

Is there a disconnect here someplace?

Mr. Finberg: This just goes to show you that if you volunteer to do something, you get to do it again. So like we did in 1988, we conducted another survey, and the goals were fairly simple. We first wanted to gauge what the industry currently is thinking about design and visuals, in general, which pretty much parallels what we did last time. And we also wanted to look for any changes between 1988 and a follow up survey SND did in 1992. So we used a lot of the same questions.

In 1988, we received 628 responses. This time we got a little over 1200, about 200 of them from a Web site we created this time around. The split? Sixty percent came from designers, 40 percent from editors.

And I might note here that our questions and assumptions in 1988 were based to a large degree on our optimism that things were going to keep rolling along at the same high plateau they had been at in the past.

And we did recognize the challenges then...go back and reread the section in *Newspaper Design: 2000 and beyond* that Marty Petty did about people, and see how right she was about finding the right people and organizing them in an effective manner.

One major difference this time, given changes that have occurred in the interim, we didn't ask questions about color and the use of computers...they are givens.

So we're going to focus today on five areas: the importance of design, however you want to define design; the importance of visual elements — photography, informational graphics and other distinctive elements —; people; the relationship online has with print

— which is a new area this time around —, and finally where we are going to put all of this stuff in the future, which is not an insignificant issue when looking out 20 years.

We're going to look at the numbers, hear what Warren Watson, from API's staff, found out from others in the industry who were asked to comment on the results, and see what we here at the table make of the responses.

As for the importance of design, the survey showed that it remains strong in the opinion of both editors and designers. And as for visuals, we're also optimistic. And that's the good news. The bad news is there appears to be a big disconnect between editors and designers in how they view the world.

And based on the discussion we had this morning, the kinds of roles newspapers are going to be playing in 2020 may be very different, and, consequently, trying to judge the role design and visuals will play at this time may be very difficult.

On the importance of design over the next five years, respondents had a choice of higher, the same, or less. And the interesting thing between '88, '92, and '99 is that basically, with a little drop off in '99, everybody thinks design is either going to be the same in importance or higher in importance which, I guess, gets us back to the optimism in the group. And looking ahead in 2020, everybody basically said the same thing.

Two new questions we asked zeroed in on the quality of current design. We asked respondents to rate quality of design in the industry overall and at their own newspapers. On a scale of 1 to 10 — 10 being the highest — thirteen percent of participants gave design

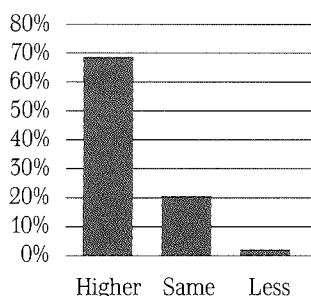
IN A NUT SHELL

Responses to API's design survey, similar to the one incorporated in the 1988 J. Montgomery Curtis seminar, Newspaper Design: 2000 and beyond, produced several surprising results, at least surprising to Howard Finberg of Central Newspapers who coordinated the project. Finberg's most animated comment: "Everybody thinks they're going to have more space in the future...what planet were these people on when they answered this question."

"So we're going to focus today on five areas: the importance of design, how-ever you want to define design; the importance of visual elements – photography, informational graphics and other distinctive elements; people; the relationship online has with print, and where we are going to put all this stuff in the future..."

Mr. Finberg

"How important will design be at your newspaper by the year 2020?"



industrywide an 8 to 10. Seventy-one percent put it at 5 to 7, and the rest were 4 and below.

And if you think respondents were being generous with their overall industry view, what do you think they were saying about their own individual newspapers? More than 50 percent felt their own newspaper rated 8 to 10. So if we have this straight, the industry sucks, but we're doing okay at our own newspaper. Yet another contradiction.

Mr. Gray: A quick question, what size newspaper are we talking about?

Mr. Finberg: Most respondents – 90 percent – came from daily newspapers, with some 45 percent over 100,000 circulation. We felt it was a good split.

But let's go back to what I think is another contradiction. Redesigns, we know, are coming further and further apart. And if we feel we are pretty good right now, why bother to redesign. But given all of the pressures we are under as an industry, shouldn't we be redesigning more? We seem to have gone through a flurry of redesigns in the late 80s, and since then have been content to live with them.

Mr. Watson: In discussing the results of this survey with some 50 publishers, editors, designers and educators, it's clear that design, at least from the publisher's and editor's viewpoint at some small newspapers, is irrelevant.

One Massachusetts publisher, Peter Watson, told us that design is absolutely no factor in his company, that readers want content, especially more local news. And we heard a chorus believing that newspapers needn't worry about design until they get their content down right.

Terry Quinn, vice president of reader development for Thomson Newspapers, called the '80s an infatuation period with design, a technicolor dream world

that readers yawned at and ignored, and then walked away from newspapers, leaving behind what he called today's sterile, homogenized look.

And, finally, Darrell Moen, someone who many of you know from the education field, echoed the views of many others that design has simply become institutionalized; it's not special anymore.

Mr. Gray: So what are we hearing here, that we haven't progressed at all in educating a lot of editors and others in the last 20 years... they still think content and design are two different things, that you can't do both at the same time, and that one precludes the other?

Mr. Black: What has actually happened is that design has been ghettoized into the art departments of many newspapers.

Mr. Ritzenberg: One can't help but think how differently a survey like this would come out if it were conducted elbow-to-elbow with somebody...which would give you an opportunity to get at what people really think design is. I suspect that most working editors when asked about the importance of design, or whether their paper is well designed or not, think design is about graphics, typographical pyrotechnics, and that kind of thing...

Mr. Finneman: Since we have two editors here, I'd like to see if either would like to respond to Phil.

Mr. Pattison: I think his instinct is right. When someone says design is very nice, the orientation from word people is to dress it up. So what most people might consider good design isn't necessarily functional design...if we are going to measure design by what it accomplishes.

Mr. Sutton: I'd agree with that, and I think Phil also made a very good point earlier about smaller and medium-sized newspapers, because that's the bulk of

survey

20

what we have in this country. I do think most editors see design simply as layout, and I believe there is a design backlash, because some visual journalists have too much of a “make it pretty” mentality.

Mr. Garcia: If I could comment on layout versus design, in my experience I have found that, going to Dave Gray’s earlier question as to whether we have created a design awareness among editors, part of the trouble is we have created too much awareness.

You have, in a sense, a lot of copy editors with the best intentions thinking they are designers. In fact, they actually are good at layout, and newspapers may have to do a better job of defining the differences. Layout is the foundation, and a good newspaper should probably be 80 percent that. Design adds the surprises, things people who are trained to do should do.

And I think if you are trying to have a 100 percent designed paper, we have seen the results here...a three or four on the scale. One of the things you learn from the Europeans is that they do understand clearly that some pages are going to be laid out and some are going to be designed. Too many American newspapers, in my opinion, have totally opted to be designed.

Mr. Finberg: Moving on to the importance of photos and graphics, the good news in this survey, once again, is that they remain important to all respondents...maybe not as much, however, as we thought.

But what’s troubling to me, as a former graphics editor who toiled in that vineyard when we had nothing but rocks and stumps, is that I now wonder whether informational graphics may have just been a fad.

Mr. Watson: Well, the comment we heard repeatedly is that they are being scaled back...space is the

issue.

Media General’s Tom Sylvestri, kind of their synergy czar, says graphics have lost their allure, that his newspapers are now looking at very simple, straightforward graphics...less color, less segmentation, less of the big thing. But, clearly, in their scheme of thinking, they have less importance.

One editor, Jim Jennings of Thomson newspapers, suggested maybe there just aren’t as many artists out there to do graphics; that a lot of them may now be paginating pages and simply don’t have the time.

Mr. Majeri: Well, to be honest, there were a lot of expectations for graphics, and maybe we just never met those expectations. Newspapers still gauge density of information as relevant, and many graphics, while providing a lot of sizzle, have very little content... and this may be their biggest shortcoming over the years.

There was a belief that visual storytelling was going to be a valuable way of informing people and bringing new people into the newspaper. And because we haven’t quite met that expectation, I think a lot of really bright young people who we sort of lured to our field have ended up finding other places much more effective than we are.

Mr. Keegan: But are papers really using fewer photographs and graphics?

Mr. Gray: What I have seen is that an awful lot of people who used to be doing informational graphics at newspapers have gone into Web work and other fields where the newsroom stress disappears...where life is easier, they can make more money, and hours aren’t horrendous.

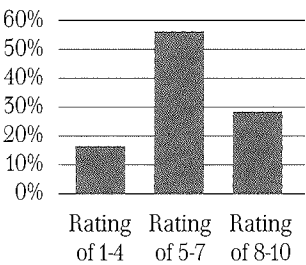
Ms. Petty: Well, I believe graphics still really do engage readers. They study them, they like them, they catch your mistakes, they call you on it, and I don’t

“I do think most editors see design simply as layout, and I believe there is a design backlash, because some visual journalists have too much of a ‘make it pretty’ mentality.”

Mr. Sutton

“...in the coming space crunch, what are editors going to give up on first? It’s likely they’re going to be giving up on the wrong things.”
Mr. Curtis

“On a scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent) how would you rate the quality of newspaper design throughout our industry?”



think we should give up on this. I agree we may not have executed them very well, going instead for the big, sexy stuff as opposed to basic maps and charts that inform and take great care. And I think we totally undersell our readers...they are very sophisticated and smart. So I think graphics are very much a part of our future. It’s a matter of balance and resources.

Mr. Pattison: I’m just wondering whether we believed that graphics somehow were going to save our industry...and now 20-25 years later we still don’t feel particularly safe, so why don’t we just give up on this graphics thing? It’s a very easy thing to give up on, you know, and I think it has happened in a lot of places.

Ms. Lacava: I think Marty is right. The problem with graphics has been that they are either so simplistic or so convoluted, and we need to achieve a better balance. We need to use graphics in an intelligent manner. They have to be meaningful and easy to read so people can absorb the information. I think newspapers were using graphics in the 80s as sort of a magnet to attract non-readers, which was the wrong reason. They have to be there to add information, not entertain.

Mr. Sutton: I just wanted to go back to something said earlier about the availability of talent. I think one of the reasons the importance of graphics has declined can be attributed to the fact that a lot of us have simply given up on trying to build that talent. We have basically merged graphic talent into design to accommodate our inability to get these people onto our staffs...and that has not allowed us to reach that higher standard of excellence for informational graphics.

Mr. DeMaio: One of the things I experienced when I was in the field, which is ironic now and was frus-

trating then, was that the hardest thing to get from the people who wanted graphics were the words to go along with them. You almost had to plead. And the irony now is that some of the people complaining that graphics are just pretty or only used as decorations were the same people who wouldn’t provide the words we needed. So it’s not surprising to me that graphics are now perceived as being kind of superficial.

Mr. Curtis: I believe the lack of quality and quantity of graphics in newspapers today is yet another representation of the disconnect between readers and editors. Twenty years ago when graphics sort of made their big impression on newspapers, they made a big impression on readers, too, and that’s because they were valued highly by both groups. Today, editors don’t value them highly anymore because they aren’t rewarded for them, and if you aren’t rewarded, you don’t do it. And that’s why graphics people don’t get the resources they need, and why readers don’t get the graphics they deserve.

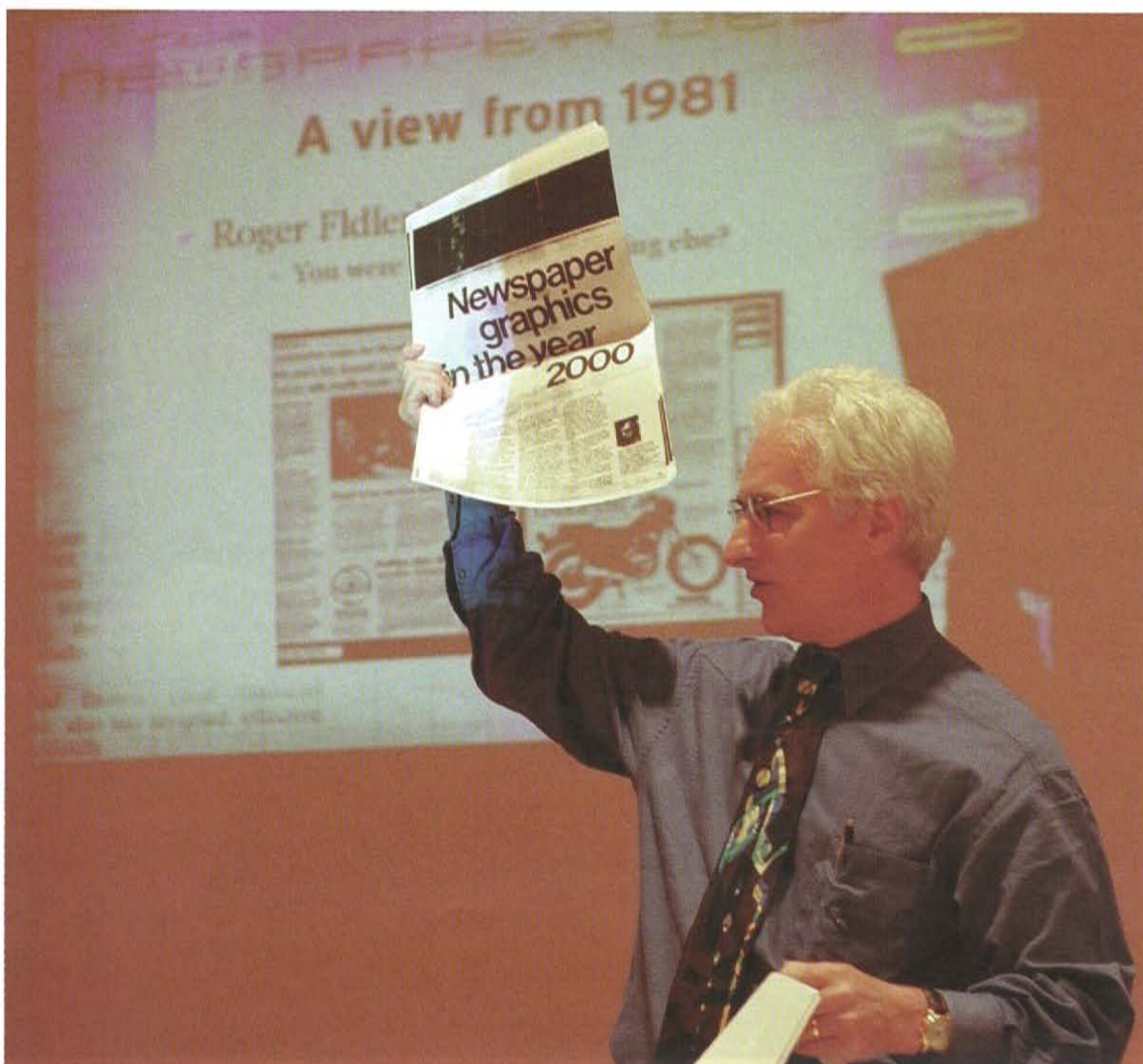
And in the coming space crunch, what are editors going to give up on first? It’s likely they’re going to be giving up on the wrong things. But if they truly want to attract readers, and keep them engaged, in my opinion, they are going to have to find ways to do so other than with 50 or 60 inches of text.

Ms. Frankeny: Graphics are probably one of the hardest things to do, because you have to integrate very good editing, reporting, illustration, and sometimes photography. They take collaboration with editors, which Don was talking about. And I agree it’s one thing editors have given up on too easily...

Mr. Finberg: Okay, let’s move on then to our next issue. Who is going to do all this, and where are we going to get these people? Not an insignificant issue,

survey

201



Howard Finberg



Howard Finberg, Marty Petty, Tony Majeri.

which I personally believe is going to be our greatest challenge. And it's going to get much, much worse, in my opinion, than was indicated in our survey.

Our question was, if you have hired people for your visual department in the last five years, what has been your experience from a difficulty standpoint? And to my surprise, 20 percent said they believe it isn't difficult to hire qualified visual people. These are probably the high-end papers where they can pay for the talent, but for the rest of us — 80 percent — it's either very difficult or about the same as it's been, and about the same isn't easy. So is it likely to get any better? No, from the study. It's likely to get worse...less difficult changing to 12 percent, and very difficult moving higher.

Mr. Curtis: But I wonder, Howard, how this differs from hiring anybody in the newspaper business.

Mr. Finberg: Well, we did ask that question about reporters, although I didn't include it in the results here...and there was little difference.

So we then asked editors, assuming they could find anybody they wanted, where they would put their money — the same question we asked in '88. And reporting, as it did in '88, gets the lion's share — more than half. Design and editing were about the same. And this time we added online. And once again, I think there is a very telling disconnect here, which gets back to what we were talking about earlier.

Mr. Watson: I have to add that difficulty getting talent also was one of the biggest complaints we heard.

And to illustrate the point further, I recently spoke to a group of college students who said they were looking for "Web architecture" jobs because they paid \$70,000 a year to start, and they weren't going to go to work for a newspaper for \$15,000, \$20,000 or \$25,000, whatever the salary would be, depending on size of

newspaper.

And a number of people said journalism schools need to do a better job of preparing students for design positions on newspapers, as well as for other forms of presentation. And the term visual journalist did come up several times.

Mr. Sutton: I think we have to put a whole lot more effort into creating, rather than just finding, visual journalists, because I find there are a lot of people who don't even understand the possibilities, the opportunities, the fun that can be had in visual journalism. It's hard enough to find a graphic artist or a designer, so if you want to broaden the pool, we simply have to create that interest in people who are different from the majority of folks already in visual journalism. That is a small talent pool, and we're essentially kind of sharing them around.

Mr. Lockwood: In my opinion, getting graphic artists simply isn't going to happen. A young guy comes to you and says "well, I would like to consider being a graphic artist at a newspaper," and we say "well, come to our newspaper. Of course, nobody else in other craft skills will respect what you do. We will put you at a little table over there. We won't pay you much money, and you won't get a great reward in doing this. Of course, you should do it, because this is a noble cause." So newspapers are not going to attract young people. It's a done deal. They should have been doing this for years, and they haven't, and it's not going to change now. So I think we should get on to another subject.

Mr. Fidler: At Kent State, we have been expanding our visual journalism program. And what's interesting to me is the number of students who want to enroll in the program simply because they don't like to write. And when I try to explain that a great deal of what

"It's hard enough to find a graphic artist or a designer, so if you want to broaden the pool, we simply have to create that interest in people who are different from the majority of folks already in visual journalism."

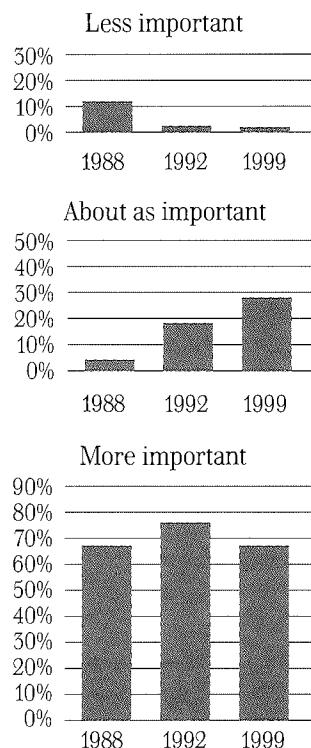
Mr. Sutton

"If you are an editor, where would you put additional funding for staff members?"

Reporting	53%
Design	37%
Editing	34%
Online	30%
Graphics	28%
Photography	27%
Illustration	13%
Other	3%

Note: Respondents could select more than one category.

“How important will information graphics be at your newspaper in the next five years?”



they would be doing in information graphics involves writing and content, they're a little shocked.

The other thing I'm finding is that very few of them want to go into newspapers. Most of our better students are looking at the Web and electronic publishing. They see newspapers as passe, and that's a real issue we are having to deal with.

Mr. Nesbitt: One thing I want to bring up is that farm teams for the major metros aren't producing the people anymore either. Art departments in newspapers under 75,000 circulation, from surveys we do here in seminars, are shrinking. And at the really small papers, the art department is the one person who works the copy desk and lays out pages.

Mr. Finberg: I'd like to move on to the online component, which sort of ties in nicely with what we've just been talking about. So where does online fit with print design and our print journalists, and what role do print designers – and I differentiate print designers and Web designers sort of arbitrarily – play? And this also raises the question about brand, because the Web very much is a new medium. Where does our newspaper design brand fit in that? And, finally, what role do journalists play? And when I refer to journalists here, I am thinking about the role traditional reporters and editors play online. Or is this a separate medium with separate companies and we deal with it that way?

So we asked how important it is for your newspaper Web site to look like the printed newspaper. And this really goes to the heart of the brand issue. Only 10 percent thought it was highly important that a newspaper Web site look like its printed product...and I was absolutely astounded by this. Somewhat important, 40 percent. And 50 percent said not important.

And I think this also goes to the heart of the eco-

nomie question...moving consumers back and forth. Are we going to leverage our print journalists online or not? And when we asked our leveraging question, a third thought it was highly important. Another third said somewhat important. However, we still had a third who thought it wasn't very important at all.

Mr. Watson: Well, in our calls, we also found a real disconnect on this issue. Most of the people I talked with felt, like Howard, that the results were incredible.

Mr. Curtis: One point I'd like to make here is that you see a lot of newspapers pushing readers toward their Web sites, but it doesn't seem to happen in reverse. So the branding thing, as far as Web sites go, seems only to go one way. And I think that's a big mistake.

Mr. Fidler: Well, one exception to this has been the *The Wall Street Journal*, which, I believe, has taken branding at its Web site very seriously. They have found that when they change too much from what people already understand, they get a lot of complaints. So the electronic form actually does take the print edition into account, and in a very effective way.

Mr. Finberg: Given the fact we're running out of time, I'd like to move on to our last section, which goes to a lot of the economic issues facing our industry. We all believe that newsprint is our prime real estate, that it's expensive, and that it's shrinking. We are not making bigger newspapers. So the question is where are we going to put all of these visual elements that everybody thinks we are going to have more of when we've got the 50-inch web issue looming? It's here, it's there, but soon it's going to be everywhere.

When we asked respondents to compare the amount of space they have today for visual packages with five years ago, 60 percent said they have more space devoted to visuals, 40 percent said the same.

survey

20

And when we asked them to look ahead, it's like happy days. Everybody thinks they are going to have more space in the future. This is editorializing, I realize, but what planet were these people on when they answered this question? I just don't understand how we're going to have any more space, because we're actually going to end up with smaller newspapers in 20 years. There is simply no doubt about it.

Ms. Bisher: Well, hold on, Howard. Maybe you missed the point. Maybe there will be no advertising, so we will have more space.

Mr. Watson: I have to say that the people we shared these numbers with also were surprised at the responses to this issue as well.

David Brace, an Ottawa newspaper executive, said, basically, that his newspapers already are having trouble getting content in, and they aren't going to be adding space for visual packages. What space they will add will be for more local stories, lists, and that kind of thing, so the last thing they're going to think about is adding room for graphics and photography.

And Juan Antonio Giner, a familiar name to the designers here, put it another way: "newspaper design is dead; news design is alive."

Mr. Finberg: Well, I'm going to ask Marty Petty first, because she's the only publisher here who has to deal with a 50-inch web and related issues, for her thoughts on whether or not we're going to see more space.

Ms. Petty: Well, a lot of it is going to depend on individual local properties and the pressures that are put on them...I know it's a big challenge for us.

But I do think if we start to trim back more on the core product we give our readers, we are kidding ourselves, because they're not stupid. All we are going to do is devalue the newspaper. So we're going to trade

off some other things to make sure we don't have to go to the newshole well. And I think we're also going to have to reinvent a whole lot of things.

As for the 50-inch web, we have to figure out how we can make that format work. It's...about sectioning, it's about the amount of space we dedicate to the paper each day...for example, the paper on Monday doesn't have to be the same size as Tuesday.

Mr. Miller: What we're seeing coming tomorrow, and already here today in some places, are multiple editions, multiple publications giving readers choices, and editors another way of looking at how to use available space. It won't all be in one monolithic package. It will be in multiple packages, and I suspect there may well be more newshole, not less...so I don't think space is the problem, unless you are stuck with one mother-of-all meganewspaper. If we stay with one edition for all, then it will be.

Ms. Petty: Sticking with that, take food for example. In the old days, we figured out our newshole based on ROP. Now look at where all the food retail has gone...to a much higher margin of profitability.

So maybe that argues there could be eight or nine similar categories in both news and advertising that we should be looking at. We have got to step back and reevaluate what we are providing to both our readers and advertisers. And if we do, then maybe as Ed says, we could end up with more space devoted to content, but in a much different way.

Mr. Keegan: Well, sometimes I think we in the newspaper industry worry too much about things we probably shouldn't be worrying about, because readers don't seem to be worrying. We took a 13 percent hit when we went to the smaller web, partly because we were then taller than most other newspapers, and focus groups all said they loved the newspaper. And

"We have got to step back and reevaluate what we are providing to both our readers and advertisers. And if we do, then maybe as Ed says, we could end up with more space devoted to content, but in a much different way."

Ms. Petty

20 survey



Phil Nesbitt, Michael Keegan, Phillip Ritzenberg, Bryan Monroe.

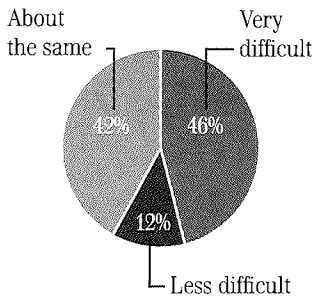


Don DeMaio, William McGrath, Will Sutton, Jr.

"I agree with Marty that in going to a 50-inch web, it provides an opportunity to get everybody on board who's engaged in figuring out the best way to tell a story, and I believe designers have an incredible opportunity to become pivotal in fashioning the news..."

Ms. Bartholamy

"Looking at the next five years, how difficult will it be to hire qualified visual journalists?"



we don't miss anything. Readers like shorter stories, and as far as I know, no reporters at *The Post* have been whining.

And the loss of space is not a cumulative loss. It's a loss of maybe an inch or two for a story. It doesn't add up, which was one of the things editors kept harping on...they were going to lose 50 pages out of the newspaper. Well, they aren't. They're going to lose just a couple of inches in a story. So if you want to put a positive spin on this, you can.

Ms. Bartholamy: I agree with Marty that in going to a 50-inch web, it provides an opportunity to get everybody on board who's engaged in figuring out the best way to tell a story, and I believe designers have an incredible opportunity to become pivotal in fashioning the news...

Mr. Black: I have two thoughts from listening to you all and from these survey results. One is the relative willingness some editors seem to have to think of content as text only, and that anything like a picture or an informational graphic is whipped cream that you pour on the top of the text. I think if we had gotten our point across over the last ten years that there is such a thing as visual content, and that readers respond to it, these survey responses would have been more positive.

The other thing is that when you look at the pages designed 11 years ago, and then look at the new pages you've designed, the amount of space devoted on your 2020 front pages to pictures or other graphics has increased. And I think we are all relatively aware of the limitations.

I love what Michael Keegan just said, because, in fact, readers do respond to shorter stories and better editing. They like it. And we'll take that.

And one example of this trend to smaller I think

you all should be aware of is *Time* magazine. It has exactly 50 pages of editorial space per week. In 1977, when Walter Bernard redesigned *Time*, they decreased the amount of text by 20 to 25 percent. Since then, in two more redesigns, they have reduced it again by 25 percent, and then again by 25 percent. So today's *Time* magazine has less than half the text it once had.

And why? Some would say they've responded to tabloid journalism, or it's all about celebrities and personality reporting, or whatever, but the real reason is the public expects visual information. They want less text. They don't have time for it. And the newsstand and subscription figures for *Time* are now going back up for the first time in 20 years.

So my feeling is that whether we see less newshole or not, over time we're going to see more space devoted to visual elements.

Mr. Lockwood: Well, I must admit the "newspaper design is dead" quote from Juan Antonio did stick in my head for a little while, and I think it is indicative of the misunderstanding people have about design and what it is. Our inability to integrate all content/visual elements as part of one package needs to be overcome. Laszlo Maholy-Nagy said years and years ago from the Bauhaus that design isn't a profession; it is an attitude. It is an attitude about information. And what we do best is to bring an attitude about information, which integrates all these elements. That is our strength, and, as in the past, that is what is going to help advance newspapers in the next 20 years.

Mr. Finberg: In an attempt to sum up here, there clearly is no single future scenario any more than there was a right answer to any of the survey questions. Our industry's challenges are huge, and I think there is more of a recognition of those challenges at

survey

20

this seminar than there was here 11 years ago - the kind of products we're going to have, where we're going to get resources, as well as the role newspapers are going to serve as we move forward.

And I do want to end on an upbeat note, since it can be pretty depressing talking about the future. I think it's important we keep in mind that we aren't the only ones with a vision...you can find a lot in popular culture. And there's a scene in **Blade Runner**, one of the more futuristic, dark visionary movies of the last part of the 20th century, where our hero, waiting for his dinner, is reading a newspaper — a printed version. So maybe there is hope for the future.

“Laszlo Maholy-Nagy said years and years ago from the Bauhaus that design isn't a profession; it is an attitude. It is an attitude about information. And what we do best is to bring an attitude about information, which integrates all these elements. That is our strength, and, as in the past, that is what is going to help advance newspapers in the next 20 years.”

Mr. Lockwood