (pixels per inch) present dozens of possible impressions.

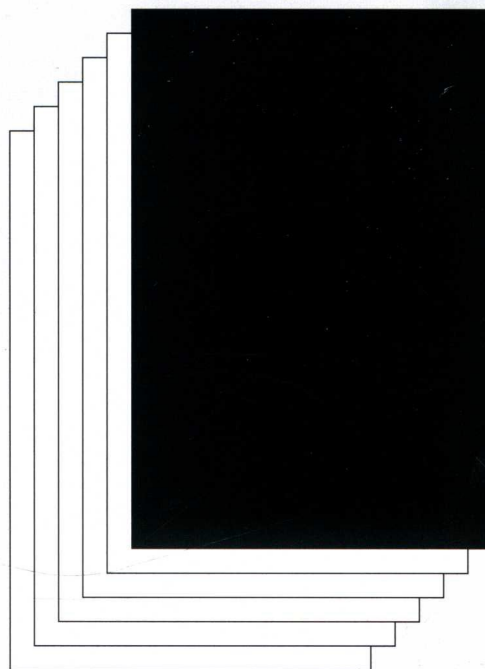
From the earliest to the latest innovations in publishing, here are some of the more popular types and formats for distributing editorial information.



Broadsheet

29.5 × 23.5 in. (749 × 597 mm)

The first broadsheet newspaper, *Courante uyt Italien, Duytslandt, &c.*, was published in Amsterdam in 1618. Prior to this, news was usually relayed in quarto size, similar to today's magazines, and the broadsheet format was used for official government notices. The broadsheet retained its importance and gained popularity after a 1712 British newspaper tax that was levied by the page. It is now the most popular format for disseminating printed news.



Berliner/Midi

12.4 × 18.5 in. (315 × 470 mm)

The Berliner format is narrower and shorter than the broadsheet but shorter and slightly wider than the tabloid format. It is more popular in Europe and Asia than in North America. *Le Monde*, *El Pais*, and *The Guardian* are all printed at the Berliner size.