Update

WEB EXTRA

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CLICK!

TIPS FROM SND'S INFOGRAPHICS
QUICK COURSE AT POYNTER

Contributors this issue
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TIPS FROM THE PROS

LEARN!

How many times have you wished you could attend a Quick Course but just couldn't make it because of time, money or both? SND offers so many good training opportunities, it would be difficult to take advantage of all of them. But here's your chance to get some of that great information without ever leaving the comfort of your computer. Look for more Update Web Extras on Quick Courses and other SND events in the future. If you have ideas for other coverage you'd like to see, e-mail denisereagan@mac.com.

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CHALLENGES FOR ARTISTS

Jeff Goertzen
The Denver Post

WHAT?

STEPS TO SUCCESS

A structured graphics department: This is the foundation of our good work. It's not enough to be a good graphics artist if you don't have good quality leadership in your graphics department. You need a good graphics editor or director that knows the importance of organization and structure including a graphics request system, performance evaluations, critiques, job descriptions and, above all, a mission statement for your department as well as your artists.

A good relationship with your newsroom: How many graphics artists ever get out in the newsroom? How many attend planning meetings? A good working relationship with the newsroom is going to have to come from the graphics department. Get into those planning meetings, converse with the reporters, read their stories and compliment them on their stories. Let them know you are reading them. Schmooze with them in every way possible. And if they write the text for your graphics or contribute in any way to the graphic, credit their names.

Develop good journalistic skills: Get out on the streets. Be proactive and look for graphics opportunities. Don't wait for them to come to you. Go out and find them. Work with reporters and photographers as much as possible. Learn from what they do best.

Integrate graphics on the pages: This is the challenge for graphics editors and directors. Don't be satisfied with producing great graphics. Be sure they get proper placement on the pages. Poor placement can destroy good work, not to mention your credibility. Talk with section editors and page designers about what works best as main art. Does the graphic tell the story better than the photo? Don't overplay graphics if the content isn't there. If it needs to be simple and small, make it that way.

INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES

At the opening of her presentation, Jeff Goertzen conducted an interview with St. Petersburg Times reporter Anne Lindberg about some of the challenges she faces as a reporter. Anne admitted that she wished there was a formula for getting information, but much of it is just luck, being at the right place at the right time, asking the right questions and also developing trust with your sources.

She told of times where interviews went really well and other times where she just crashed and burned in an interview. She said that often interviewing is hit and miss.

"One time I knew I wasn't going to get anywhere with this source, so I just asked the question point blank and he got angry with me and started spewing information," chuckled Anne.

In a show of hands, about half of the 20 participants in the workshop admitted that they felt uncomfortable with the idea of conducting an interview.

Then Anne made them do an interview. The participants divided into four groups and had to attend a mock news conference conducted by Anne Lindberg and Jeff Goertzen. It was each group's challenge to search for the answers and ask the right questions. The object of the news conference was to discover that a stand pipe was not working in an apartment complex that burned down.

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FACT-CHECKING & VERIFYING Ron Brackett
St. Petersburg Times

WHY?

Every mistake, no matter how small, erodes the credibility of your newspaper. With so many news sources available we can't afford to do anything that could cost us readers. If they don't trust us, they won't read us.

Internally, if you are sending graphics to your colleagues with mistakes in them, your credibility, as well as your entire department's reputation, is eroded. Accuracy is one of the most important aspects of your job as a journalist.

How do you fact-check a graphic?

It's not just about looking for typos. Every reporter is expected to fact-check his or her story before sending it to the editor. When you fact-check, you are verifying each tiny piece of information. Here's how the process could apply to a graphic.

• Are you clear on what you're trying to show? Have a discussion with the assigning editor or reporter before you begin.

• Have you met all the goals set out in the assignment?

• Use only trusted sources. Ask the research department (or your local library) for help.

• Don't blindly accept even what a trusted source (e.g., MapStudio) spits out.

• Don't look at the piece as a whole, break it down to its most simple elements. Fact-check each element.

• Fact-check on a hard copy, not on a computer screen.

• Double-check the finished graphic with the source material. Do your facts match what you were given? Does your map look like the original?

• Is everything in the right column?

• Are all the names spelled correctly?

• Is the pointer box or the dot in the right location?
• Is it millions or billions?

• If it's a map, compare it with maps on the walls or in atlases. Look at the surrounding states and countries too, not just the one you're focused on.

• Are all the roads labeled correctly? Is it a U.S. highway or a County Road? Is it an Alternate highway?

• If you don't understand something, neither will the reader. Get an explanation.

• Use your colleagues. Every graphic should be checked by you and another graphic journalist, and then the reporter, his editor, a copy editor and a copy chief.

• If you are creating original text, type it in the editing system (not Freehand or Illustrator). The text can be edited by the desk before it reaches the graphic.

• Bring in a copy editor on a complicated graphic. Make arrangements to get their help earlier in the process.

• Read the big type backward.

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SELLING YOUR IDEAS **George Rorick**
The Poynter Institute

HOW?

THINK THE IDEA THROUGH
Be sure that you have completely thought through your idea BEFORE you suggest it. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT. You can be assured (and rightly so) that there will be numerous questions and doubts.

WRITE IT DOWN
For your own personal clarification, ALWAYS spell out the idea, word for word, in writing before you move ahead.

WHO WILL BENEFIT?
Explain why your idea will be beneficial. It could be a financial benefit (one of the better reasons) but whatever it may be, be sure that you clarify the value of the idea.

EXPECT OPPOSITION
Do your best to anticipate as many questions and have answers ready to those questions.

PRESENT A PROTOTYPE
Be prepared to show a prototype or an example of your completed project.

SET DEADLINES
Set yourself realistic deadlines. Be prepared to commit to those deadlines at the time of your presentation.

MAXIMIZE YOUR RESOURCES
Learn how to make the best use of all your resources, including the talent and knowledge of others around you.

SHARE IDEAS
Share your idea with others, ask their opinion. This will encourage others to buy into the idea and take ownership of the idea. This will make change much easier in the long run.

THE EXPENSE FACTOR
Be prepared to accurately spell out any anticipated expense. This is very important.

3–D DOs & DON'Ts

By Kevin Hand
Newsweek

DOs

FOR ARTISTS

1. Gather 50 percent more information than with a 2-D information graphic. Remember, you have to fill-in information not only for width and height, but also depth with 3-D.

2. Use illustration programs for more accurate base shapes. Creating a shape to be extruded or lathed in a 3-D program can be cumbersome and unwieldy. Just wanted to use that word, "unwieldy" because it sounds cool. "Unwieldy," "unweeeldy."

3. When possible, find photos from every angle when researching a 3-D infographic.

4. Use internet sites for references of colors, textures and backgrounds.

5. Manipulate textures in Photoshop for multiple uses. Like turning sandpaper into asphalt by playing with the brightness and contrast. Wheeeeeee!

6. Use only as much detail as the graphic will allow on deadline.

7. Find out how other artists approached the subject through other publications and try to expand on what they did.

8. Give the art plenty of leeway as far as width and depth when planning how to layout your 3-D scene. Make sure everything that is important will not be cropped in the final graphic.

9. Use "cheats" like repeating textures or simpler shapes in distances too far away to make out detail. This will save time on deadline.

10. When doing detail such as windows and doors on aircraft, only add as much detail as needed at the distance you hope to render.

11. Build 3-D models with structure and detail only on the sides that will be visible; Say, if you're shooting the front of the building, and not including the back.

12. Use models from copyright-free sources such as Strata Cafe.

13. You can also use models that are provided by the various software. I use these models and manipulate them when needed.

14. Assess the time it takes to produce various 3-D models at various levels of detail in your free time. This will give you an idea how long these types of renderings will take on deadline.

15. When at all possible, keep in mind that you also have the option of your graphic running on the net or TV. Detail and rendering resolutions vary. Internet (72 dpi), TV 720 X 480 (72 dpi).

16. When in the fact checking process, fax or e-mail JPEGs of your models to your sources for their review.

17. Provide rough drafts and preliminary renderings to your reporters and editors in the early stages to let them know what direction you are headed with the art.

18. Layout the graphic with the preliminary models when possible. Even better, get the actual page from the editor and place the model to see how it will interact with the rest of the page.

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19. Print out photo references when producing your 3-D model and hang them around your cubicle for quick viewing.

20. Shoot reference photos as panorama when dealing with a large subject. Shoot several images from one standpoint in a sequential manner. Place them together in Photoshop to produce a panoramic view.

21. Use scale whenever possible to show proportion. For example, a man next to a Saturn V rocket or Peruvian Yak.

22. When lighting a model, make sure the subject of the graphic is the brightest lit to bring it forward from the rest of the graphic. 23. Use back lighting to show detail near the back of the subject.

24. When placing cameras in a scene, use more than one camera and camera position. This will give editors and art directors more choices of subject perspective.

25. When laying out a graphic use low res on early renders for size and shape.

26. Get in on meetings with editors when time allows, to make sure that you are on the same page with them about the graphic. Make sure to alert them as to how long a project will take to produce in 3-D. Oh, and don't lie about this.

27. When dealing with textures and images that are incremental to the graphic, such as airplane logos, make sure to practice logo placement before this becomes a deadline issue.

FOR EDITORS

28. Remember to always consult with the artist as well as the art director about his ability to produce complicated 3-D models on deadline.

29. Size and scope of a 3-D graphic depends on you and your layout, but to get knowledge and fuel to sell it to the managing editor, consult the art director and artist.

30. Give as much lead time as possible for more complicated 3-D graphics ideas.

31. Beforehand, set sub-deadlines for sections of larger 3-D graphics to be completed. This will allow the artist to set limits on detail and scope.

32. Allow reporters and researchers to work closely with the artist by freeing up some time to produce the best and most accurate product.

FOR ART DIRECTORS

33. For the larger graphics, free up some time for the artist when possible. Nothing can squelch craftsmanship like a half-column locator to the up coming frog festival.

34. When possible, take a few hours or maybe a day off to familiarize yourself with the 3-D software of your departments choice. This will give you a round idea of how difficult or not it is to complete a given graphic.

35. Given time constraints, have an artist do fifty pushups every time you catch them with an "unsaved" 3-D model or graphic.

36. Whenever possible and when resources allow, send the artist on location to the site of a given 3-D graphic subject. This will prove invaluable for his orientation to the subject.

3-D DOs & DON'Ts

By Kevin Hand
Newsweek

DON'Ts

FOR ARTISTS

1. Don't forget to make sure you and the art director have the same ideas as to what is expected upon the completion of your 3-D model. Miscommunication will not only be a complete bummer upon the presentation of the final drawing, but it will not look good wrapped around your head.

2. Don't forget to communicate with the editors as often as time will allow. If trouble occurs there will then be enough time to work around a problem.

3. Don't leave a subject site with too few pictures as reference.

4. Don't use special effects in the 3-D program when on a strict deadline. This adds render time and the outcome is sometimes unpredictable.

5. Don't forget you have textures all around you that can be used for different things. A picture of sand can be turned into a beach. A straight on picture of grass can be used to create a football field, spaghetti for muscle fibers, etc.

6. Don't give a model the most detail when only some will do.

7. Don't look for sympathy when an over- detailed graphic will not render. When you see me, I will be crying on the outside.

8. Don't overuse 3-D. Icons can be done quicker in most cases with an illustration program. Sometimes, it's nice to give the reader a break from the usual.

9. Don't produce details in areas that wont be seen with the final render whenever possible.

10. Don't forget your 3-D graphic is 3-D. Use a perspective that will be dynamic, but not comical.

11. Don't forget to include information that is helpful to the reader. I know this sounds simple, but often I can get caught up in a complicated 3-D drawing and forget that it must show the reader something other than a cool drawing.

12. Don't forget your expertise counts. Make suggestions that you think might bring something new or special to the reader.

13. Don't forget to keep the graphic as simple as you can. Step back and ask yourself or someone other that the art director or the editor if the graphic and drawing are making sense. This will surprise you sometimes. Better do this one when in the planning stage.

14. Don't get caught up in lighting that will give that ant that "extra something" when he is not going to be seen.

15. Don't wait to the last minute to find the best way to light something. Use free time to experiment with lighting. Use old 3-D models to try different light effects and write down results for future reference.

16. Don't find out on deadline that you should have saved your 3-D model 2 minutes before your machine crashed.

17. Don't forget to save your 3-D model.

18. Don't forget to save your 3-D model.

19. Don't forget to save your 3-D model.

20. Don't forget that 4 out of 5 art directors prefer you to save your 3-D model.

21. Don't forget to save your 3-D model in different stages. I usually have 10 or 12 3-D drawings saved of the same model in different stages. This allows me to go back to a previous stage if for some reason, not related to anything reasonable, the version I am working on is corrupted.

22. Don't give an editor something that is not ready to print without him knowing it is not ready to print. This has happened to me and will happen to you.

23. Don't forget to double check every detail of your drawing. Compare your graphic with the story and make sure your information and the reporters are on the same page.

24. Don't copy someone else work, unless permission is granted. Plagiarism is bad. It makes the original artist's inner child very angry and can be dangerous to your health. By the way, I will find you. You know who you are.

25. Don't take ALL of the things I say seriously if you are an upstanding professional. For the rest of you, when I snap my fingers you will awake refreshed and alert.

FOR EDITORS

26. Don't forget to tell your artist to save his work.

27. Don't give the artist an assignment that is due in 2 hours with him telling you it will take days. Work with the art director and the artist to come up with a quicker way than 3-D, if time does not allow.

28. Don't give the artist information on a graphic subject that has not been double checked by the reporter or the researcher. This short time used to check information will pay back later on deadline.

29. Don't let a 3-D graphic go in the publication without checking for proportion, sizes, altitudes, etc., that may effect important information you are trying to relay to the reader.

30. Don't get caught on deadline with the artist telling you of some technical glitch. Make sure he/she has the power and up-to-date software in his/her machine to pull off the best 3-D renderings.

FOR ART DIRECTORS

31. Don't forget to kill those who don't save their work.

32. Don't take on too much grunt work like locator maps when centerpieces arise that require more attention. Giving the artist time to finish a graphic will give the paper and you a product to be proud of.

33. Don't schedule time off to those who have produced a large 3-D graphic on the night/day it runs. This holds true only if no one else can correct details in the graphic on the specialized software.

34. Don't let the artists know I said that.

35. Don't forget you have a special resource in your 3-D artist. Not all publications can produce this type of graphic. Give him/her ample opportunity to hone his/her craft.

FOR OTHERS

36. Don't send me e-mail if you can't say something nice (khand@newsweek.com).

37. Don't forget to enjoy what you do. Not every job has to be great, but great is not every job ... Uh ... every great has to be a job ... Give it some thought and get back to me.

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