Typographic Hierarchy

Typographic Design 1

Typographic Hierarchy

- Typographic hierarchy is how different faces, weights and sizes of typefaces structure a document

- A typographic hierarchy expresses the organization of content, emphasizing some elements and subordinating others

More on Typographic Hierarchy

- A visual hierarchy helps readers scan a text, knowing where to enter and exit and how to pick and choose among its offerings

- Each level of the hierarchy should be signaled by one or more cues, applied consistently across a body of text

- A cue can be spatial (indent, line spacing, placement) or graphic (size, style, color). Infinite variations are possible

Opening Stage

- Undifferentiated content
- No hierarchy of content at all, the reader is not directed to find any one detail more important than the rest

The Typography of Paul Rand
with Lewis Blackwell
Shattuck Hall • 7:00 pm
March 30, 2011
Design Lecture Series
Portland State University
Art Department
With wit and wisdom, Blackwell
dissects the patterns of Rand's use of
typography throughout his brands,
book covers, and advertising work.

Stage One: Spacing and Order

- Using only one typeface and one weight, the content is split into relevant chunks with spacing

- Ordering the chunks helps direct the reader's attention

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Stage Two: Weight

- The most important element is emphasized with a weight change

- Order now not as imprtant as we have the visual signal of bold text to tell us what is most important

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Stage Three: SIze

- A new size is introduced to the hierarchy

- Varying the vertical spacing provides more visual structure

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Stage Four: Alignment and Spacing

- The alignment and spacing is varied

- Multiple sizes and weights are introduced

- Overall trend: increase **contrast**

  - Use tools such as weight and size to emphasize the most important content, while simultaneously using the same to make the less important content *recede*

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Stage Five:
Color and Accents

- Color is used to guide the eye around the composition

- Graphic elements are added to emphasize certain blocks of content

- The same rules that applied to the type also apply to these elements: color and heavier weight denote greater importance

Stage Five, cont'd: Directional Tension

- We can also balance the composition with graphic elements by creating **directional tension** (pushing left versus pushing right) and by creating **tension with the edge of the page** by bleeding off

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Some Rules of Thumb

- To create an elegant economy of signals, try using no more than three cues for each level or break in a document

- **Emphasizing a word or phrase within a body of text usually requires only one signal.** Italic is the standard form of emphasis. There are many alternatives, however, including boldface, small caps, or a change in color.

- A full-range type family such as Scala has many weight and style variations designed to work together. You can also create emphasis with a different font. If you want to mix font families, such as Scala and Helvetica, adjust the sizes so that the x-heights align.