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ABSTRACT

Specific procedures for planning, producing, distributing, and evaluating newsletters are provided in this guide intended for the staff of voluntary organizations who have limited or no prior editing experience. Topics covered include the functions and purposes of a newsletter; staff qualifications and duties, and the organization of a newsletter production staff; how to decide what to include and find appropriate articles; editing and writing techniques, including stylistic considerations; production decisions and procedures, including typesetting, format and design, printing and proofreading; distribution, with emphasis on preparations for mailing newsletters; and possible ways to evaluate newsletters, including survey questions and sample questionnaires. A bibliography lists additional sources for help in editing/writing or production/design, and a "game" based on the newsletter production process ends the guide. (LMM)

HOW TO PRODUCE NEWSLETTERS:

NEWSLETTER EDITOR'S HANDBOOK

Association for Educational Communications & Technology
1979

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

How To Produce Newsletters is the culmination of an idea which began at the Region VI Leadership Conference held at Knox College in Illinois in June 1975.* The state affiliate newsletter editors in Region VI (Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin) of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) identified a need and worked together to offer a solution to that need.

The result of their efforts was the Newsletter Editor's Handbook (1976), edited by Roger Volker, Iowa State University; managing editor, Will Phillipson, University of Minnesota, with assistance from:

Ed Bardill	Ed Grebis
Genevieve Buresch	Pat Hughes
Ed Erickson	S. R. Lacher
Wes Grabow	Bob Lindemeyer
Joe Gray	Marian Turner

The commitment and dedication of the Region VI newsletter editors, who gave generously of their time and efforts, provided the impetus for this present work.

The intent of the Newsletter Editor's Handbook was to offer a collection of practical suggestions for both the novice and the long-time state affiliate newsletter editor. It has been revised by Vita Pariente of the Blue Pencil Group in Reston, Virginia, to serve the needs of a larger audience: volunteer and part-time editors who are not editors by profession.

How To Produce Newsletters is offered as a practical guide to writers and editors for voluntary organizations.

Howard B. Hitchens
Executive Director, AECT

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* In 1965, under the leadership of Vernon Gerlach (chairperson) and the Newsletter Editors' Committee of AECT, a handbook was produced to help affiliate newsletter editors. In 1968, a revised and expanded edition was produced by the National Newsletter Editors' Committee under the chairmanship of Wesley J. F. Grabow.

Functions & Purposes

Almost every organization sponsors a newsletter. Practically all members of the organization read it. And nearly all officers and board members of organizations list their newsletter as one of the most important elements of a strong program.

The newsletter is a concrete example of what an organization is doing and the issues it considers important. The newsletter is a tangible product - sometimes the only tangible product - each member receives in return for dues. It provides an opportunity for each member to say something to others.

What Is a Newsletter?

Newsletters vary widely. Some look almost like journals or magazines. Others are two-page affairs, duplicated or printed inexpensively. But content and style - not physical format - are newsletters' most important characteristics.

In general, newsletters perform three important functions:

- INFORMING - objective reporting of what is happening in the organization's area, keeping members up to date on current issues, upcoming conventions and conferences, and names and activities of members active on the local, regional, and national scene.

  PROMOTING - editorial treatment of key issues that affect the entire membership and continual reminders to become involved, to form opinions, to take action. Official decisions by the organization's governing board, as reported in the newsletter, help members form opinions and set direction for action.

- COORDINATING - notices of meetings, committee work, and dozens of other tasks that make an organization move. The membership campaign, ongoing long-range projects, and annual meetings require notices in the newsletter.

Mission and Purpose

Sometimes newsletters suffer from lack of direction and end up being a miscellaneous collection of unrelated items lacking cohesive impact. The psychological effect on members may be the impression that the entire organization is as fragmented as its newsletter appears.

To provide the necessary direction, a set of ground rules - a mission statement - should be developed. One or two sentences or a short paragraph can give the staff and other members of the organization an idea of what the newsletter intends to do, whom it serves, and what its goals are.

One approach to developing such a mission statement is to list the answers to some basic questions. Why does the organization have a newsletter? How can the newsletter serve its purpose? Who are the readers? What interests the readers? A typical statement might read like this:

> The purpose of the (organization's) newsletter is to communicate news of the (state, regional, district) organization, providing information about:

- Conferences, meetings, workshops, and other organization activities.
- Official business of the organization.
- Activities of members with local, regional, and national responsibilities.
- News not appearing in other widely read publications.
- In-depth articles exploring problem areas considered important by members.
- Editorials or position statements that clarify the association's stand on key issues.
- Ideas for utilization and application of new materials and techniques.

The newsletter can include not only short "newsy" or "inside scoop" materials, but also extended coverage of activities, how-to-do-it techniques, membership news, minutes of meetings, and conference plans and programs. The balance between short-term news and longer articles on substantive issues should be determined by the organization and the focus it wants to give to the newsletter. Because a newsletter does provide a concrete return for membership dues, the question of coverage is important. Will a small-format newsletter or a journal format providing in-depth coverage best suit the needs of the membership?

A well-written, comprehensive mission statement will act as a kind of constitution, providing a permanent set of guidelines that can be consulted from time to time for clarification about the purpose and scope of the newsletter. The statement will also help members understand the functions of the newsletter so they will know both what to expect and what not to expect.

Additional Functions

The newsletter can be more than a communication link among members. It can also reach potential members and nonmembers who are interested in some aspects of the organization and its activities.

Special mailings can be used to recruit new members. Through the newsletter, readers may become interested in the organization and should be invited to join. Make it easy for people to sign up by including membership blanks and appropriate information in the newsletter. Current members should also be encouraged to renew their memberships and bring in new people.

Special mailings to nonmembers can also increase the leadership role of the organization. A carefully designed and well-written newsletter covering interesting programs will attract the attention of a number of people outside the specific interest area of the organization.

Furthermore, reports of significant activities will encourage coverage of other activities. Once established as an interesting and reliable source of information, the newsletter will attract additional material from its readers. It will build confidence as a communication medium and tie an association into a cohesive group that has a significant impact.

Staff

A local or state organization's newsletter is usually produced by volunteers. Generally, the editor is appointed by the president.

Sometimes an organization makes the mistake of trying to produce a newsletter by committee, perhaps because no one will accept the position of editor. When this happens, the organization's secretary or president ends up putting out the newsletter. The newsletter may turn into little more than lists of routine announcements and minutes of the last meeting.

One person should be the newsletter editor, with full responsibility and authority for selecting material and producing the newsletter on schedule. (Sometimes two people can act as coeditors.) If the editor doesn't do the job satisfactorily, the elected leadership should get a new editor. The editor (or someone acting for the editor) should sit in on board meetings, attend organization events, and, in general, should be fully informed of what is going on in the organization.

Qualifications of the Editor

Newsletter editors seldom have any special training or experience, other than what they learn on the job. The basic requirement is the ability to write good, plain English.

It helps if the editor knows the organization and many people in it. The editor should be able to persuade others to participate. Knowing how to meet a schedule and being able to stick to a budget are also useful assets. So are news sense and an eye for design.

Sometimes the newsletter editor does all the work for the newsletter - gets all the news, writes it, types it, has it printed, staples and folds it, puts on the mailing labels, stamps and mails it. A four-page typewritten newsletter produced monthly or less often can be done this way - and done well. But it is not necessarily good for the organization.

The Staff

If you study newsletters, you'll see that the size of staffs varies a great deal, usually in proportion to the number of pages and complexity of the newsletter. The smaller the staff, the easier the coordination and production - and the more work each person must do. A larger staff makes the editor's job more complex, but on the other hand, each person's job is small and relatively easy. More importantly, member participation helps build a healthy and strong association.

There are many jobs that need to be done to produce a newsletter. Here are some job titles and job descriptions that turned up in a survey of one organization's state editors:

- EDITOR

  --Identifies topics to be featured

  --Contacts members and others for articles

  --Informs staff and others of duties and deadlines

  --Collects miscellaneous information from a variety of sources both inside and outside the

organization that may be of interest to the reader

--Prepares rough draft, including specifications for photos (pictures may be taken by the editor or they may be solicited from others in the association)

--Furnishes managing editor with manuscript for the entire issue

--Writes an editorial if certain issues seem to warrant it

--Solicits "guest editorial" from president, other officers, membership chairperson, and other sources

- COEDITOR

--Works as a partner with the editor, carrying out tasks jointly identified (in some cases, one person will gather the news, the other write it)

- LAYOUT EDITOR

--Makes a "dummy" from the manuscript, or from a set of galley proofs, showing placement of pictures, captions, art, and articles (and ads, if any)

--Specifies type size, placement of titles for articles

- GRAPHICS EDITOR

--Designs or oversees production of line drawings and photographs needed to illustrate articles

--Serves as photographer (or arranges for photographer) at association conferences and meetings

--Gathers visual material for newsletter

- MANAGING EDITOR

--Collects all materials from other editors and works with printer in all stages of producing the newsletter--reads galley and page proofs and corrects errors

--Secures labels, oversees final mailing

- NEWS EDITOR

--Gathers news from a variety of sources such as members and other publications

--Attends association conferences, reports on meetings held

--Attends Board of Directors meetings

- CIRCULATION MANAGER

--Maintains up-to-date mailing list

--Solicits subscriptions from nonmembers

- ADVERTISING MANAGER

--Solicits advertising

--Assists advertisers in preparation of materials, copy, photos, and art that may be needed

--Establishes rates for advertising

--Handles billing and collection of fees from advertisers

- FEATURE EDITOR

--Conceptualizes features or feature articles and gathers information to write these articles

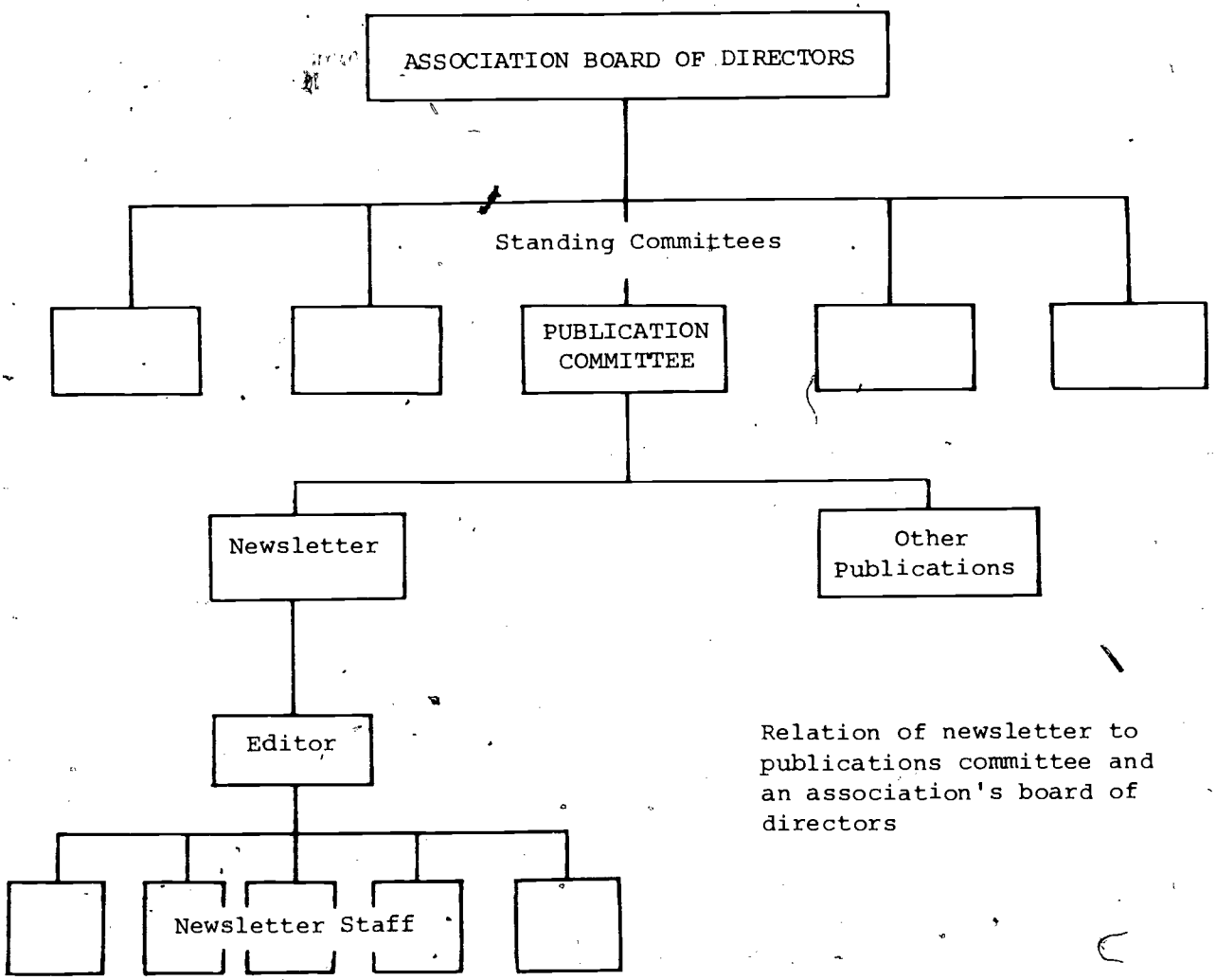
It is certainly not necessary to include all these positions on a newsletter staff. But it is important to make sure that someone has the responsibility for every job that must be done.

Organizing for a Newsletter

Since a newsletter addresses issues of importance to the association, a broad base of opinion is needed to provide guidance for the editor and staff. One way a large association can provide help is to establish an editorial board, publication committee, or other group from within the association to act as a clearinghouse for policy decisions.

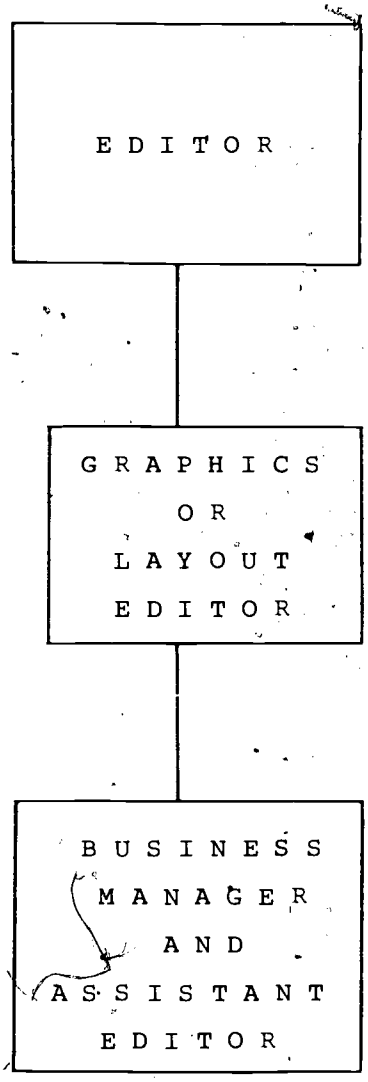
The publication committee can coordinate all of the publications of the association. These may include the newsletter, membership materials, a membership handbook, conference programs, and other materials. For budgeting purposes, the publication committee may ask for a lump sum to support the association's publications program.

Several levels of sophistication for organizing the publications program may be considered. The accompanying diagrams indicate some possibilities.



Relation of newsletter to publications committee and an association's board of directors

A newsletter staff of three people

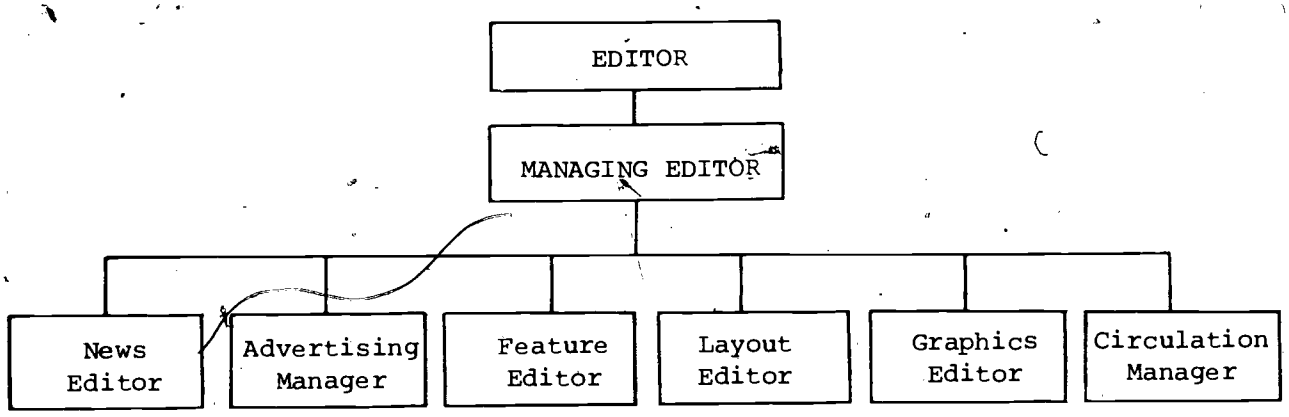


- Gathers news
- Writes copy and headlines
- Requests photos
- Determines content
- Proofs copy

- Determines layout
- Obtains art
- Crops and scales photos and art
- Works with printer

- Maintains mailing list
- Proofs copy
- Handles distribution
- Handles advertising, if any

A newsletter staff of eight people



Content

WHAT GOES INTO THE NEWSLETTER?

Although this question may have been answered in a general way, it has to be asked - and answered - very specifically for each issue of the newsletter.

One aspect of the content, usually taken for granted, cannot be forgotten. That is the "standing material" (as it is sometimes called) --the flag, the issue number and date, masthead, return address, and so forth. (A checklist of standard items is provided at the end of this section.) These things don't change much from issue to issue, but space must be allotted to them. Often, a four-page newsletter will have little more than three pages of space left for editorial content.

There are a number of ways to look at the content of the newsletter - by type of subject matter, in terms of timeliness, or appeal to different segments of the membership. These and other considerations are important.

Editorial Balance

The editor's goal is to achieve a newsletter that is lively, interesting, timely, and - above all - informative for all members. Of course, not all items will be equally useful to all members. And some things may have to be included as a matter of record.

ORGANIZATION ACTIVITIES. It goes without saying that the association's newsletter will carry news about the group's activities. The newsletter should concentrate on activities that involve members - not just officers - and on the content, rather than the form, of the activities. In other words, the newsletter should not merely note that a meeting was held, but what the meeting accomplished. Newsletters become dull when too much space is devoted to who was elected to what, presentations of awards, reports of meetings, and other typical organization activities.

FIELD OF INTEREST. Some space should be devoted to material on the interests that members of the organization share. It may be the work they do, a hobby, or a desire to be of service to some segment of society. Whether it's the best way to mulch roses, discipline problems in the open classroom, or new developments in eye surgery, there are interests and concerns the newsletter should deal with if it is to be useful to members.

The problem here is keeping the range narrow enough to fit a newsletter, which, after all, is not a book or a magazine. Concise summaries of long reports might be useful. Tips from readers, interviews with experts, brief lists of publications or exhibits of interest might be included.

READERS' INTERESTS. It's a good idea to make a list of readers' areas of special interest. Check the content to make sure there is something for everyone, at least some of the time. Also, you may need to cover a broad range of expertise; professionals, technicians, paraprofessionals, and amateurs may be among the membership.

TIMELINESS. Certain items must appear in certain issues of the newsletter, or they are worthless. There is no use telling members about

wonderful workshops they can attend if the newsletter arrives a week after registration is closed. Some items will continue to be of current interest for some time and can be saved for later issues to achieve balance in some other aspect.

There are other things that are timeless, or nearly so. Puzzles, cartoons, some humor, some general interest articles can be used at almost any time. Editors may think of these things as "filler" - of no real value except to fill space. But this isn't necessarily so. Filler material can be just as useful as more timely items.

DEPARTMENTS. Readers find it helpful to have material organized into departments. It also helps the editor achieve balance. Departments needn't run in every issue, but they should be regular enough to become recognized and expected by readers.

Departments can include news organized geographically, chronologically (as in alumni newsletters), by level (local, regional, statewide; or elementary, secondary, higher education), by type of work or workplace (engineering department, program office, personnel), or almost anything else you can think of. Some common columns and departments include:

- News & Notes (brief news items)
- "What's Inside..." (contents)
- Treasurer's Report
- Board Minutes
- President's Letter
- New Products
- Production Techniques
- Free Materials
- Dates to Remember (calendar)
- Committee Reports
- Editorial (opinion)
- "Who's Doing What" (personals)
- Regional Notes
- Around the State
- Letters to the Editor

REPETITION. Plan to repeat some kinds of information at regular intervals. Remember that new members will not have read earlier issues of the newsletter. Some information that is taken for granted by old members will be fresh for newcomers. Also, people forget things. Short reminders are useful.

On the other hand, avoid long-winded rehashing of the same old subject issue after issue. Balance between the familiar and the new should favor the new. But newsletter editors, because they must read the same things over and over, are likely to find subjects sounding "old hat" long before readers do.

VISUAL ELEMENTS. The appearance of the newsletter also requires balance. Try for articles of different lengths. Art and photographs can also be used to convey a message. Art and photographs can also be used decoratively.

ADVERTISING. Few newsletters accept advertising. Some newsletters with larger distributions, serving a wide area and an organization of at least several hundred members, use advertising to help defray newsletter expenses.

Advertising varies from a mere list of representatives selling products to larger ads (including line drawings,

photos, or other prepared artwork).

Whether or not to include advertising is a policy question as well as a business decision. Some members may feel that the organization should not identify itself with selected services or products, believing that a tie to sales might distort the organization's goals and interests. Others may believe that ads provide useful information.

It is also possible that the added cost of producing ads, designing layouts around ads, and working with advertisers may make it, at best, a break-even venture. On the other hand, some editors and publication committees feel that advertising pays its own way and may expand circulation. It may even make a profit for the newsletter.

HOW TO GET NEWS AND ARTICLES

Producing a lively, timely, informative, and well-balanced newsletter is easier said than done. The volunteer editor with only so many hours to devote to the newsletter must depend on volunteers to gather the news and write the thoughtful articles. Some dependable souls will come through with regular, reliable information. For the rest, the editor will have to beg, borrow, steal, nag, and cajole.

Plan Ahead

Taking time to plan at the beginning of the volume year will save time in the long run. Start with a calendar of organization events--monthly meetings, annual conferences, holiday occasions, whatever. Consider how far in advance readers will need information about these activities and schedule something for the newsletter issues that precede the event. You may also want a report after the event. Do the same for activities conducted by other groups of interest to your members.

Also make a list of subjects that you want to cover during the year. This might be done in a brainstorming session with newsletter staff members and others. Assign subjects to issues of the newsletter, keeping in mind various kinds of balance. All of this, of course, is tentative. Intervening events might change your plans completely.

Once you have roughed out plans for each issue, start thinking of people who might serve as sources of information and writers of articles. (This is another good brainstorming activity.) In addition to members, think of other sources:

- companies that manufacture or distribute supplies or equipment used by members
- government agencies (federal, state, local)
- educational groups
- nonprofit associations
- businesses that provide services that members use
- people members serve - clients, customers, students, patients, and so on
- universities, schools, libraries

Ask yourself: Who has something to say on this subject? Who reads a lot in this area?

Making Assignments

Once you have some ideas about what you want to cover and what your sour-

ces might be, start finding people to do the legwork and the writing. Don't be too ambitious (space is limited) but at the same time, expect that many promised articles won't come through.

When asking someone to write an article for the newsletter, be specific about length and scope. Request art or photographs if they are appropriate. And be honest about the deadline. Allow time for revisions if necessary and don't promise that the article will run; there may not be space or the writing may be awful.

Organization news should come from the people who are conducting or planning the activities. Keep a list of key people, with telephone numbers as well as addresses. Try to have a liaison person as a reporter on every committee, task force, chapter, or other subgroup of the organization. Tell your reporter exactly what you want to know. You will probably find that people are more willing to cooperate if all they have to do is provide information, rather than write articles. Reports from different people can be collected and used for a column or department.

Sources of Information

Getting information from outside sources can be very easy in some ways. Just write or call the public relations departments of businesses, government agencies, institutions, associations, and so on and ask to be put on the mailing lists. You can also contact ad agencies and public relations firms, tell them what you're interested in, and you'll be bombarded with news releases, promotional literature, etc. The problem will be to separate the useful news from the irrelevant.

Other newsletters and periodicals in the field, as well as general-interest publications, can yield interesting items. Perhaps a staff member will volunteer to spend a few hours at a library, noting articles that should be brought to the attention of your readers.

In your reading you may find specialists in related fields or experts in your own area who have something interesting to say. Many people who will say they're too busy to write an article will agree to an interview. It can be done on the phone to save travel time.

Telephone interviews can be taped, but be sure the person you're speaking with knows you're recording the conversation. (There are laws about this.) The article will be more interesting if you quote the person's exact words. If your source wasn't particularly articulate, you may have to cut and splice sentences, to make the article concise. It's wise to check back with the person to be sure the quotations are accurate.

Requests for Information

Newsletters often publish appeals for news from readers. This general, anonymous request usually doesn't get much response, but it's useful in that it at least provides the address to which information should be sent.

For better results, mail requests to members individually. If the membership is large, take a random sample or select every fifth or tenth name from the mailing list. Asking for items for particular departments may help readers think of something to supply. You might even send a form on which to write the items and include a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

WHERE CREDIT IS DUE

People who work on the newsletter

Date_____

Dear_____

We're happy to have your article entitled_____

_____ for the newsletter and plan to print it in the next issue. But we'd like a head shot (a Polaroid print will do) of you and your correct title and address for a by-line.

Send by _____ to:

Harry Blimn, Editor
XYZ Newsletter
000 Street
Montgomery, AL 00000

Example of a postcard form used to get correct by-line information and a photograph of a writer.

Dear Colleague:

We want to publish an outstanding newsletter this year, starting with the first issue in September. This issue will go to all members, and to all school districts as well.

I need your help by August 15. That's two weeks from now. Late copy means a late newsletter--and you know the problems that brings. So please send me the information I've requested below by August 15. Call me at 000-0000 if you have any questions.

Information requested:

TO ALL AREA MEDIA DIRECTORS:

The May issue of the Iowa Media Message will feature a section on "What They Are Saying..." and the "They" is you.

We'd like to get your reactions to the new Area Educational Agency concept slated for implementation this year. Our readers will want your opinion of its effectiveness, disadvantages as well as advantages of the program, and any impact you may have felt from it.

We'll need a brief (one page, not more than two) double-spaced, typed report. Please include a head shot (Polaroid will do) along with your name and title.

We're trying for 100% feedback from area media centers and I know you'll want to be represented. May I hear from you by April 13?

Examples of form letters used to solicit news from selected segments of an organization. (Adapted from letters supplied by Roger Volker, editor, Iowa Media Message)

should receive credit for their work. Editors are usually listed on the masthead. Columns regularly written by one person are usually signed or perhaps the person's name is included in the title of the column or department.

Major articles generally carry the byline of the writer. Some newsletters include a picture of the writer also. If you want a picture, be sure to ask for one when you ask for or when you accept the article. Or have a picture taken if you have that luxury.

When a number of people have supplied information, you can include a line at the end of the article, "Contributed by...." Or the writer who puts the piece together can attribute the information to the individuals who sent it in. "According to Sue Jones, the Book Fair needs three more people to handle sales...."

If you print letters to the editor, you will have to decide whether or not to print letters without signatures. Also, if you receive a letter you want to print in the newsletter, check with the writer to be sure it was intended for publication.

Of course, names should be spelled accurately. A person's title and affiliation should also be correct. If you take this information over the phone, be sure to read it and spell it back to the person. Beware of consonants that sound alike over the phone.

Many association newsletters aren't copyrighted and excerpts may be taken from them as long as credit is given. But written permission must be obtained to use copyrighted material. Newsletters often exchange information, and it is common to find items passed around from one newsletter to another. Because items are so freely picked up, accuracy is often lost. Check with the original source before repeating an item. And credit the originator, not the intermediary.

16

CHECKLIST OF STANDARD MATERIAL

Flag - The newsletter's front-page identification. It includes:

- ☐ Name of the newsletter
- ☐ Name of the organization
- ☐ Date, volume, and issue number
- ☐ Logotype or other identifying symbol of the organization

Masthead - Usually found within the newsletter, often on page 2, this block may list:

- ☐ Name of the newsletter
- ☐ Names and positions of the staff
- ☐ Frequency of publication
- ☐ Name and address of organization the newsletter represents
- ☐ Officers of the organization
- ☐ Membership information
- ☐ How to obtain subscriptions
- ☐ Whom to notify of change of address
- ☐ Mailing information
- ☐ Copyright information

Return Address

Mailing Indicia (See page 30.)

Publication Information - Periodically, perhaps once or twice a year, it is important to inform the readers about instructions for submitting articles, deadline dates, and other items. Includes:

- ☐ Publication dates
- ☐ Deadline for submitting articles to meet publication dates
- ☐ Manuscript information (double spacing, width of margins)
- ☐ Illustration instructions (size of photos, glossy or matte finish, color or black and white, line drawings, use of cut lines, identification of people appearing in photos)
- ☐ Editorial prerogatives, such as "The editor reserves the right to shorten articles." "Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned," etc.

Writing & Editing

Editing is a series of decisions. The first steps are taken when the size, frequency, and general content of a newsletter are determined. Once the materials for an issue are gathered together, the hard editing begins in earnest.

When editing for a particular issue, the first consideration is length. How much material do you have for the space you want to fill? One hopes to have too much, rather than too little. (You will probably have too little of some things and too much of others.)

Start with a list of everything that could go in the issue. What must run in this issue? What should run? What could run now or wait until later? Look at the content in terms of timeliness, interest, action required by the reader. Look at the condition of the materials; you'll probably find everything from scribbled notes to full scale articles.

Now make some decisions. Cross off or set aside articles that can wait. Note the ones that need work - making sense of the scribbled notes, combining reports on the same subject, shortening the editorial. Some articles may need a "pencil edit" - correcting a few things here, changing a word there, and styling. Others may need a complete rewrite. Some "must run" piece may be missing altogether and will require getting some facts and writing a story. It is helpful to be able to delegate some of the work.

Making it Fit

The New York Times states the claim "all the news that's fit to print," which is often parodied into "all the news that fits the print." As a matter of fact, an editor must make the material fit - in both senses of the word.

The items in a newsletter should be effective and accurate. To be effective, items should be short. That usually means editing to eliminate unnecessary words. It may also mean changing the "slant" or approach. (More about that later.) Of course, information should be correct. That means checking facts.

Editing also involves "styling." Style refers to decisions about capitalization, abbreviation, use of special typefaces, some punctuation decisions, which of a number of acceptable spellings to use, and so on. The goal is to achieve consistency so that the reader isn't distracted into wondering whether there is a difference between 2 apples and two apples, or why it says Sally Jones on one page, Ms. Jones on the next, and Mrs. Jones someplace else.

News Editing

Members who contribute news items should know that their contributions may be rewritten and edited to fit the space and content requirements of the particular issue. Editors should have no compunctions about changing the writing style of such items, but be careful about the facts. Attempts to enliven routine items sometimes change the meaning.

A by-lined column with a distinctive writing style is another matter. It might be best to find some things that can be cut, but ask the writer to

do it. Words might be judiciously cut or changed, and perhaps whole sentences could be removed. But rewriting might destroy the flavor you presumably want in the column.

Editing Signed Articles

Articles contributed by volunteers usually need a good deal of editing - including reorganizing and shortening. The author usually doesn't have the time, or perhaps the ability, to do the work, even if the editor has the skill to explain what is wanted. It is usually easier to do the editing and then check it out with the author.

Remember, it's the author's article. Retain as much of the original as you can and don't change the facts. If you think the author is in error, check it out. If the author's views disagree with yours, print them anyway. There's nothing like a little controversy to enliven a newsletter. (Of course, don't print anything libelous or otherwise likely to get you in trouble with the law.)

If a contributed article is written so badly you can't use it, but the author has some interesting things to say, try turning the article into an interview. Make up some questions and use pieces of the article as answers. Just make sure the author agrees. You can always reject a contributed article. But it's hard to turn down a solicited article that comes in poorly written. In commercial publishing, if an editor asks a professional writer to do an article and then doesn't like the result, the editor can (1) work with the writer to get an acceptable piece or (2) reject the article, which may involve paying a previously agreed upon fee.

The situation is more delicate for the editor who asks a friend (who happens to be an expert on subject X) to donate an article to the newsletter - and then finds out that the expert is a very inept writer. If you print the article as is, your friend looks bad in print. If you reject or rewrite the article, your friend may be offended. "All that effort to write the thing, and nothing to show for it," may be the reaction you expect.

If the article is way off base, you may have no choice but to say, "I'm sorry. I don't know what went wrong but this isn't what I had in mind for our readers." If something can be salvaged, the interview technique may work.

WRITING AND REWRITING

Newsletters need clear, plain writing. Simple words, short sentences, and brief articles make the newsletter interesting, easy to read, and attention-getting.

A newsletter should be fun to read. Maintain a conversational, but not flippant, tone. Readers tend to browse through a newsletter for current events of the association. They want to be informed, even entertained, but not taught.

Purists say a newsletter should be just that--a letter of news, from one person to the individual reader, expressing the personality of the writer. Unfortunately, it's not easy to find someone with the time and talent to produce such a newsletter. So the association newsletter ends up being a mongrel--a little of one kind of news, some personalized writing, and likable if not beautiful.

When you write (or rewrite) newsletter articles, use the following:

- common contractions
- current idioms or expressions (with discretion)
- short sentences with few commas

- simple words whenever possible
- everyday language
- active voice
- concrete, specific nouns
- strong verbs

For example: (Passive voice, general nouns, weak verbs) "The tool was put in the vehicle by a man wearing dark clothes who then shut the door and left." (Active voice, specific nouns, stronger verbs) "John Jones, in a navy blue jogging suit, tossed the snow shovel into the back seat, slammed the car door, and set off for his morning run."

In this case the second sentence is longer but the reader gets a sharper picture. If you take out the part about the jogging suit, the sentence has 21 words, none of more than two syllables.

Getting to the Point

The part of contributed articles that most often needs rewriting is the beginning. A chapter liaison person may submit a story that begins, "The Smalltown chapter of Younameit Association held its regular business meeting recently." Five paragraphs later the editor is astounded to find out that the chapter voted to withdraw from the association unless it got back a larger share of national and state dues.

Another correspondent begins a report, "Despite temperatures that hovered near zero, ten feet of snow, and the blandishments of home and hearth, the Smalltown chapter of Younameit Association's 50 members were determined...." Paragraphs later, having slogged through a snow of purple prose, the editor finds out that the meeting was cancelled.

How, then, should an article begin?

With information the reader can use. The newsletter exists to inform. Therefore, every news item must tell readers who is doing what, when and where it is being done, why it is being done, and, sometimes, how.

"John Jones last week told members of the Anyplace Bridge Club that it was not sexism to have two male and one female picture cards in each suit. Using genealogical charts tracing back the origins of the 52-card deck, Jones pointed out that it was not unreasonable to think in terms of a royal couple and the heir to the throne."

That report may be absolutely irrelevant to everyone but the readers of a particular newsletter, but it does fulfill the basic requirements for a newsletter item. A report on the same meeting that began, "Imagine what might have happened if Queen Victoria had had an older brother" might make the newsletter editor happy because it displays an imaginative approach, but it doesn't make a good newsletter item.

Even if there is room enough to write the article as though it were going into a magazine, the reader may not have the time or inclination to wade through anecdotes or other "feature" leads to get the basic facts.

"Just which Facts, M'am?"

It is not necessary to say who did what, when, where, how, and why in that order--or all in the very first sentence. It is important to include all the essential facts in the article--but some are not as important others. More than that, there will probably be more than one who, or what, or why, or how.

To decide what to say first, put

yourself in your reader's shoes. Ask yourself, "What is the most important thing I would want to know about this subject?" As writer, or editor, ask, "What do I want the reader to do as a result of reading this?'

Suppose, for example, that after five years of hard work, the program committee has finally persuaded world-famous Joe Violinist to play a benefit concert in your town. What does your reader want to know? Probably, where and when to buy tickets. What do you want the reader to do? Buy tickets. Your first sentence can say something like, "Tickets for the Joe Violinist concert go on sale 9 a.m. Monday, March 6, at the Downtown Ticket Office." You can then go into the details of program, cost of tickets, who benefits, how the program committee worked to get violinist to play, etc.

Suppose, on the other hand, Stan Stringplayer is giving his first recital as part of your organization's Young Artists series. You want members to attend. If you write, "Stan Stringplayer will give his first violin recital Thursday, April 10, at 8 p.m. in the Alltown High School auditorium, as part of this year's Young Artist's series," you have supplied the facts. But will the reader go to the concert? What will encourage your reader to attend the concert? Loyalty to the organization may be one reason. Hearing a good concert is better reason. Try quoting someone who should know. "I'm really looking forward to next Thursday's Young Artists concert," Carla Concert-master said yesterday. "Stan Stringplayer sounds a lot like Joe Violinist as a young soloist."

Selecting the facts to be presented first and determining how to present the facts are important editorial decisions. The editor should not shrink from making those decisions, even if it means rewriting the committee chairperson's report and putting your best friend's article at the bottom of the list of articles for this issue.

The first goal is to get the reader to read the newsletter. Otherwise, nothing can be accomplished. Tell the readers what they need to know--and do that as quickly, concisely, and accurately as possible.

YES

The June 10th workshop offers members a chance to learn the X technique, a new way to produce Y in half the time.

NO

The committee did a wonderful job in preparing the workshop.

YES

"The use of 1957 and earlier vintage buses is a danger to our children and a threat to all other drivers," declared the Alltown PTA yesterday in a strongly worded resolution.

NO

The All town PTA met yesterday at the Main Street Hall, at 7:30 p.m. A number of subjects were considered.

YES

Three [association] members will be job hunting soon if the Alltown Council accepts the budget that will be discussed Friday night, March 15, at the town hall.

NO

The Alltown Council will hold hearings Friday night, March 15, on the city's budget.

These examples are written in a

hard news" or newspaper style. A newsletter can be much more conversational.

"I hope my job isn't one of the three to be eliminated in the budget the Alltown Council will be considering next Friday. I'll be at the Town Hall promptly at 7:30 and I hope you'll be there, too."

"Children late to school because the bus broke down. A near rear-end collision because the bus lights failed. No wonder alarmed parents turned out in record numbers for yesterday's Alltown PTA meeting..."

Other Beginnings

It is not always necessary to get into a story quite so fast. If the information is interesting, but doesn't require any action on the part of the reader, some other approach may work.

THE EXAMPLE. Many newspapers and magazines begin a feature story with an example. They tell a brief story about specific people who have a specific problem. Sometimes the story does not illustrate the problem, but leads into it. The point of the article comes at the end. a number of columnists use this technique regularly.

THE QUESTION. A good question can draw readers into an article. But don't ask, "Are you interested in...?" If the answer is likely to be "no." Questions that ask, "How would you vote..." or "What would you do...." can be effective.

QUOTATION. A well-phrased sentence, from a well-known person, can be an effective beginning. Newsletter editors should have several books of quotations at hand. Writers often keep a notebook of quotations they might want to use some day.

DIALOG. A conversation involves readers in a situation. If you don't know what was actually said, paraphrase. Make up a scene that might have happened. (But don't try to pass off the imaginary as actual.)

Production

Production is the process of turning manuscript into printed newsletters. Many decisions are involved in the process - from editing material to fit a particular issue, to final checking of the printed copies.

Because there are so many choices to be made in the production of a newsletter, the explanation of each step may seem confusing. But by making the decisions in a logical order, you will see that the entire process is an orderly progression from rough copy to completed newsletter.

It may be convenient to separate the process into a series of stages:

1. MANUSCRIPT STAGE: prepare copy for typing or typesetting; copy-fitting; specifying type; rough layout.

2. GALLEY PROOF STAGE: proofreading typed or typeset copy against the original material; cropping and scaling photos and art, making a dummy; writing filler or cutting material to fit; adding late material.

3. PAGE PROOF STAGE: checking corrections indicated on galleys; checking pages against the dummy; making sure captions match pictures; checking "continued" lines, page numbers, other newly set copy; checking sequence.

4. REVISED PAGES/BLUELINE STAGE: checking same things.

5. PRINTING. Writing the print order. Checking the printed copies. Verify delivery.

Before you begin, you must make certain basic decisions. If you are starting a new publication, or completely revamping an existing newsletter, you must answer these questions:

- What general format will you follow? How many columns of type will you have on a page?
- Will the material be typewritten or typeset?
- Will you use art or photographs?
- What size, color, and weight paper will you use?
- How many pages will there be in a typical issue?
- How will the newsletter be reproduced or printed?

BASIC PRODUCTION DECISIONS

As a starting point, look at newsletters published by other organizations. You will see a variety of formats. Some newsletters will rely heavily on photographs and art. Others will be mostly text. Looking over other newsletters will give you a feel for the options open to you.

The major decisions are what form of reproduction (printing) to use and whether or not to typeset the newsletter. Your choices will affect all other parts of production. As you make these two primary decisions keep the following factors in mind:

- number of copies needed
- amount of copy to be accommodated

- whether or not art/photos are important
- how much time you have
- availability of talent
- access to equipment
- budget allowances

Typesetting

Consider typesetting first. Typesetting costs more than typewriting - for instance $28 per page versus $5 a page. However, you get more type on a page. You will have fewer pages to print if your newsletter is typeset. For example, a 12-page typewritten newsletter can make an 8-page typeset newsletter. If 12 pages cost around $180 per thousand for printing and 8 pages cost $224 per thousand, when you get up to 3,000 copies the typeset newsletter begins to cost less.

Cost is not the only consideration, however. Typing offers a sense of immediacy and a personal touch. It is also faster. Some newsletters, printed in the tens of thousands are typewritten - or typeset in a typeface that looks like a typewriter.

Typesetting has a more professional appearance. If done well it should be easier to read and can be more eye-catching. It offers more flexibility in design and layout. Certain kinds of newsletters are expected to look very professional and should be typeset even if only a few copies are printed. The newsletter for an art directors' association or one for large corporation will probably be more credible if typeset. The local PTA newsletter, on the other hand, probably should be typewritten.

If you do choose typesetting, you will also choose commercial printing. There are a number of printing methods available, but that is too technical a subject go into here.

If you decide on typewriting, you can still have your newsletter printed. But you can consider other reproduction methods as well. The accompanying chart provides some guidance.

Type of Reproduction	number of copies	number of pages	use of art	use of photos	second color	Comment
Spirit duplicator (Ditto)	50-150	2+	yes	no	yes (green, red, blue	Inexpensive; used in schools; usually purple because it makes more copies
Mimeograph stencil	50-1000+	2+	yes fair	no	limited	Frequently used; may be available from secretarial services
electronic stencil	same	same	yes	poor	same	Stencil made from typed sheet; more uniform inking

Type of Reproduction	number of copies	number of pages	use of art	use of photos	second color	Comment
Office copier	10-50	1+	yes	no poor	no	High cost per copy; offered by duplicating services; easily available
Office offset	100-2000	2+	yes	pos-sible	pos-sible	You can type your own stencil or have one done; offered by duplicating services and small print shops
"Instant" print	100-1000	2+, 4+	yes	fair	pos-sible	Small print shop, often franchise businesses, offer quick offset printing from short-run plates
Offset printing	2000+	4+	yes	yes	yes	The most common printing method; wide range of services, quality, quantity, and costs
Letterpress printing	any	1+	plate	plate	pos-sible	Becoming less available; uses metal type; art and photos require metal plates (usually)

Printing or Duplicating

Any type of reproduction can produce a nice newsletter if you stay within the capabilities of the process and use high quality materials. To find out what the equipment can do, go to a showroom where the salespeople can demonstrate in detail what each piece can do. In many cases a duplicating machine can perform better than you think it can. However, you must know how to operate it and keep it in good condition.

There are so many reproduction methods available that it is hard to say where "duplicating" ends and "printing" begins. There are small offset printing presses that print one color on one letter - or legal-size sheet at a time. There are large offset presses that print four colors on 16 pages in one run through the press.

To find a printer or duplicating service, look in the Yellow Pages under printers, lithographers, dupli-

cating, and copying. Most of the ads will list the types of things the company prints. Newsletters may be mentioned, but if they're not, you can guess the size of the printer by the types of things listed. If you want up to 2,000 or so copies, you want a small print shop. If you want 20,000 copies, you want a larger print shop.

It pays to comparison shop for your printer. Give each printer the same set of specifications - number of pages, number of copies, stapling, folding, and delivery. Prices will vary widely - depending on what equipment the printer has, how busy the shop is, the availability of paper, quality standards, and many other factors. The highest price doesn't necessarily mean the best quality. The lowest price isn't always the best buy. To check quality, look at samples printed on the same press and same quality paper that would be used for your newsletter. Check service by asking other customers about their experiences with the printer. (The printer should be willing to supply references.)

Other factors to consider are location, delivery service, hours open (printers often work early hours which may or may not be convenient for you), and willingness of the printer to work with you. Convenience can be very important. If there's a huge printing plant just around the corner, see if they'll do a small job. Large printers usually have a small press or two for certain kinds of jobs and someone there may be willing to work with you even if your newsletter is small. If yours is a community service organization, the printer might even print the newsletter free or at low cost or in exchange for an ad.

In general, printers tend to be helpful. Ask for their advice. They usually tell you if they are not equipped to do the best or most economical job for you. They may recommend another printer or suggest duplicating instead of printing, or vice versa.

Format or Design

The format or design of the newsletter should remain the same from issue to issue so that readers recognize it. Continuity also makes production easier and faster. Format decisions include the number of columns per page, the length of the columns, the typeface you use, treatment of headlines, and so on.

If you want a distinctive, good-looking newsletter, have a graphic designer create a format for you. The design should include type specification and graphic treatments for departments, the name of the newsletter (if you don't have or are changing the logo). The designer should do a number of layouts for you, incorporating different elements. The services of an experienced graphic designer cost hundreds and even thousands of dollars. It is worth it if your organization wants a professional looking newsletter.

If you must decide the format on your own, here are some guidelines.

TYPED FORMAT. Typewriters type 10 (pica) or 12 (elite) characters per inch across and 6 lines per inch down. You will be able to put more on a page if you use elite type.

One column is the easiest but long lines of single-spaced type are not easy to read. If you use one column, pica may be better than elite. Add a space between paragraphs, use subheads liberally, and keep paragraphs short.

Two-column format is more difficult to do but the lines are shorter. There is also more flexibility in layout. Taking advantage of that flexibility, however, means more work.

Some typed newsletters use a narrow column combined with a wider column. The narrow column is used only for headings so that most of the copy is typed on a line that is shorter than full width; since very little is typed in the narrow column, the typing is easier to do than regular double column. The white space helps the appearance of the newsletter; but items must be short so that two or three headings appear on each page.

The typewriter does not give you many ways to add emphasis, but there are some things you can do. Underlining and use of all capital letters are two ways to set off headlines and subheads. You can make "bullets" (heavy dots) by using the lower case "o" and filling in the center. You can put short articles in boxes by indenting two letters on each sides and drawing lines around the item. If you have interchangeable elements you can use one element for heads and another for the main text. You can also use transfer lettering for heads.

This book uses typewriter type (Courier elite) but it was produced by computer. The right-hand side was justified (aligned evenly) by the computer program. The chapter heads were done with transfer lettering (Helvetica bold, 24 point). The bullets came from a roll of tape (Formaline).

TYPESET FORMAT. With typesetting you have a choice of many more typefaces and type sizes. Type is measured in picas, not inches. A pica is about a sixth of an inch and there are twelve points in a pica. Body type for most reading matter is 9, 10, or 11 point type. Sometimes 8 or 12 point is used. Footnotes, the classified ads, and the telephone directory use 6 or 7 point type (or smaller).

Specifications for a standard two-column format might read: 10/11 Times Roman x 20, 62 lines per column, 2 picas between columns. That means that the typeface is Times Roman (an often used typeface), and that 10-point type with 1 point of "leading" (the space between lines) will be set 20 picas wide. In addition, there are 62 lines in each of two columns on one page.

Specifications for a three-column format might read: 9/10 x 13 Baskerville, 68 lines per column, 1 1/2 picas between columns. Baskerville is another popular typeface. The type size is 9 points, the line has 10 points (9 plus 1 point leading), the line length is 13 picas, with 1 1/2 picas of space between columns.

Headlines should be at least 12 points, boldface. Headlines could be in a different typeface. Subheads could be the same face but in bold or italic, and the same size or one point larger, with a line space above the subhead.

Following these specifications would give you an ordinary, but acceptable, newsletter.

One way to decide a format for your newsletter is to copy another newsletter. The typesetter may not have the exact same typefaces but should have something similar.

Specifying type is a complex and technical skill. One typeface may have many varieties - regular, light, bold, demi-bold, italic, bold italic, condensed, and so on. The size, space between lines/space between words and between letters varies. Type can be hot metal linotype, or phototype, or strike-on cold type. The same type made by different companies varies somewhat. That's why you need a format - it makes decision-making manageable. You will have perhaps two typefaces, three or four varieties of

those typefaces, and perhaps five sizes that you use regularly.

Color

You know the expression, "I'll believe it when I see it in black and white"? Most newsletters are printed in black ink on white paper - a readable, believable combination. And the least expensive.

Color does attract attention and gives a newsletter an identity. Many organizations print up a supply of paper with the logo or flag in color ink. The newsletter is then printed in black on the preprinted paper. Some newsletters are printed on a colored paper with a similarly colored ink, such as brown on ivory paper, or dark blue on pale blue paper. The color makes the newsletter look a little different.

When you select a color you should realize that colors carry an emotional message. A garden club might use green, a boating association blue, but neither group should use brown although a historical society could. The Heart Association could use red but the National Rifle Association shouldn't.

Printing in a colored ink usually costs more because the ink costs more and the printer must wash the press to change ink colors. However, some print shops, to attract business, may offer certain colors on a certain day - maybe blue on Monday, green on Wednesday. You can't choose the particular shade but you can get the color without paying extra.

Printing a second color when you are running only a thousand copies usually means that the paper must run through the press twice - once for black and once for the other color. If you are having large quantities printed, the newsletter might run on a large two-color press, in which case the extra cost of the second color is relatively small.

Paper

Paper comes in a number of sizes, weights, colors, and finishes. Some standard weights are 20 and 24 lb. bond for stationery and 50 and 60 lb. offset for general printing. Paper may be coated or uncoated. Printers can show you many different papers, but the most economical choice will be a "house stock" - something the printer keeps on hand in large quantities. Occasionally a printer will have an unusual paper left over from another job that you can use at less cost - like buying remnants in a fabric store.

Size

The standard size for a newsletter is 8 1/2" x 11" or some slight variation of that. A four-page newsletter is 11" x 17", printed on both sides, and folded down the middle. Newsletters can be other sizes, such as half a legal size sheet, or half tabloid newspaper size. An advantage of the standard letter size is that it can be kept in a ring binder or in an ordinary file. Some publishers print their newsletters with the holes for ring binders already punched.

A newsletter should have an even number of pages and preferably a multiple of four or eight. A newsletter with more than 16 pages is more like a magazine than a newsletter. In fact, 12 pages probably should be the maximum size for a newsletter. The reason for multiples of four is that eight pages are really two 11" x 17" sheets of four-pages each and twelve pages are three four-page sheets. To make six or ten pages, you have an extra 8 1/2" x 11" sheet which either folds in or is loose in the center. Of course,

almost any number of single sheets (printed front and back equals two pages) can be stapled together at the corner.

The number of pages doesn't have to be the same from issue to issue, but for budgeting purposes you should have an idea of how many you will print in the course of the year.

This information provided here is the barest outline of what is involved in printing. An excellent and inexpensive source of information is the Pocket Pal: A Graphic Arts Production Handbook, published by the International Paper Company. (See the Selected Readings section, page 37.)

THE PRODUCTION PROCESS

Once you've made the initial production decisions you can start the process of producing an issue.

Preparing Copy

The first step is to prepare your copy, keeping in mind a rough idea of where the different elements (flag, masthead, standard columns and features, etc.) will be placed in the finished newsletter. Determining how much space your copy will fill when typed or typeset is called copyfitting. If your finished newsletter will have about 35 characters in a line, it is convenient to type your copy 35 characters wide. Then all you have to do is count the lines. The original copy should be typed double-spaced, even if the final form is single-spaced typewritten.

Suppose you have a four-page newsletter, two-column format, with 60 lines per column. You have a total of eight columns, 60 lines each, or 480 lines. However, the standing material may take up the equivalent of 60 lines so you have 420 lines to fill. An average typewritten page has 25 to 27 lines double-spaced, so you will need 15 to 17 full pages, typed 35 characters wide - or more like 25 pages since not all pages will be full.

Get an exact line count by adding the number of lines in each article, counting line spaces above subheads, the subheads, the heads, line spaces above the heads, below the heads, and after the article (to separate articles from each other). If your newsletter is typewritten, your count should be very precise. If your newsletter is typeset, the count will be approximate; you must allow extra space for larger headlines, for example. Also, the number of characters per line will not be exactly 35, because the letters require different amounts of space.

For example, "monument" and "littlest" both have eight characters, but the letter "m" takes up more space than most letters and "l" and "i" and "t" take less. On a typewriter (except the IBM Executive), the "m" and "l," both require one character space. In this book, the letters are all one character-space wide but the computer program has added space between letters and between words to make justified lines.

To get the right number of lines, and make them fit in the columns where you want them, you will probably have to cut some articles and add to others. If you are using art and photographs, you will need fewer lines of copy.

Be sure to read and correct the copy after you have done the copy-fitting. You will save time and money by not having to make corrections later.

If your newsletter is to be typeset, you will have to mark up the copy. That means you will indicate what the typeface is, the size, leading, and column width. When you

send your copy out to be typeset (or when it's ready for final typing), you have completed the "Manuscript Stage."

Proofreading

When the copy has been set in type or has been retyped, you must read the new copy against the original to make sure everything is correct. If you discover an error in the original, fixing it is called an "author alteration" or "AA." If the new copy has an error in it that was not in the original, you have a "printer error" or "PE" and fixing it is a "correction." You should pay for AA's but not for PE's.

Dummy

If your copy has been typeset, you will probably receive sets of galley proofs (of linotype) or "galley" proofs made on an office copier (of phototype or strike-on type). It is convenient to have one set of proofs with a waxed backing. This will enable you to stick the copy on layout sheets (sheets of paper you have ruled to match your format) to make a dummy. You can also use tape instead of was but don't use glue - it's too difficult to move the paper if you change your mind about the placement of a particular article.

The dummy shows exactly where to place the type, headlines, photographs, and art on each page. Before typesetting you had a rough layout in mind. Now you will see how accurate your copyfitting was. You may have to make changes if the articles don't fit exactly. (These may be considered AA's or PE's, depending on the typesetter's policy or what arrangements you've made with the typesetter.) If you planned ahead, you will have "filler" that you can add or subtract as needed.

Send corrected galley proofs back to have corrections made. Check the corrections. If everything is OK, you're ready to make pages.

Paste-Up

You may choose to do the page paste-up yourself, or you may have it done by the typesetter. (Letterpress printing doesn't have a paste-up stage, but few newsletters are printed letter- press any more.) The paste-up is the camera-ready page that the printer will use to make printing plates. (The paste-up is sometimes called a "mechanical.") If an error is present, this is your last chance to catch it - otherwise your readers will tell you about it. Triple check the spelling of all names. No matter how flattering an article is, the person featured will only remember you spelled his or her name incorrectly. You won't have photographs on the paste-up although the position of the photographs will be shown, probably with rectangles of red film called "windows." The photographs have to be screened by the printer to make "half-tones."

Printing

Now you are ready to take your camera-ready paste-up to the printer together with all photos and art work. Be sure to give your printer enough time. Although most printers joke that every job was to have been "done yesterday," the two of you will have a better rapport if you are not screaming on the phone about a late delivery. Of course, once in a while the printer will be late through no fault of yours.

If your newsletter is printed on an offset press and has photographs, you may see a proof of the film the printer uses to make plates. This proof is often called a "blueline" although it has other names. This is your chance to make sure the photographs and the captions match.

If you don't see a blueline, be very sure the pictures are keyed to the proper spaces on the paste-up.

Now you can sit back and wait for the finished copies to be delivered. (Or perhaps you will wait at the printers and see the first copies off the press.) You should check the copies as soon as they are delivered to be sure you have the right quantity and that the newsletter meets specifications. Usually there are no problems. However, you do have the right to reject a job that is not delivered as ordered.

Distribution

In one way, the most important part of the newsletter is the mailing label. If the association member doesn't get the newsletter, it might as well not exist.

Mailing list maintenance (and sometimes the mailing of the newsletter) is usually the responsibility of the organization's secretary, treasurer, or membership committee or department. If the newsletter staff is to handle mailing, someone must obtain a set of mailing labels. Someone has to see to it that the labels are placed on the newsletter. Members might volunteer to stick the labels on. If the mailing is large, it might be well to have a commercial mailer do the job.

The mailing list also determines the press run (how many copies of the newsletter are printed). Usually, the editor will order a number of copies to use as samples, to distribute to authors and others who have contributed to the newsletter, and for other uses. Therefore, the editor needs to know how many labels there are some time before the newsletter is printed.

Who Gets the Newsletter?

In addition to the membership list, a special mailing list can be maintained for mailing promotional copies, membership campaign copies, and the like. Here's a list of groups that might be on the mailing list for an association in some aspect of education:

- Members
- Commercial representatives and vendors of materials, equipment, and supplies
- School libraries (primarily college and university, since they tend to keep back issues of periodicals)
- State Department of Education personnel, especially coordinators of curriculum and content areas
- Public relations departments of institutions in your area
- Other newsletter editors in your field
- Newspapers, television, radio; especially public radio and cable TV
- School administrators
- Officers of State Education Associations
- All of the content-area colleagues in your state--perhaps once a year

Mailing Labels

Not long ago, labels were commonly produced from plates imprinted with each member's name and address. Today, large mailing lists and some small ones are computer-generated. Small mailing lists are often produced on an office copier.

COPIER-PRODUCED LABELS. An organization with a membership list of around 200 can easily maintain current mailing information by keeping a typed master address list on label sheets. Type the addresses of members and address corrections on these sheets. Cross off old addresses.

To make labels for mailing, use a copier that will feed sheets of labels that match those used for the master list. Test the position of the master on the copier to make sure the columns

line up correctly. Use only those labels that are not crossed off. After a while, too many will be crossed off and you'll have to retype the list.

Both pressure-sensitive labels (the kind that peel off a paper backing) and "lick-and-stick" (the kind you have to moisten) come in sheets that will feed through a copier. The pressure-sensitive labels are easier to use but more expensive. There is a difference of opinion as to which kind are more likely to stay stuck to the newsletter.

COMPUTER-GENERATED LABELS. If you have access to a computer, or can buy computer services from a data processing firm, you can automate your newsletter labeling. Details vary, of course, depending on the type of computer facilities at your disposal. But this is the idea: You furnish a list of members, including home and business addresses, phone numbers, and any other important information. The computer prints labels, sorted by ZIP code if you want. In addition, you can call for a printout to make up a membership directory. Or you can do an analysis of the membership based on length of membership in the association, professional occupational level, or other criteria.

Computers can produce pressure-sensitive labels that can be applied to the newsletter by hand. If the labeling is to be done by machine, you'll probably want "cheshire labels," probably "4-up" (four labels across a row). Computer printouts can also provide carbon copies, so you can get more than one list at once.

Folding and Sealing

If you send an unstapled, flat newsletter, some of the pages may come out. And if you enclose a special insert from time to time, that's almost sure to get lost. For these reasons many newsletters are closed--often with a staple. You may get nasty comments from readers who, in their wild enthusiasm to tear the newsletter open, rip pages. For a more satisfactory method, take advantage of automation (printers have automatic taping machines) or use wafer seals (the small self-sticking circles that come in a variety of colors).

Mailing Rates

How and when members get their newsletter depends on mailing procedures. The easiest way to mail up to 200 newsletters that weigh less than an ounce each is to stick a first class stamp and a label on each newsletter and drop the newsletters in a mailbox. (A postage meter might make it even easier.) If you have zip codes on the labels, every member should have a newsletter within three days, no matter how far away the address in the U.S.

When you start mailing more than 200 newsletters regularly, you might want to consider bulk rates. If you change from first class to second or third class bulk rates, you will have to print your newsletter two weeks earlier if you want readers to receive it at the same time they would if it were mailed first class. Delivery might not take so long, but don't count on it.

THIRD CLASS. If your newsletter weighs an ounce or less, you won't be interested in the single piece third class rate. (As of 1979, a single piece first class is 15c for one ounce, third class 20c--but you can send another ounce for the extra nickel.)

To get the bulk rate you pay an annual bulk mailing fee. Your mailing

must meet certain requirements having to do with the method of paying the postage, use of ZIP codes, sorting, identification, and size.

Rates vary. If you qualify as a nonprofit organization, you'll pay less. The best thing to do is take copies of your newsletter to your post office and discuss the situation with the postmaster.

SECOND CLASS. Second class mail includes newspapers and other periodical publications issued regularly at least four times a year. To use second class mail you must obtain a second class entry permit from the post office. There are several second class classifications for which a newsletter may qualify. The rates are different for each classification. Furthermore, rates also depend on the amount of advertising, where the newsletters are being sent, how the pieces are sorted, and other factors. Because the regulations concerning second class mail are complex, consult your local postmaster. Large post offices have separate sections for second class mail.

Postal regulations and rates change continually. Local interpretations of rules may vary. For anything other than single piece first class (there's even a first class bulk rate), it's best to go to your post office with copies of the newsletter to find out what options are open to you. Factors such as the number of pages, amount of advertising, weight, size, and even the method of printing and duplicating must be considered.

Even your postmaster may not be familiar with all the regulations. The Postal Service Manual and the Postal Bulletin, which should be available at all post offices, are the primary sources for current rates and regulations. For postal users like you, there is a Mailers Guide published by the Postal Service and available from the customer services representative at the main post office in your area.

Postage: Indicia, Meter, Stamps

You can use stamps to affix postage to your newsletters, but when quantities are large you will probably use a postage meter or preprinted indicia.

If your organization has a postage meter, you can use it for the postage on your newsletter. You can also arrange to have your newsletter metered at the post office. Sometimes you can arrange to use another organization's meter if you pay for the postage you use. Or you can use a mailing service. Meter users are licensed by the post office. The meter is rented or leased from a private company. The post office "sets" the meter for the amount of postage you pay for at the post office. The meter will show a declining amount. When the amount gets too low, you simply take the meter to the post office and pay for a "refill."

Indicia are used for bulk mailings. The indicia are printed on the newsletters and state the permit number, that postage has been paid, and where the postage was paid. You pay the postage at the post office, either by maintaining an account with the post office or by paying for each mailing as it comes along. If you have an account, you keep enough money in it to cover anticipated mailings.

When indicia are used, each piece in one mailing must be the same. Metered mail doesn't have to be all the same, but the amount of postage has to be adjusted accordingly.

Address Changes

If you want members to continue to

receive the newsletter after they have moved, you will need an address change. (In the best of all worlds, members notify their organizations six weeks before they move, so the mailing list can be changed.) First class mail is forwarded free of charge for one year after a change of address. But you won't get an address correction from the post office unless you ask for it. Second and third class mail will be neither forwarded nor returned unless you request the service.

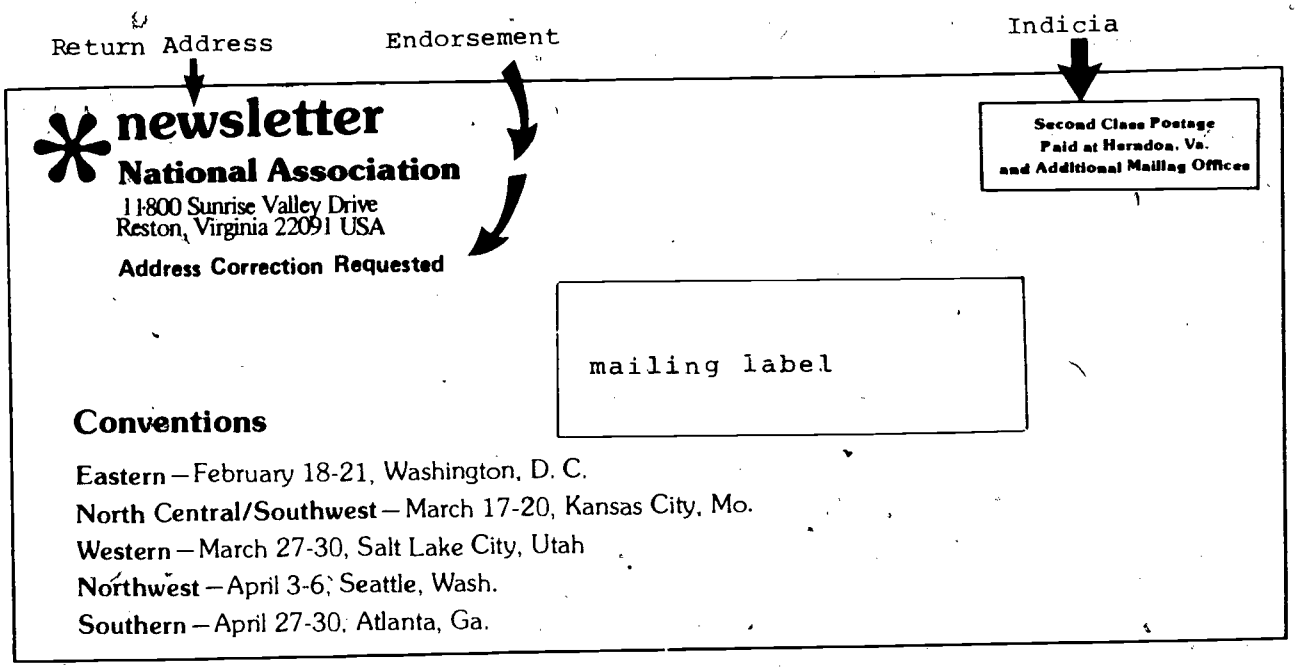
To tell postal workers what to do about forwarding, returning, and supplying address changes, use an endorsement. The endorsement appears directly under the return address. Typical endorsements are "Address Correction Requested," "Do Not Forward," "Return Postage Guaranteed." Again, check with your postmaster. Regulations vary for each class of mail and fees vary for different services.

Return Address

Don't forget to print the return address on the newsletter (or wrapper or envelope, if that's what you use). The return address is not only required for some kinds of mail, it is also an important service to members. It can even be promotional.

In addition to the name of the organization, include the name of a person--usually the editor--so that readers know to whom to address correspondence. You might also include the name of the subscription or circulation manager. The same information may be included in the masthead, but readers will look at the return address first.

You can also use part of the return address space (the left side of the mailing area) for promotional copy--"Renew Your Subscription!" "Don't Miss the Conference!" and so on. A visual message is also effective.



Evaluation

Whether or not you have a formal evaluation plan, you can be sure that readers will evaluate the newsletter. Evidence may appear as comments at conferences and meetings or in letters to the editor. Some comments will be favorable, some unfavorable. The larger and more diverse the organization, the greater the chances of getting a wide range of reaction to the newsletter.

The editor's perceptions will differ from those of the readers. Here are a few pitfalls and typical reader reactions:

- A page of mailing labels was left in the copier.

  Reaction: "I've been a member for 3 months and still haven't received my newsletter. Why can't you get things straightened out?

- An article was shortened to fit the space available.

  Reaction: "You left out the most important paragraph in my article. That's the last time I write anything for the newsletter."

- Printer failed to make corrections.

  Reaction: "This is the worst issue I've seen with all the misspellings and mixed up names."

- Last minute layout, too much copy.

  Reaction: "What a dumb issue - everything was squeezed together, hardly any pictures, and the ones there were had the wrong names under them."

Such comments tell you that someone is reading the newsletter, but they don't provide much guidance for making editorial decisions.

Readers will form an opinion of the newsletter (and the association) on their own, so why not ask them what they think? You can obtain suggestions by seeking comments from members you see at meetings and conferences. Have some specific questions in mind. For example, if the newsletter has been promoting a conference, you might ask attendees how they learned about the conference and why they decided to attend.

Attending Board of Directors meetings is another way to elicit responses. You might ask for a place on the agenda and have a questionnaire ready to distribute. Or you may prefer to talk to Board members informally before and after the meeting.

It is fairly easy to find out whether the organization leaders and active members think the newsletter is fulfilling its function. However, since the newletter is one association service that reaches all members - the active and less active - it is important to find out whether the typical member finds the newsletter useful. A more formal survey is usually necessary to do this.

The objectives of a readership survey should be clearly stated in writing before a questionnaire is drawn up. Are there problem areas? Are some departments receiving too much space and others not enough? Does the newsletter need to be reorganized? What about type style and layout - would a change make the newsletter more attractive and easier to read? Are there other subjects that should be included?

One effective way to survey readers is to conduct in-depth telephone interviews. To do this, select a few members at random and telephone them. Have a list of questions prepared and keep a record of the replies.

Organizations are more likely to survey members by mail. It requires less of one person's time and the results are easier to tabulate. The results are also more representative, if you get a reasonably good response.

Assuming that the organization's membership list represents the group to be polled, you must then decide the size of your sample. If you have 200 or fewer members, you don't need a sample. Just survey the entire membership. To have confidence in the results of your survey, you should try to achieve a 50% rate of response - a rate that is difficult to achieve. Therefore, you should have a random sample at least twice as large as the response you need. That is, you should send at least 500 surveys if you need to have 250 usable replies. You are unlikely to need more than that, since 220 replies is sufficient from a membership of 100,000.

The next step is to write the survey. Experts recommend a multiple-choice format rather than open-ended questions. Multiple-choice is less time-consuming so readers are more likely to finish the form. Test the survey by having associates and friends complete it. Can they understand the questions? Are the instructions clear? Is the length acceptable?

When you mail the survey, include a stamped, self-addressed envelope and a covering letter explaining why the questionnaire is being sent. Do everything possible to make the receivers feel they have been carefully selected because they can give the newsletter staff valuable advice. In other words, flatter them. Spend extra money on postage. Use commemorative stamps rather than a postage meter and send via first class mail - special delivery will get an even better response. The object is to make the readers open, answer, and return the survey. Of course, even after all efforts are made, the response will probably be disappointing. A follow-up duplicate questionnaire 2 or 3 weeks later is a good idea. This time the accompanying letter can say, "Since you may not have received our first readership survey or may not have had time to complete it, we wanted to give you another opportunity . . ." or words to that effect.

After the returns are in, tabulate and analyze them. Most importantly, be sure to act on what you've learned. Make changes that seem to be indicated, even if it means eliminating your favorite feature. A few issues after the changes have been made, you may want to send another questionnaire to see if readers are more satisfied.

A word of warning: editors must be sensitive to the wishes of their readers, but not too sensitive. Don't be afraid to take a stand. One of the purposes of a newsletter is to stimulate new ideas, and you can't do that by printing news that is mundane, lackluster, and insipid.

Also, do not rely too much on surveys. Survey research is full of pitfalls, even when conducted by professionals. Survey responses should be analyzed with a grain of salt and common sense. They should be used as just one tool in judging how well the newsletter is serving the readers.

Survey Questions

Each survey is unique. However, there are types of questions you may

want to include. This list may help you develop your own questions.

NEWSLETTER READERSHIP. The primary purpose of the survey is to find out whether members actually read the newsletter, what parts they read, what they like the best, what they like least.

DEMOGRAPHIC. Most surveys include questions about age, sex, income, occupation, numbers of persons in household, home ownership, etc. These questions may not be needed for a membership publication that does not include advertising.

READING HABITS. Many publishers ask whether readers subscribe to competing or related publications. If you are thinking of running a column about articles of interest in related publications, it may be helpful to know whether members already read those publications.

ADVERTISING. If you carry advertising, you might want to ask if readers pay attention to the ads and whether they have purchased anything as a result of reading the ad in the newsletter.

PARTICIPATION. How active are members in association activities? How important is the newsletter as a member service. If the organization has chapters, questions about the chapter activities may be appropriate.

SUGGESTIONS. Most questionnaires have at least one open-ended question asking for suggestions for articles or for areas of interest.

TIMELINESS. If you are having problems with mailing, you might ask when readers receive the newsletter and in what condition.

SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRES

World magazine asks its young readers to evaluate articles by putting an X on a scale that looks something like this:

Another method is to give the article a grade--A, B, C, D, or F (failure).

Editors don't necessarily discard an article because it doesn't get a good response from the readership. Instead, they may rewrite the piece and illustrate it differently.

Here is a form adapted from one used by the American School Board Journal. ASBJ surveys 500 randomly selected readers each month.

1. Comment on the items listed under "This Month's News" by marking the appropriate boxes below.
2. Use the back of this sheet to make additional comments about the topics you'd like to see us cover in the future.
3. Mail this page in the enclosed postage-paid envelope.

CHECK ONE:

__Member less than 1 year
__Member 1 - 3 years
__Member 4 or more years
__Employed in school district
__Employed in state department of education
__Employed in higher education
__Other employment_____

NAME OF NEWSLETTER
Name of Association
ISSUE DATE, VOL.(); NO.()
Month's Contents

(List articles and news stories)

DID NOT READ	I READ THE ARTICLE AND THOUGHT IT WAS:				
	Great	Useful or of Interest	So-So	A Loser	

Write in the numbers of the features listed that you usually:

DON'T READ	READ AND FIND USEFUL	READ BUT FIND USELESS

Features:
1-Editor's Mail
2-Editorial
3-New Products
4-Around the State
5-The Law and your Job
6-Job Clearinghouse
7-Calendar
8-President's Column
9-Legislation
10-Helpful Tips
11-Books

Selected Readings

Newsletter editors should have as a basic working library a good dictionary, a thesaurus, a current almanac, a book of quotations, and the best reference work in their field. Printers are good sources for free pamphlets that will provide typographic information and design ideas. Kodak makes available (both for sale and without charge) a wealth of material on ways to use photographs effectively.

The following list of reference books is meant to be only a beginning. Many of these titles contain bibliographies for additional reading.

EDITING/WRITING

Barzun, J. Simple and Direct: A Rhetoric for Writers. New York: Harper & Row, 1975.

Bates, J. D. Writing with Precision. Washington, D.C.: Acropolis Books, 1978.

Bernstein, T. M. Watch Your Language. New York: Atheneum, 1965.

Bernstein, T. M. The Careful Writer: A Modern Guide to English Usuage. New York: Atheneum, 1973.

Brodinsky, B., editor and compiler. An Idea Book for the Education Editor. Glassboro, N.J.: Educational Press Association of America, 1974.

Ferguson, R. Editing the Small Magazine. New York: Columbia University Press, 1976.

Flesch, R. The Art of Readable Writing. New York: Macmillan, 1949.

Hohenberg, J. The Professional Journalist: A Guide to the Principles and Practices of the News Media, 3rd edition. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1973.

Phelps, R., and Hamilton, E. D. Libel: A Guide to Rights, Risks, Responsibilities. New York: Collier, 1969.

Strunk, W., Jr., and White, E. B. The Elements of Style, 2nd edition. New York: Macmillan, 1972. (Also original edition of 1959)

Strunk, W., Jr., Words Into Type, 3rd edition. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974. (A basic editing text.)

Zinsser, W. On Writing Well: An Informal Guide To Writing Nonfiction. New York: Harper & Row, 1976.

PRODUCTION/DESIGN

Craig, J. Production for the Graphic Designer. New York: Watson-Guptill, 1974.

How to Produce a Small Newspaper. Harvard, Mass.: The Harvard Common Press, 1978.

Hurlburt, A. Publication Design, revised edition. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1976.

Lem, D. P. Graphics Master. Los Angeles, Calif.: Dean Lem Associates, 1977.

Melcher, D. and Larrick, N. Printing and Promotion Handbook: How To Plan, Produce and Use Printing, Advertising and Direct Mail, 3rd edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966.

Pocket Pal: A Graphic Arts Production Handbook. New York: International Paper Company, 1974. (A new edition appears every few years.)

Clip art books can save time; they come with assorted topics within one book or on a specific subject, such as humor, weather, food, etc. Catalogs of dry transfer lettering such as those published by the Zipatone Company offer creative ways for using graphic aids. Free type catalogs are available from printers and typesetters and you can buy excellent books on typography, such as Designing with Type by James Craig (New York: Watson-Guptill).

"The Newsletter Game"