Anatomy of a Magazine Layout

Page elements can be divided into two basic categories: **architecture** (grid, margins, standing heads, folios, typographical style sheets, etc) which stay consistent issue to issue and **content**, which changes with each page and each article. This handout looks at both, introducing students to the basic vocabulary of publication design. While much of periodical design concerns style, which may seem trivial by definition, a consistently style is necessary, helping to create a magazine's **brand** or **identity**. Readers rely upon, even when they do not notice the design decisions that make an isolated page function as part of a larger whole.

Blue Challenge

Democrats hold power now in places where they have been on the outside a long time. The question is what they will do with it.

By Josh Goodman

John Shea, of Nelson, New Hampshire, For many years, he has wanted a seat on cil, the five-member body that has veto appointments. He ran in 1998 and lost. 2004—and lost both times. In 2006, was something of a fatalist about his chances. Not only did he refuse to accept campaign donations, or spend much time appealing to voters, he left on Election Day for a vacation in ticket that I had to use by the end of November," Shea When he arrived at his hotel in Belgium, there was a sur message waiting for him: He'd won.

Democrat John Lynch strong favorite to win on as New Hampshire's governor. But nobody anticipated his party's legislative landslide.

Headline — Depending on the article (feature, column or brief) and the magazine's style, "heds" can be tightly proscribed or open in format

Art — It doesn't matter if it's a photo, graphic or an illustration. To a magazine designer it's all "art." This feature is organized around a single large photograph—an easy to parse, reader-friendly design strategy. Every extra element you throw into a layout has the potential of adding clutter and confusion unless carefully structured.

Caption — Almost every photo needs a caption (or pull quote) to help make the image meaningful to the reader. This one is designed, but most captions are tightly formatted.
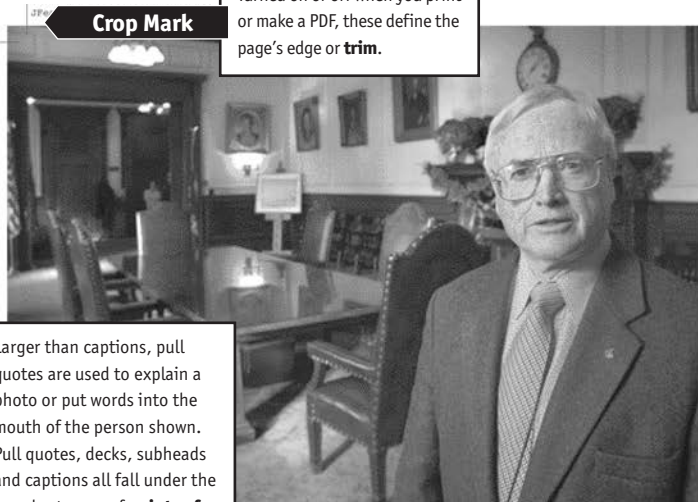
Spread — The unit of magazine design is often not the page but the spread. Even when there is no interaction across pages, spread pages should be designed as a unit.

Deck — Not all articles have a deck but most features do. When used, they usually are longer and provide more specific information than the hed.

Byline — It can be here or at the end, but don't forget it. "By" is capitalized here, **l.c.** at the end.

Lead — Articles generally start with a "lead," written and designed to engage the reader. After the lead comes the "nut graf," journo-speak for "thesis statement." Leads may be bigger and splashier than the **body** of the article. It pays to design your page with the content and pacing of the article in mind.

Folio — More than a page number, folios generally contain the magazine's name and issue date, In the old days, the name might appear on left-hand pages and the date on right (or the other way around) but most magazines now put all info on both pages. The folio is not a design opportunity—it should be an unobtrusive part of your layouts.

LAPREE

Anatomy of a Magazine Layout (continued)

Opening spreads are billboards, coaxing readers to tuck into the story to follow. However, subsequent pages must keep the momentum going—offering the reader visual interest, intellectual stimulation and entertainment. Readers will put the magazine down or flip to something else if they don't perceive value.

Crop Mark
Turned on or off when you print or make a PDF, these define the page's edge or **trim**.

Registration
Turned on or off with crops, these little targets help the printer make sure CMY and K plates print in the right place.

Trim

One of the easiest mistakes a beginning designer can make is not giving proper consideration to margins. A little white space, particularly at the top and outsides of your pages helps make layouts feel open and inviting.

Margin

Bleed
Printing isn't as precise as hand-cutting. All items that go to the **trim** should overlap it slightly, "bleeding" off the edge.

Baseline
This text "locks to baseline" so that text aligns across columns automatically. You can build this feature into your style sheets.

Gutter
or **Alley**. The space between columns is at least a pica. It can be more.

Grid
This page is laid out on 3-columns, a common grid for magazines. You must follow a regular grid, though it can vary with section.

Pull Quote
Larger than captions, pull quotes are used to explain a photo or put words into the mouth of the person shown. Pull quotes, decks, subheads and captions all fall under the broad category of **points of entry**—call-out text that invites the reader into the story.

The Nation in a Nutshell

Democrats made historic gains in state politics last year—or didn't—depending on which statistics you consider.

The total gain in legislative seats for the Democrats, around 325, wasn't among the biggest on record—the parties routinely traded more seats throughout the 1940s, 50s, 60s and 70s. Even the 325 figure in some ways overstates the shift that occurred, since Democratic advances were...

Deeper Blue
Legislatures with the largest Democratic gains, 2006*

State	Gain
New Hampshire	22.41%
Minnesota	12.44
Wisconsin	9.09
Washington	8.84
North Dakota	8.51
Arizona	7.78
Maine	7.53
Michigan	6.76
Alaska	6.67
Iowa	6.67
Vermont	6.67
Ohio	6.06
Colorado	6.00
Idaho	5.71
South Dakota	5.71

*Gains were calculated in proportion to the total number of seats in the legislature.

Source: National Conference of State Legislatures

Long-shot John Shea could win in New Hampshire last year for one reason: He's a Democrat. His party took over the Executive Council and both chambers of the legislature.

Sidebar
A small story that relates to the main text. This sidebar is set off by a colored screen, and is on a two-column- rather than a three-column grid.

Body
Most text in a magazine is in a single size, style and leading referred to as body or **text**.

Infographic
Presenting information in ways other than columnar text makes any magazine more scannable and more accessible. This table is a (very) basic infographic, but still adds visual interest to the page. Most infographics credit the source of the information at the bottom.

Subhead
Subheads are used to **break up** large chunks of text and help the reader understand what will follow. Drop caps, line returns, and dingbats are also used to subdivide text.

Credit
All art, with rare exception, should be credited. Some magazines place credits at the bottom, others next to the image, If there are several images by one person, there may be a larger "Photographs by..." credit in one spot.

Typographical Design & Vocabulary—mind the details

You know many of these terms from typography class, but may have trouble applying them to your own writing. However, it's critical to use vocabulary correctly and consistently for clarity of communication. This guide is by no means exhaustive, see Bringhurst or another good type reference for a more complete list.

Rule

The trouble with the word "line" is it can be a line of type or a line like this one. When discussing rules, be sure to describe them—thick, thin, length, color, texture.

Kicker

A label or short deck above the head is a kicker.

Sans Serif

Literally "without 'serifs'"(the little strokes that finish letters), these fonts are defined by what they don't have. Note that, by itself, serif or sans is not a very good description. Compare Officina extra bold (used above) to Franklin #2 used here. Both fonts are Extra Bold Sans, but have little else in common.

Auto lead, and default indents (which are usually too large) are two of the surest signs of incompetently and indifferently set type. Designers pay attention to, and care about the details.

Indent

Measure

or line length. The width of a column of text described in picas and points, never inches. This text is fully **justified**, most lines to the full width. The headline is flush left.

City Beat

LA Labor's Myriad Troubles

LOS ANGELES IS HOME to one of the best-organized and most politically sophisticated labor movements in the nation, and the ordinance, calling for a wage floor of $9.39 per hour with health insurance or $10.64 without it, had easily passed the city council the month before. It had the public backing of Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, himself a former union leader. The hotel owners had launched a drive to overturn it by referendum, arguing that the city had no business imposing a living-wage requirement on companies that weren't directly doing business with local government.

On the last afternoon of the protest, Villaraigosa put in an appearance with the workers, to express his support and hand out

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leading is the space between lines of type. Headlines often look best with "negative lead"—less lead between lines than the size of the type. This headline is set 24/21, compare to the text below, 9.5/11.5. You can tell by it's negative by looking—the **descenders** and **ascenders** overlap.

negative lead

The first paragraph in a story or after a subhead often doesn't have an indent—it's obviously the start of a new "graf" and it allows a neater start.

no indent

Old-Style #'s

Old-style numbers have ascenders and descenders, which blend into text more gracefully than **lining numbers**, which are all the size of capital letters.

Color

Typographic color—the overall tone and consistency of columnar type, has nothing to do with chromatic color. Don't use the word color without being clear about what you mean.

Ascenders go to or above the **cap height**

Ligature two stuck-together letters

Serif

x-Heights can vary. different fonts are differently proportioned.

Serif

Descenders go below the **baseline**

SERIFS BY TYPE

Old Style (looks hand-drawn, bradketed serif)

Transitional (precise, bracketed serif)

Modern (fine strokes, unbracketed serif)

Slab (serifs as thick as body weight)

Caps and small caps Articles often start

LOS ANGELES IS HOME to one of the best-organized and most politically sophisticated labor movements in the nation, and the ordinance.

with a small flourish like this.

Leading

is the space between lines of text. This type and the grayed text have the same lead even though the size of the fonts are different. Generous lead can go a long way to making a page open and inviting. Tight leading feels newsy and serious.