

National News – spring 2008 issue

Newsletters: A how-to

Building a newsletter for your Auxiliary unit is a daunting task that's best left for trained professionals, right? Wrong—a newsletter is a simple yet extremely effective way to disseminate news to members—and you don't need to be a so-called professional to learn how to construct one.

Q: If only one word could best describe what makes good newsletter design, what would it be?

A: *Balance*; there is a fine line between how much content you are presenting people and how readable that info actually is. Just packing a ton of copy on a page doesn't necessarily make it very readable. Ideally, you should provide a balance between content, white space and imagery.

Q: Font choices and type size: What are best for general audiences?

A: Serif typefaces, like times new roman and garamond, for example, are more readable in print, whereas sans-serif typefaces like arial and helvetica are typically used and more readable on the web. The age of your audience often affects the typesizes that should be used: For older audiences, shoot for 12pt, but try not to settle for anything less than 11pt.

Q: For Auxiliary members who may not have expensive desktop publishing software, what are some alternatives?

A: There is a reason good design software costs money because it gives designers good control. Programs like Microsoft Word and Publisher have made some advances in layout functions, but they also have finicky results (many times) and can be very frustrating for someone who likes good control over their design.

Q: Any tips when using photographs?

A: Photographs are nice to help break up copy, give the eyes some breathing room and help provide balance. There are many stock photo shops out there that have reasonable charges for stock images (if you don't have any images for your articles) and this can often be a good alternative. Web graphics are usually very bad and are saved in low-resolution formats and shouldn't be used in print applications unless used quite small.

Q: Any other tips Auxiliary members should know about newsletter design?

A: For designers, getting copy that is 99 percent approved *before* you start with it is ideal. This streamlines the process, eliminates lots of reflow in your changed layouts and forces your content providers to lead the process vs. working backwards from design to content. It's always easier to cut copy down for a story layout where space is limited than not have enough copy/content to begin with.

Got a question about designing newsletters that's not answered here? Email the Auxiliary's Marketing Communications Division at pr@legion-aux.org.

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