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A report explaining the content and layout of the EAAA newsletter and what design principles were followed to produce it.

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List of Contents

Summary

A major part of producing the newsletter document was learning the Indesign CS3 desktop publishing software. This report concentrates mainly on the design principles and the choice of content with references to the software where examples are appropriate. Some assumptions can be made about the audience and the newsletter purpose but a detailed analysis is difficult to produce without more investigation.

Methodology

To produce the newsletter itself I have used the methods shown in the Adobe Indesign CS3 book as constant reference and dipped into the other 3 Indesign Books only occasionally. The Design principles have come mainly from the Williams books and partially from the Sevilla books. The ideas for what type of content has been based around what Sevilla and Wurman says. Although before producing a finished document I would have liked a more accurate picture of who the audience are.

To use the recommended text from Petterson would have turned this document into an epic and much of what Petterson says I have included anyway. Peterson even refers to Williams 1st edition anyway.

Introduction

The Western world starts reading at the top left corner of the page and scans down and to the right (Sevilla). The layout of the newsletter I hope reflects this whilst incorporating other important design principles that are described in the Discussion. Also the chosen content is of relevance to the assumed audience.

Results and Findings

The Newsletter started as a grid, of 3 columns per page. Christine Sevilla (p.56) calls it "Grid E" but I have modified it to suit the content. Sevilla also recommends a ragged style for short lines but I have disagreed with this to keep the gutters even. I have also gone to great trouble to make sure that are no hyphenation and no widow lines. I have also found that there is so much to consider when producing a newsletter that these considerations are actually greater than the document being produced.

Discussion

1. Font

a. Headings and Sub-headings

Astronomy is an old science that is very precise.
Looking from the ground up into the sky is a long vertical movement and the header font should reflect the vast distance between the ground (baseline) and the stars (caps height)
Astronomers are not showy, their profession or hobby is quiet serious business They are fascinated by the beauty and elegance of what they observe. And so a simple elegant font, sans serif, with monoweight strokes is very readable for short burst of text (Williams 2006). With headlines people are scanning very quickly to see what interests them. Any extra time taken to understand the meaning of the words would mean that they may just ignore the headline and move on. Sans serif fonts are very easily recognised when there are just a few words that make a headline and this gives them their High Legibility.
Planets and stars are round so I would like the letter "O" to be perfectly round.
Astronomers also look at the past when they look through a telescope.
The Bauhaus motto of "form follows function" fits very well here and their font "Futura" especially a tall version of "Futura" would be good although some of the letters are not straight up and down. A full list appears in Appendix 1.
The choice of font will have to contrast with the body text so that there is a clear distinction between them. Also headings have to balance the body text. Too thin or light and the body text will stand out too much. Too thick or heavy and the font will become clumsy. So to sum up, font has to be:-
Elegant – tall monoweight strokes
non fussy – no serifs
Circular O – as a nod to the shape of stars and planets.
High Legibility

Now that could be the end of it but considerations such as cost and shared responsibility for producing the newsletter for EAAA means that popular or common fonts would be better utilised rather than an obscure one that only sits no the first editors machine.
So finally I have decided on Gills Sans for the headings and minor headings.
And finally with the reverse type on the masthead and the contents header, I had to be very careful not to go too small and 12pt is still large enough for there to be no danger of the counters filling in when the newsletter goes to print.

b. Main Body text

The choice of font here is down to the "readability" of the text. To keep the reader focused on the message on not on the font, the font has to be one that does not stand out. It needs to have moderate features with no characters that have contrasting features such as thick to thin strokes or slanted serifs.
Serif fonts lead the eye from one character to another linking the letters into words (Williams 2006). Out of the serif fonts the Old Style are very moderate and so very readable so much so that they can be difficult to tell apart.
Examples of Classic Old Style are:-
Caslon Pro regular, Minion Regular, Century School Book, Garamond.

2. Colours

a. Colour

Space at a glance is very black white. Incredible colours are what can be seen when using a power telescope and this could be a big part of the attraction of Astronomy. Astronomers like colour that occurs naturally. The best colours that are so awe inspiring to look at through a telescope are the reds and purples of nebulas. But a newsletter however may be photocopied, need to be produced quickly on a low budget. Colour is not cheap so for the most part simple black and white providing the most contrast is the best choice.

b. Typographic Colour

Typographic Colour is only concerned with black and white. More colour is seen when using bold, condensed, or anywhere where type is heavy looking.
Two examples of this are:-
1. Page 3 last column where because there was so much text to include I had to go down 2 point sizes and this means that the characters are closer together making the column heavier looking and so more colour. I feel that this is not too much of a problem because the column is narrower than the one next to it where I have used double width.
2. Page 4 with the Christmas Menu I have used bold type for the titles of the meals.

Had a Gill Sans bold been available on my machine I would have used it to provide more typographers colour in the headings to provide even more contrast.

3. Content Layout

a. Contrast

Contrast is created when 2 elements are different. The masthead is nearly completely black and the font used has enough contrast to stand out. Also at the bottom of the page I have repeated the space image, looking like a near black stripe to give the page a clear finish. Also in the masthead I have used a drop shadow which is not that noticeable but just gives the text further contrast because the closest part of the shadow to the text is solid black. On page 4, the Christmas Menu, the box of the text frame I used Object Styles in the panels, called it "menu" and simple gave it a thick thin 1 point stroke to basically show that this is something very different to the rest of the newsletter and inset spacing of 0.2picas to keep the text from touching the side.

b. Repetition

One of the most important features of a multiple page publication is consistency, or repetition (Williams 2006). The four pages have the same masthead and rule line at the bottom, same fonts (just 2 fonts), a consistent use of colours, spatial arrangements and so they all look as though they belong to each other. With these obvious repetitive features in place I was able to do a few things that break the rules slightly and they were:- Using on page 1 and 2, three column format that has 2 wider columns and one narrow one and on page 2 the quote is laid out down the edge of the page.
Something that maybe suitable for other newsletter but I felt that it may have been a bit ostentatious for Astronomers is the use of Drop Caps. The tool for this is accessible in Indesign when n Type mode click the Paragraph Formatting Controls button far left below the little capital A.
But if I had to repeat this at the beginning of each article I think that it would have been distracting from the message of the text.

c.   Alignment

All of the newsletter has a strong left alignment. This is for all the Headings and Subheads making the text appear neat and not cluttered. The rules on page 4 align with other elements except for the Christmas Menu which could be viewed as a separate document in it's own right so in this case it is quite alright not to use left alignment.
The first line of each paragraph of the text is not indented and this is to preserve the strength of the left alignment.
To stop a lot of the text hyphenating I used Adobe Single-line Composer many times using the justify left and fully justifying type until there were no hyphens. I could well have used in Indesign em, en and thin spaces maybe to the same effect.
With the quote on page 2 I would have like to have used hung punctuation so that the quotation marks were outside of the quote, but never had the space to do this so left if as the standard setting. To do this I would have needed to use the Indesign Story Palette (Tool bar-Windows-type & tables) and ticked the Optical Margin Alignment.

d.   Proximity

This is simply the principle that things that relate to each other should be close to each other.
There is a little more space above the subheads than below to ensure that the subhead is visually connected with the text it refers to.
On example of this is on page 3, the top ten list of space foods where each title of the food is closer to it's description. In Indesign Character panel each title was given a −1pt baseline shift.

4. **Content**

A newsletter is not a sales brochure that has to promote itself to people who are only partially interested in it's contents.
The audience of amateur enthusiasts I can safely assume that they will be very interested in the content and so they probably are not concerned with a gorgeous layout and graphics (Sevilla). And if learning is remembering what you are interested in (Wurman) then producing a well received newsletter should not be too hard.
Other assumptions about the audience could include that they would be:-
Well educated
Knowledgeable about the subject
Very motivated to read the content

The lead story on page 1 looks to the future year ahead and should leave the reader with a curiosity to see what exciting news will be in future issues especially of events that they can attend. This being the first issue I want to make sure that the reader wants to look out for the next issue.
This could be the assumed purpose of the first issue, which is getting the readership in the habit of reading the newsletter and so becoming more involved in the Associations activities.

The story on page 2 is a more detailed account of a significant discovery during the year. Page 3 story offered the chance to provide some stunning photographs that truly remind the audience why they do what they do. And this is balanced with the third column that is a bit of light hearted fun after the seriousness of the last two articles.

Page 4 lists the remaining social event for this year with the menu detailed and a cut out booking form to complete and return.

The contents of the newsletter are not vast enough to have a sophisticated method of organising but the titles and body text are arranged in a hierarchy from bigger to smallest and this directs the readers eye in the direction it needs to go.
Photos are there to illustrate the content and where used I have credited the source. They have been cropped to size and aligned with the text.

Conclusions And Recommendations

After the first issue some feedback and testing would be done to find out whether the newsletter was useful, that the audience had taken in the information and that they would like to receive the next issue.
Before going to print it would be preferable if the newsletter is printed on a glossier paper to for better photo reproduction but this to be not too heavy to push up the cost of postage. It would be good to test the newsletter to see how well it reproduces using a photocopier. Some photos may need to be replaced with higher contracting graphics.

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Indesign CS3 Quick Start Reference Guide by Sandee Cohen 2008
Adobe Indesign CS3 Industrial Strength Page Layout techniques by Olav Martin Kvern and David Blather 2008
Mastering Indesign CS3 for Print Design and Production by Pariah S. Burcke 2007