

Less is more. Too much design is **just too much.**

Design principles don't change

Design that stays with the basics is bound to succeed

HENNINGER
ON DESIGN

Pinciples never change. With every editorial project, go back to the basics.”

The words are the final sentences in the final column of Edmund C. Arnold in “Publisher’s Auxiliary,” the publication of the National Newspaper Assn.

For 44 years—in 1,200 columns—Ed Arnold stood strong for design principles. The essence of good design is all about principles.

If your design is disciplined, if it is principled, if it goes back to the basics, it must eventually succeed. But if you reject the principles—worse, if you do not know them—then you do not have design. You have disarray.

Following are some design principles I consider critical:

WE DESIGN FOR READERS. We do not design to fulfill our creative urges, though that may occur. We do not design for contest judges, though they may consider our work worth recognition. We do not design for our bosses, though we certainly want to satisfy them. No, we must design for the ultimate boss—the reader.

LESS IS MORE. Too much design is just too much. There must come a time on every page when your silent voice says: “Enough. You have



A consistent look gives your readers a face they'll recognize—and become comfortable with—over time.

done this. Move on.” Listen to that voice. Respect it. Follow its guidance. And remember that it's always better to have a page with too little than one with too much.

UNDERSTAND and practice the art of typography. Learn to use typography as a tool—not as a toy. We serve our readers better by limiting the number of typefaces in our newspapers. The tendency to reach into our typeface grab bag with every new features front is lazy and undisciplined.

BRING A SENSE of focus to every design. If your newspaper page has five stories and a dozen points of entry—each a siren song to your reader—then something has gone wrong. There's too much attention to the soloists and not enough attention to the music of the page.

YOUR DESIGN MUST reflect your content. You wouldn't work to make your Opinion page look the same as your local front. You wouldn't want your sports front to look like your comics page. No—each of these pages is unique because of its content. And each of these pages should have a different look because of its content. When you are about to commit the act of design, reflect for a moment on what the page is trying to tell the reader. When you have a sense of the message, then you can begin to frame it in your design.

BE CONSISTENT. Offer your readers the same look from issue to issue. Create a design style guide that sets down the rules of what you do and what you don't do. Appoint a “design cop” who will make sure the rules are being followed. If you allow your designers to experiment, you do so at the risk of confusing and frustrating your readers. Allow some flexibility in your design, so you can create extraordinary designs to match extraordinary situations. But, for the most part, work to present the same face to your readers with each issue.

Like the values we cherish, design principles do not go in and out of vogue with time.

Bring a **sense of focus** to every design.