



newspaper techniques

the monthly publication of the INCA-FIEJ Research Association

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Newspapers by redesign: in Arizona . . .

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At a time when a majority of daily newspapers, including some of the most traditional and conservative ones, are quickly switching to colour, «The Arizona Republic», of Phoenix, Ariz, U.S.A., has just completed a redesign where the emphasis happens to be black and white only for the news sections. A trend to watch for? Probably not. The impact and effectiveness of colour is



A sample front page from «The Republic» after the redesign, completed in April 1988. No colour is carried on the front page. A basic six-column format prevails, although one can get a glimpse of the half-column concept in the index. Times Roman was used as the main headline face.



The old nameplate of «The Arizona Republic» included a sun symbol.



Page 2 of «The Republic» leads with a vertical summary from top to bottom. Note use of the half-column unit to carry small photos. The rest of the page includes a daily profile of a newsworthy individual.

here to stay, with more and more dailies worldwide capitalising on their colour press investments and providing their readers with more attractive newspapers. However, a general trend is evident for a newspaper that emphasises a return to a more classic newspaper look — vertical columns, more stories on the front page, a «newsy» approach throughout and the realisation that newspapers are at their best when they look like newspapers.

As we enter the last decade of this century it's obvious that we are also completing what might be referred to as the post-«USA Today» cycle.

The last decade witnessed a great deal of experimentation with newspaper formats, and, especially, colour.

Newspapers will abandon imitation to rediscover a sense of self-identity. Not every newspaper has to look like «USA Today» or «The Orange County Register» or «The Independent» in London. All three of these are very distinctive and successful products — each in a different market for which it is tailored.

When the publisher of «The Arizona Republic», Pat Murphy, commissioned me to redesign his newspaper, he had brought to our discussion a clearly defined blueprint of what he wanted his newspaper to look like:

«Make it elegant», he said. «Also let it look like a classic, reliable newspaper, one that readers will feel comfortable and safe with.»

The entire redesign process took one full year to complete. Like the majority of my redesign projects, I began the process by working with the newspaper's marketing and research department to carry out focus groups and to explore reader perception of the news-



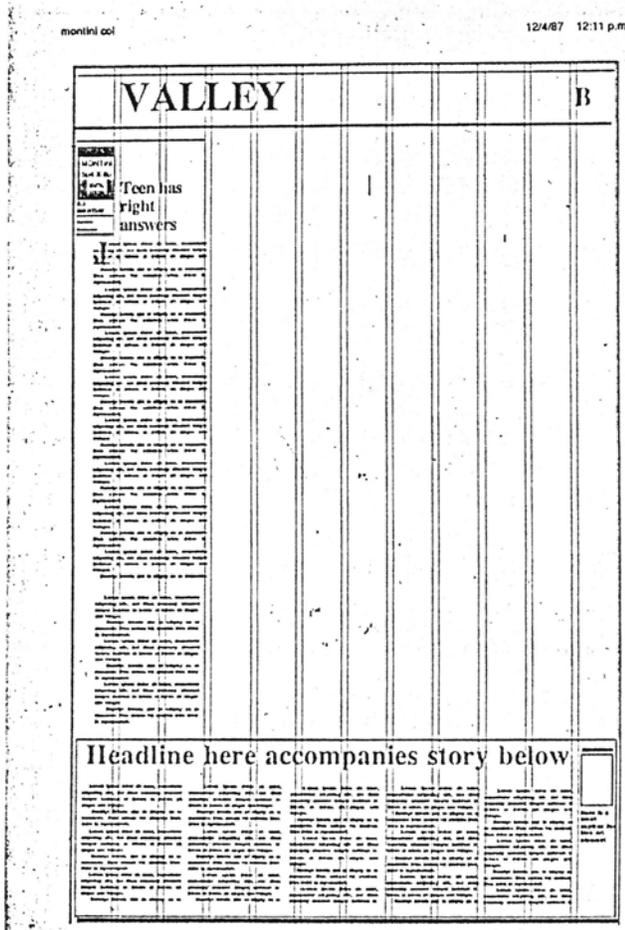
A sample travel section front displays colour, as well as very effective use of the half-column unit, not only to bring some white space relief to an otherwise-busy page, but also used functionally to introduce the big initial letters.

paper in its old format. At the same time, we appointed a committee of about 13 editors, photographers and reporters, to analyse the newspaper and to make recommendations.

Based on the results of the focus groups and the committee's deliberations, we assembled enough information to proceed with the first set of sketches.

Cross-pollination of ideas

Just about this time, spring of 1987, I was teaching at a Newspaper Design Seminar at the IFRA Institute and met a group of editors and designers from Groningse Pers in Holland, including Jan van Kooten. The redesign of their



This illustration shows how the 12-column (half-column units) grid works. The narrow columns are used to incorporate white space in a methodical manner, or to carry small art elements, or even typographic display elements.

newspaper was in the early stages and as I worked with the group, providing advice and making suggestions, I was interested in the very innovative use of a half-column grid instituted as a basic design structure. (See following article.)

We knew that the redesign of «The Republic» would be elegant, classic and somewhat reminiscent of the glory-days of U.S. newspapers in the 1950s. I selected Times Roman as a primary headline typeface, along with Franklin Gothic Bold for accessories. Centennial Bold was selected for the redesigned nameplate, along with Century Schoolbook for text, set 9.5 on 10.5.

«The Arizona Republic» is totally paginated (triple-I), which facilitated the idea of a half-column concept. Into the third month of the redesign, the newspaper hired an assistant managing editor for graphics, Howard Fienberg, who came from «The San Francisco Chronicle» and had served as graphics editor of «The Chicago Tribune» as well. With his impressive credentials and experience, he became a full partner in the process, refining the use of informational graphics, guiding the every day logistics of the redesign, and hiring new designers for the different sections.

The half-column grid became the most outstanding feature of the new design. It allowed more standardised use of white space, while providing a good structure for

maps, small graphics, head shots and even initial letters (see examples).

Implementation of the design took place over a four-month period, beginning in December 1987 and culminating with total presentation of the redesign on 11 April 1988. The Governor of Arizona happened to be convicted of misconduct that day, prompting a large headline on the first front page with the new look, hardly the type of news event that a redesign team anticipates on opening night.

Reaction has been most favorable. Readers feel that «The Republic»'s look is more appropriate to the mood and spirit of the city. Subsequent focus groups will be conducted in the latter part of 1988 to assess reader reaction.

Meanwhile, it is interesting to note how one newspaper's design can influence that of another. As the editors of Groningse Pers look at what we have done with «The Arizona Republic», their reaction is one of pride for the further development of their idea, as well as a desire to adapt some of «The Republic»'s own concepts.

Mario R. Garcia serves as a design consultant to newspapers around the world and he frequently leads IFRA Newspaper Design Workshops which are held throughout the year in Darmstadt, F.R.G.

... and the Netherlands

This is the redesign story of five daily newspapers, centred in one publishing house and circulating in the northern part of the Netherlands. In the past, they were distributed to the public by two publishers. Both publishers were subsidiaries of the same holding company,

JAN VAN KOOTEN, Assistant Editor-in-Chief
Drents-Groningse Pers, Assen, the Netherlands

namely Wegener. The newspapers of both publishers were printed on the same press.

In 1986 it became an absolute necessity to merge the two publishers in order to retain a good grip on the readers and on the advertising market. The question arose: How



How the front pages of the five daily newspaper titles looked before . . .