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Endless News Most Beautiful: Exploring The Visual Landscape of Journalism and Transforming The Carroll News' Visual Identity

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Endless News Most Beautiful:

Exploring The Visual Landscape of Journalism and

Transforming *The Carroll News*' Visual Identity

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Senior Honors Project

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John Carroll University

Abstract:

This project aims to explore the practice, value and impact of newspaper design and how its principles can be applied to construct a coherent visual identity for a college newspaper. The first part will examine primary and secondary sources on visual journalism, including both theoretical and visual analysis of renowned newspaper designs around the world. The second part focuses on designing a complete visual overhaul for *The Carroll News*. This part will include insights from key current and former *Carroll News* staff members through interviews, and a survey of Communications majors, who are frequently exposed to news media, to gather their opinions on the current visual presentation of *The Carroll News* and their inputs into the final look for the redesign.

Endless News Most Beautiful: Exploring The Visual Landscape of Journalism and

Transforming *The Carroll News'* Visual Identity

Most people would not hesitate to point out that a strong visual appeal is the first thing

that grabs their attention and makes them more interested in certain objects and works. While

this natural tendency benefits lots of media products, this does not seem to be the case with

newspapers. As people often associate the press with words rather than images, the visual aspect

of news tends to be overlooked and thus retreats to the background in most readers' minds. In his

article *Kit of parts*, editorial designer Simon Esterson (2004) pointed out this issue through a

common question:

> Why do people read one newspaper in preference to another? Politics? Price? Quality of
>
> writing? Better sport or financial news? Easier to read on the train? The choice rests on a
>
> complex, largely unspoken equation where design is not apparently a key factor. (p. 4)

In the media's ever-changing adaptation to the digital age, however, visual journalism has

become increasingly crucial in defining a newspaper's identity and enhancing its textual

contents. Esterson (2004) asserts that the "visual vocabulary" of a newspaper is "integral to its

character." This vocabulary ranges from font choice, graphic color palette, and the kind and size

of pictures to each article on the front page or the headline of each article (p. 4). In their book

News Production Theory and Practice, media scholar David Machin and real-life journalist

Sarah Niblock (2006) also define visual journalism as "the ability to project a news story to

readers and audiences through image and design as well as through text" (p. 14). Beyond this

straight-forward definition is a whole other dimension of visual experimentation and creative

nuance that designers pour into every news page.

This project aims to explore that often seen-yet-unseen visual world of newspapers. Although visual journalism has a broad definition and spans multiple media, the focus for this project is on newspaper design across both print and digital platforms. Thus, within this limited scope, the term "visual journalism" will refer to the way visual elements of newspaper design enhance textual contents, interact and impact the readers' perceptions and emotions. There are five central visual components of newspapers that this project aims to examine: photos, colors, layout, typography and infographics. The culminating fruit of this research will be a redesign project for *The Carroll News*.

Looking at newspapers through visual lenses, this project seeks to answers several questions: In what way should news workers and readers understand and approach the visual elements of newspapers? Will the news content suffer if the look become prioritized? How can general newspaper design principles be catered to a specific audience, in this case, college students? And if so, what role will a new visual facelift play in helping a college newspaper increase its readership?

The Theoretical Foundation of Visual Journalism

Multimodality as a framework

Visual journalism researchers often look at theories from other fields to examine newspaper visuals in practice. Notably, Machin and Poltzer (2015) suggest the many faces of visual journalism necessitate a multimodal approach to the matter. The theory of multimodality originally belongs to linguistics, examining our choices in rhetorical and oral contexts and why we use words the way we do. It describes communication in terms of various modes, such as textual, visual, semiotic, linguistic or spatial. Simply put, multimodality is "an approach that breaks down compositions into their most basic components and leads to an understanding of

how these work together" (p. 13). Considering that newspaper design represents a form of visual communication, multimodality is particularly relevant and useful in that it can help explain why designers opt for certain graphic choices over others.

As the theory of multimodality develops, it increases in complexity and depth, since scholars with different expertise begin to explore the impact of multimodality in their particular field. Due to the uninformative nature of the term itself, many scholars explore the theory from different angles, rarely reaching a consensus on how we should define it. Before dissecting how multimodality applies to visual journalism, it is necessary to figure out which view of multimodality works best with the press and other forms of media. Since multimodality has a linguistics root, it is most helpful if our view of each modality is tied to its origin: a way to communicate and present information. If so, a modality can be considered as "a way of representing information in some physical medium," and subsequently "is defined by its physical medium and its particular 'way' of representation" (Bernsen, 2009, p. 4).

Multimodal theorists assume that communication itself is intrinsically and inevitably multimodal. There are many "ways" of information representation because many different modalities co-exist in the same physical medium and are perceived by the same human sense. Viewed from this perspective, the newspaper exemplifies a modality that embodies a variety of different modalities in itself. Two dominant modes of communication are writing and images, both of which are integral to a journalistic presentation. Each of these two modes can be broken down into in smaller elements: Writing takes into account syntax, grammar or vocabulary, while images involve textures, space or color. Thus, through the same physical medium that is the newspaper, humans use the visual sensory system to perceive different modalities being communicated.

However, modality is not only about quantity but also quality - the factor that actually helps explain why news designers make decisions regarding visual choices. Bernsen (2009) attributes the difference between multiple modalities to two reasons: *expressiveness* and *recipient*. First, different modalities vary in their *expressiveness*: each of them is suited for representing each different kind of information. For example, a photo (image) will be much better at expressing how things look rather than a linguistic description (writing). Second, the properties of the *recipient* – the way the human perceptual and cognitive system enables us to perceive the information represented — also account for the differences between modalities. Even with the same amount of information instantiated in the same physical medium, our brain process may gear towards certain preferences for information representation, depending on the purpose. For example, we prefer bar charts for statistics that show progress and pie charts to display percentage data.

Due to this qualitative difference, there have been concerns that visuals have overtaken writing and become a preferable method when it comes to information representation. The pioneering figure of multimodality theory, Gunther Kress (2004), remarks, "It seems evident to many commentators that writing is giving way, is being displaced by image in many instances of communication where previously it had held sway" (p. 1). Kress draws a crucial distinction between words and images: vagueness versus precision. Since words are "highly conventional entities, and only exist in that manner," their reliance on this convention makes them vague and general within a "fixed order" of syntax, line, paragraph and page. With images, its depictions are full of specific meanings with graphical precision and occur in "open order" based on the interests of the readers or viewers. According to Kress, in the traditional written landscape, it was "the power of the author that ruled," yet in visual representation, it is "the interest of the reader,

derived from the contingencies and needs of their life-worlds" that serves as the driving force (p. 14). Since newspapers exist to serve the public, it is understandable that the medium has become increasingly visual with time. However, the traditional pages do not have to disappear but rather, continue to exist for plenty of reasons that Kress theorized as follows: generation, power dimension and affordance. The generation-related reason dictates that older generations will pick the traditional mode if given a choice; the power dimension points out that the elite will use writing as their preferred mode; and affordance means that writing is easy to access and therefore "afford." For these reasons, "stories will continue and narratives will continue to be written" (Kress, 2004, p. 14). To keep this convention alive amidst modernity, it is essential to harmonize these two seemingly contradictory modes of communications with a multimodal perspective, especially in a medium with a rich history like newspapers.

Applying multimodality to visual journalism may seem like an unprecedented approach. Yet, in past decades, many visual journalists subconsciously thought in terms of multimodality. Moen (2000) states that the newspaper, at its core, is a "visual medium" and requires a holistic approach. "Newspapers are a visual medium. The words, pictures and numbers all are visual. They work together synergistically, and the people who produce them separate themselves at the risk of fragmenting the message" (p. 7). That means, the traditional distinctions between the textual and the visual, writer and designer need to disappear in modern journalism in order for two dramatically different features of the newspaper to harmonize. An individual approach will lead to "fragments of information" but a collaborative effort from the newsroom team will produce a coherent package and identity for the newspaper (p. 7). Esterson (2004) also views the newspaper as "a giant kit of parts that gets assembled in different ways each day depending on

the emphasis needed for different stories" (p. 4). Thus, the role of designers is to determine how the kit should look and work with the various design elements at hand.

Photography as an element of design

Photojournalism has always been the most recognizable visual aspect of news because of its rich content and direct message. Studies on photojournalism often take a semiotic approach, viewing photojournalism as documentary and dissecting its symbols and their meanings. However, contemporary visual journalism revolves around more creative ways to utilize photos with other elements to provide a visual package for the newspaper. As such, news photography has become "a communicative strategy that suggests a more creative and thoughtful way of looking at the world" (Machin & Polzer, 2015, p. 21). Several concerns arise as photos are viewed as design elements. If news photos serve as part of the design as well as the content, are they required to be beautiful? If they needed to be beautiful, how can they retain their truth-quality in cases of brutal and saddening reality (for example, war photos)? Is there a way to harmonize photos with newspaper design without sacrificing their original mission of bearing "the burden of truth"? (Newton, 1998)

There have been several theories of photojournalism that grapple with concerns about the truth-quality of photos used in newspapers. Two main problems are pointed out. First, photographs provide only selected moments of reality, separated from the events that come before and afterwards. Fragmented depictions of truth may lead readers to decontextualize the series of events and view these events as memorable moments rather than a complex process. Second, the process behind making any photograph is also full of subconscious actions that affect its eye-witness status. Artistic considerations such as angle, proximity, exposure, cropping, editing and the editorial decision to pick one image over the other may eventually convey

different meanings to the readers. For example, if a photo of a frowning person is picked instead

of a smiling one, the audience may perceive the personality of that person differently. Moreover,

visual journalists, including both photographers and designers alike, need to work photographs

into certain news frames – the long-established basic themes within news culture. News frames

determine which stories are noteworthy and how these events should be visually covered. So,

when a conflict/disagreement type of story is deemed notable, the photo should portray

corresponding emotions and feelings, even at the risk of ignoring a broader context that triggers

such strong reactions (Machin & Polzer, 2015, p. 21).

But the conventional role of a storyteller and truth witness is not the only way to see

photojournalism. Machin and Poltzer (2015) observe that contemporary photojournalists have

realized the new function of the photo as an element of news branding that connects with news

design, and conclude, "The image should be thought of in itself as a design resource that can be

deployed alongside other elements" (p. 46). Photos are full of graphical details themselves–

shapes, sizes, color, lighting and angles. Looking at them as a design component requires an

examination with respect to other design elements such as layout and color.

The combination of these elements proves to be much more challenging than it sounds.

As much as the changing nature of the photograph, from a pure messenger of reality to a design

companion, requires a deep integration with technology, it is also the rapid advancement of the

digital age that has led to a decline in the number of photographers in news industry. This is

considered just one of many "casualties" of the digital age: photojournalism is being "shaken to

its core" due to the availability of free online image banks, news sites, social media, blogs and

citizen journalism (Copp, 2015).

In order to tackle this challenge, more photographers have developed more innovative

approaches to include photos in news design. Visual communication expert Hannu Vanhanen (2012) emphasizes the crucial design of photojournalism:

> A photo editor who manages the visual field supremely has got a photo brain, which they use to create an individual look for the paper by using photographers and illustrators who are good for a given shoot. A photo editor makes bold and value setting photo selections, with which they even reflect the changes in the society. This cannot be done with semi-free wannabe visualists or image banks who dump the prices of photos.

Perhaps Andrea Levy, award-winning artist and columnist for *The Plain Dealer*, best exemplifies the fusion of photographic elements into news design. Levy identifies both as an illustrator and an artist, but her creative approach to her "opinion art" columns fully demonstrates her capability as a photographer.

Figure 1. Samples of Andrea Levy's works for Cleveland's The Plain Dealer
(Levy, 2005, 2010)

As seen from news pages above, Levy's photos, or photographic factors, exhibit a sophisticated design approach. Photographing individual pieces, arranging them on the layout, placing the text and picking the font choice, and utilizing colors so that they complement the idea and opinion being communicated, all maximize the visual potential of core design elements into a single page. In *Hot Mama of Invention*, viewers can recognize the woman's body with the metaphoric use of white and round light bulbs, the shaping of the power cord and its plug, the curved wrapping of paragraphs, and the pink background color. *The Ravages of Stress* is characterized by the monotone color of black, white and gray, and the conceptualized photograph of a stress-stricken man being stabbed by multiple nails, evoking the feeling of distress in the viewers.

While it can be argued that Levy's works may stray too far from the conventional concept of photojournalism, they certainly broaden the functions for photos in newspaper as a whole. News photos' versatility, whether as illustrations, story-tellers or design components, does not sacrifice news contents but rather adds more complexity to both textual and visual power of each article: Photos in newspapers still set up the mood and communicate an idea, but now they are totally capable of contributing to the newspaper's visual brand by refreshing the look for each news page.

The psychology of color

Color is often the least noticed visual element in the newspaper due to the dominant use of black and white in print. The monotonous color choice facilitates the readability of the newspaper. For this reason, colors other than black and white have never had a strong presence in newspapers. However, when used, color accents are the first thing that stands out in an otherwise monotone page. The use of color in the newspaper has a close relationship with

technological development. The transition from print to digital, furthermore, asks for more

innovative use of colors, prompting journalists and readers alike to reconsider the value and

impact of color in the field.

Throughout history, each different color has always had symbolic meanings attached to

it. Colors used for graphic design in general are often picked based on these cultural associations,

concerning what emotion a certain color can evoke and what it reminds people of. For example,

in the U.S., basic colors such as red and blue are politicized, representing two prominent political

parties. If the front pages contain political graphics, readers would easily get a tease of what the

articles are about just by looking at the color. Publication artist Pegie Stark Adam (1995) asserts,

"We all live 'in color' all our lives" and at the same time, color itself "is a living thing" because

it "changes in different environments" and projects different moods (p. 5).
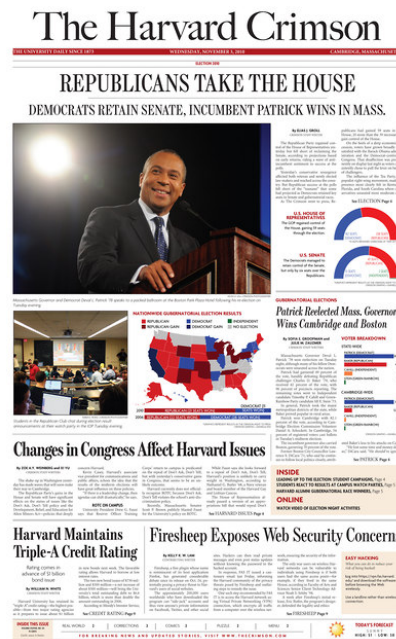

Figure 2. The use of red and blue in political infographics.
(The Harvard Crimson, 2010)

One of the most successful uses of color in newspapers was the redesign of *USA Today* in 2012. The change shows primarily in the logos for each sections. In the past, the newspaper's logo was a blue rectangle framed beneath the globe icon and the newspaper's name. The logo in the redesign relies for its symbolic meaning on a blue circle, or a big dot on a white background with the black text. This approach follows the minimalist trend in design, in which every graphical complexity is stripped off to pave way for a simple, yet highly representative nameplate.

Figure 3. USA Today's main logo: Past and Present
(USA Today, 2011, 2015)

In the case of *USA Today*'s logo, the blue dot exemplifies the theory of color perception that asserts "abstract forms can take on meaning if color is applied to them" (Samara, 2005). With a single circle, a black one would have no particular meaning, a yellow or red one becomes the sun, and a blue one can become the Earth. These meanings assigned to colors stem from the natural environment surrounding us, thus carrying universal values that rarely vary across different cultures.

The *USA Today* staff do not limit the use of color in the circle logo, but also create circles with different colors representing different sections of the newspaper. The color choice may appear random at first glance. On closer look, they all relate to our psychological perceptions. For example, the money section is represented by green which closely matches the color of a real US dollar bank note. The red color, with its ability to to evoke the sensations of intensity and

heat, is reserved for sports. Previously, the logo was static, as it remained unchanged across the

pages. Today's logo is dynamic in the sense that it "changes depending on what's happening in

the news" (Kessler, 2012). A dynamic logo adapts to the modern trend in design, demonstrating

a news organization's capability to catch up with the current and rejuvenate itself. Lisa Smith,

director of Wolff Olins, the agency that helped develop *USA Today*'s dramatic visual changes,

remarks, "To have something static doesn't seem appropriate for a news organization that

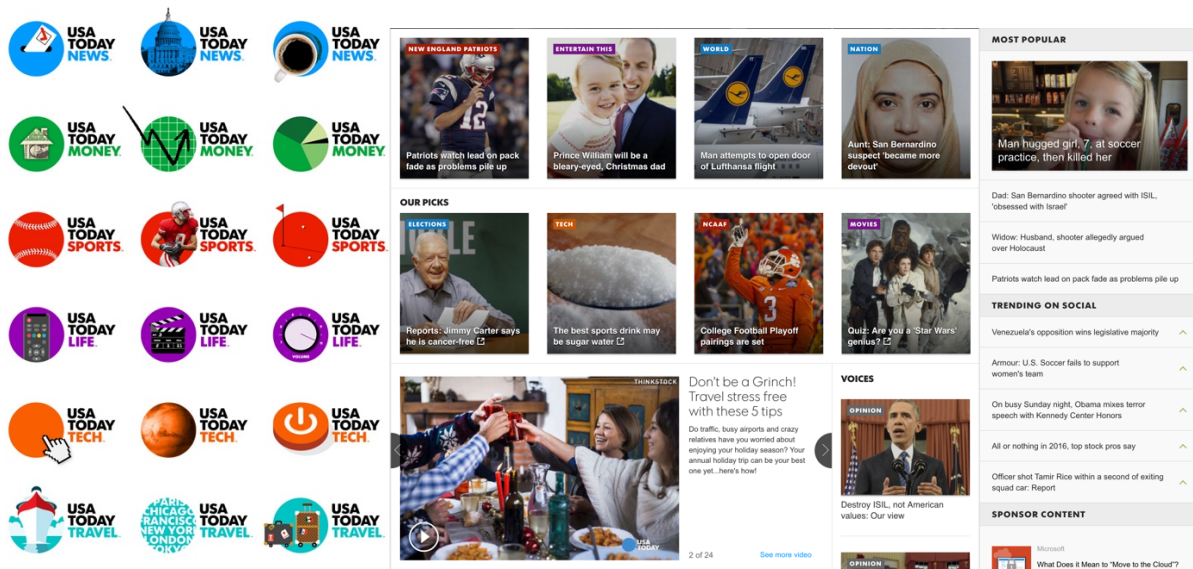changes every single second, so its brand needs to be adaptive in the same way" (Kessler, 2012).

Figure 4. The use of color-code in USA Today's logo and website redesign
(Brand New, 2012; USA Today, 2015)

USA Today's logos in various colors are also used as infographics, as clipped images associated

with highlighted stories of the day are added to its corresponding sections. In this way, colors

also serve as a managing system, since they "can help distinguish different kinds of information,

as well as create relationships among components or editions of a publications" (Samara, 2005).

Color-coding is a popular option for the color system, as demonstrated in *USA Today's* website

redesign. Colors do not only show up on each section's logos, but also in lines and the

background color of each section's title textbox. This works in tandem with the redesign's

mobile-friendly features, as they help readers and visitors easily identify each section and

navigate to their favorites. The utilization of multiple colored backdrops for the main graphics of

USA Today does not diminish the newspaper's visual identity. The newspaper's designer, Sam

Ward, reflects on his "Cool Balls" design, "I believe our balls are symbols of who we are and

where we're headed, […] They are not stories, graphics, or illustrations. They are signposts,

perhaps; reminders that offer inroads into America's stream of consciousness" (Kessler, 2012).

This innovative and forward thinking establishes *USA Today* as a forerunner in its use of color in

news design that inspires and impacts other news organizations.

Layout as a matter of space

Layout, at its core, is a matter of space. It refers to the spatial arrangement of items on a

page or a field (Apfelbaum, 2014). Newspaper design tends to combine vertical and horizontal

shapes to package the information. Each layout arrangement has its own advantages and

disadvantages.

*Figure 5. Examples of vertical (left) and horizontal (right) layout in newspaper design
(Cousins, 2011; Dubuque Telegraph Herald, 2012)*

The vertical structure allows more stories to be told above the fold, so it is convenient to

display several high stories in the front page. Since more stories show up on the front page,

designers who prefer non-traditional, less text-heavy presence and more visually exciting photos

view the vertical structure as a disadvantage. On the other hand, the horizontal layout gives

photos a better display, allows more flexible balance with the page, and is perceived by readers

as being more aesthetically pleasing since it accommodates human tendency to read from left to

right (Moen, 2004, p. 24). A few disadvantages of the horizontal layout include the limited

number of featured stories and the additional time and effort to arrange textual and graphic

elements. Modern newspaper design encourages a combination of both arrangements since an

exclusively vertical or horizontal makeup can look uninteresting. A varied structure would

facilitate the different nature of each different article and provide contrast for each page. For

example, a vertical photograph would fit well into a horizontal arrangement.

   Newspaper layout, when broken down to the most basic, is the play of shapes in space

which has been dubbed modular page design. A module is defined as "a unit, a subdivision of the

whole" (Moen, 2004, p. 42). Each page composes of multiple modules that come in the shape of

rectangles or squares. The arrangement of these modules is made possible with the grid that

traditionally consists of multiple evenly-spaced columns. The grid is a beloved companion of

graphic designers as it helps provide an accurate and rational organization of the elements. It

holds an even more significant role in news design, since newspapers traditionally have a dense

textual structure that requires multiple design steps of breaking the text apart and then putting the

pieces into blocks.
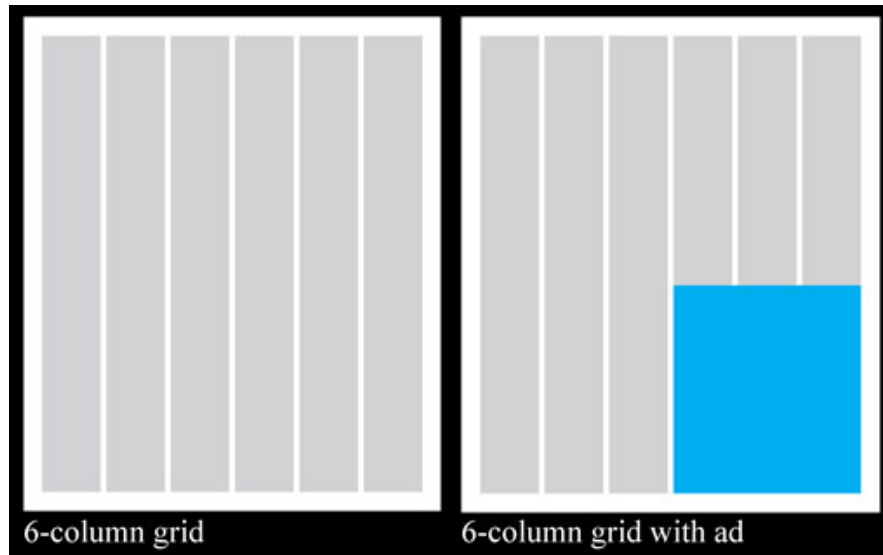
Figure 6. Example of a grid and a designated ad area based on its guide.
(Cousins, 2011)

As newspaper design evolved, the grid was also used in different ways while still keeping

its original role. Today's popular modular grid uses less vertical format and enables designers to

pack information into rectangular boxes. Based on guides provided by the grid, modular

newspaper design comes into various forms. A news page can either use perfectly balanced

modules (packing the entire pieces of a story in a perfect rectangle) or break away from it

(elements of the same article can lie in different rectangles).

Figure 7. A perfect modular design (left) and deviation (right). The red outline highlights the difference in stories' arrangement between the two newspapers. (Hartford Courant, 2011; The New York Times, 2014)

Throughout the history of the newspaper, the spatial nature of layout calls for more versatile and scientific manipulations of space. The white space and the grid system have become increasingly correlated. Modern news design tends to rely less on such a tight structure. It takes white space interestingly into account. White space is viewed as "the visual equivalence of silence" (Barnhurst, 1994, p.185). Due to the mostly black and white tones of almost every newspaper, white space provides "a visual relief" for the readers amidst the weight of heavy text and black and white photographs (Moen, 2004, p. 25). Since news design today employs more white space than in the past, the pages have become "more open in form" and "less open in content" (Barnhurst, 1994, p. 185). The spacious look drives traditionalists to express concern that newspapers might lose a sense of established authority they derived from the old tight layout. With the rise of minimalistic designs that prioritize the "less is more" principle in recent decades, however, the power of white space may manifest itself even more in news design.

Figure 8. The Boston Globe combines traditional and modern design elements: classic fonts with prominent white space between the lines.
(Coles, 2011)

Typography and the art of text

Typography is the art and technique of manipulating typefaces and texts to produce pleasing aesthetics and convey rich messages. While the use of typography in news does not allow the same degree of creative freedom as in independent typographic artworks, it is by no mean of less prominence. Moen (2004) emphasizes the importance of typeface in newspaper design, "Type is to the reader what the interstate highway is to the trucker. The better the highway, the faster the trucker goes. With a sound infrastructure, readers can quickly and easily absorb the information" (p. 96). John D. Berry (2004) asserts, "The typeface affects every aspect of the paper in subtle ways, and it's an integral part of the reader's experience, even if few readers are consciously aware of this" (p. 122).

There are two basic types of a typeface: serif and sans-serif. Serifs are small lines or tails coming out at the edges of a letter. Sans-serif fonts do not have those serifs at the end of each

letter's strokes. The distinctive features of these two different types accommodate different

design environments. Since serif fonts project a more traditional look and contain little serifs, the

human brain can recognize and process it more quickly, which makes it preferable for the print.

On the other hand, sans-serif tend to be more modern-looking; its ability to adapt to computer

monitors (which is about 100 dots per inch compared to 1000+ dots per inch in the print) makes

it a better fit for the web environment (The UF Team, 2013 (Parkinson, 2004).
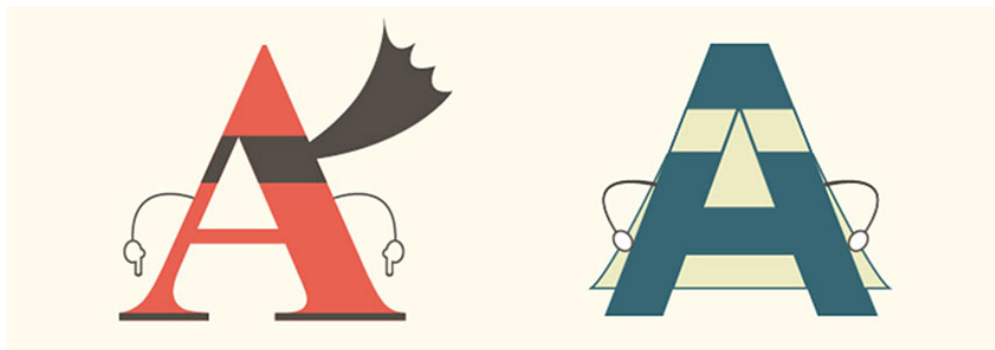
Figure 9. Serif (left) and Sans-serif (right)
(The UF Team, 2013)

Perhaps the signature use of typeface in a newspaper is in its nameplate, or masthead.

Compared to a commercial brand's logo, which usually involves a pictorial element, a

newspaper's nameplate features heavier use of text. The typeface in the nameplate very often

becomes the sole representative of the newspaper. Over time, the template increases in flexibility

and can be combined with other visual elements, such as a hand-drawn illustration, a color block

or clip graphics.

Figure 10. Example of nameplate variations in The Toronto Star throughout the years.
(Typemaniac, 2014)

Jim Parkinson (2004) remarks that while the nameplate "is one of the most prominent

elements in the typography, but also one of the most neglected" (p. 159). As "the face of the

institution," a newspaper's nameplate "demands as much care as the design of any other product

name or company logo" (p. 159). When newspapers undergo redesign, the designers face a big

challenge in executing the nameplate. The hesitation to redesign the nameplate stems from the

concern that it would "impair the trademark value that long usage of the old nameplate has given

them" (Parkinson, 2004, p. 159). Contrary to this concern, many long-established newspapers

have changed their nameplates during their history without ill effect. With any redesign, the

nameplate should "reflect tradition, authority and dignity" that expresses the newspaper's individuality and timeless presence (Parkinson, 2004, p.166).

In newspapers, the nameplate is the first piece of typography that catch the readers' eyes. As newspapers contain articles and stories, typography needs to be effective in delivering the best reading experience. This is when the theory of legibility comes into play. Legibility science measures "how letters were perceived," meaning their legibility, and compares "how different designs were read," meaning their readability (Barnhurst, 1994, p.145). Legibility research has a crucial role in observing typography. Among many conclusions about types and their legibility are: capital letters and italics are harder to read than plain small letters; darker or bolder letters are usually easier to read; tinted background have a negligible effect on readers; dark letters on light paper are easier to read than light letters; justified type (aligned on both sides) is no more legible than ragged or unjustified type (Barnhurst, 1994, p. 148).

However, as Barnhurst (1994) concluded, these rigid rules hardly apply to design, since experiments in a controlled environment have little correlation with real-world reading practices. The legibility research from past decades does not measure up to contemporary style. To make typography work in the newspaper, understanding the way modern audiences absorb information will affect a news designer's choice of typeface, font size and font placements on the pages. Indeed, typography is a direct visual manipulation of textual objects, and demands a new way of reading and interpreting on the part of readers as technology advances.

The modern emergence of infographics

"Infographics" may sound like a newly invented term, but information visualization can be dated back to classical visual guiding devices such as maps and diagrams. In modern times, infographics are digitally built and thus become an important component of the digital news

platform. Infographics is the visualization of factual data and statistics; its presence in

newspapers makes information easier to digest and news design itself more attractive. In 1991,

the Poynter Institute conducted a study called "Eyetrack" that recorded how readers see and

navigate through newspaper pages, identifying entry points to the page and which elements

maintain their attention and motivate them to read the rest. The results further confirmed that

graphic elements can propel readers' interest in reading the news: 77 percent read the text

because of the infographics, 61 percent because of the photography and 36 percent because of

the headline (Ghode, 2012).

As analyzed above from a multimodal perspective, a newspaper is a medium that

encompasses other modalities, such as texts and pictures, in itself. When used in a newspaper, an

infographic becomes a modal entity: It relies on other graphic components like text, icon, data,

colors and layout arrangement for its existence. Therefore, an infographic is a modality of the

newspaper that is made up of different modes, making the newspaper itself a complex, meta-

modal object. However, due to this characteristic, using infographics requires a selective process.

An abundance of infographics in the same issue may distract the audience from traditionally-

written stories.

In his book *Envisioning Information*, Professor Edward R. Tufte (2001) describes the

challenge of information display as "escaping flatland," referring to the translation of a three-

dimensional, perceptual world to the two-dimension flatlands of paper and screen monitor.

Escaping this flatland is the essential task of of envisioning information – for all the

interesting worlds (physical, biological, imaginary, human) that we seek to understand

are inevitably and happily multivariate in nature. Not flatlands (p. 12).

Tufte describes the history of information displays and statistical graphics as entirely a process of enriching the density, complexity, dimensionality and beauty. This is done through the manipulation and narrative of small tabular or pictorial multiples – which is essentially different modalities explained above. Techniques required for envisioning information are rich and varied: readings of details and data, layering and separation of data, multiplying colors and images, and incorporating the fourth dimension of space and time into the flatland through narrative infographic (p. 33).

While Tufte's works deal with big and structural data, his techniques are very much relevant to designing infographics in the newspaper. Because of the limited use of color in newspapers, there are a few complications in using infographics for newspaper design. However, a quality infographic design should maintain the same appeal even when created using primarily black and white (Infographics Design Team, n.d.). Contemporary newspapers embrace infographics with diverse design approach to them. The *Boston Globe* is one of the most prominent producers of infographics in both its print and online edition, though it approaches each environment differently. In an interview with the Society for News Design, Chiqui Espan, the head of the *Globe*'s design team, explains the different execution of the same infographic content for the print and the web.

> One of the things we must think first when we do graphics for the *Globe* is that they have to work on every device. That's why we have responsive design. And work doesn't mean just technically work, it means work as a narrative. So we have to think about the best way to represent the information on all different devices. For print, static and with a big size, the concentric circles seemed the best approach to show the different levels of responsibility in the new City Hall. Online, that formula would have not worked, because

the information could not have been seen complete at first glance, so the best way to explain the different steps was one-by-one, from top to bottom. The idea is the same, but the way of representing it had to be different because of the nature of how people are going to consume the information. While we use size, color and other factors to give the reader a path to guide them through the graphic, online those factors are different. (Berlin, 2014)
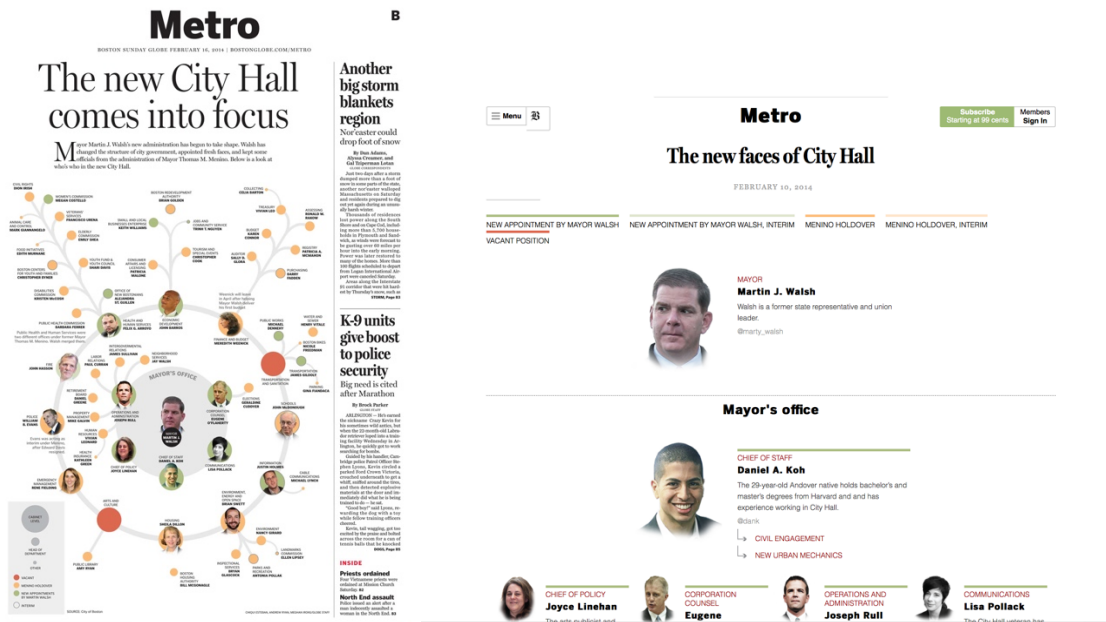
Figure 11: The City Hall infographic for The Boston Globe: print versus digital (Berlin, 2014)

When newspaper layout transited from print to digital, data visualization became even more interactive, allowing users to engage in an energetic and lively way with the information. From *The New York Times* to the *Guardian*, big-name newspapers around the world constantly invent new narratives with interactive data, efficiently adapting the traditional article to the digital age. Though interactive journalism involves lots of other-field works like designing and programming, most interactive journalists "'talk the talk' of professional journalism because many of them come from journalistic, rather than data, graphical or programming backgrounds"

(Dick, 2014). Over time, they have become "more self-confident, more creative, and less 'auxiliary' than their non-interactive predecessors" (Dick, 2014).

Redesigning *The Carroll News*: Analysis & Implementation

The following case analysis attempts to assess the current visual presentation of *The Carroll News* with regards to the above elements and the possibility of improvement in each department. The analysis is based on results from the survey sent to all Communication majors and input from interviews with people directly involved with *The Carroll News*. The survey results and interviews also serve as a market research that helps bring the redesign closer to the students' desired style for the newspaper.

Background

The Carroll News is the official, award-winning student newspaper of John Carroll University. Ever since its establishment in 1925, it has become an active student voice on campus. It is published every Thursday during the academic year, except on weeks during or following holidays, which results in with roughly 22 issues per year. The newspaper is renowned for its diverse content with eight sections: Campus, Life & Entertainment, Sports, World News, Business & Finance, Editorial, Op/Ed and Diversions.

Currently, section editors are responsible for designing all the page layout and assigning the photos within their sections of *The Carroll News*. Since the front page shows noteworthy stories on campus, campus editors have been responsible for its look throughout the years. Writers are not trained in design unless they receive approval from the editor-in-chief to become assistant editors (K. DeBaun, personal communication, 3 December 2015). While the front page tends to vary in its design, the inside pages retain largely the same layout. This allows staff members who are not familiar with design software such as Photoshop and InDesign to build

news pages with little difficulty. When a new management team is appointed and new staff members join, there are several sessions and workshops that train them to use necessary graphic programs to design the newspaper. As the need for a stronger digital presence increases, *The Carroll News* also created a new volunteer position, the web editor, to manage social network accounts and posting articles on the website. However, due to varying degrees of commitment from the staff, currently the managing editor is responsible for all online-related tasks (A. Higl, personal communication, November 21, 2015).

Methodology

This research utilized qualitative methods, including a student survey on visual perception of newspapers and interviews with key people who actively contribute to *The Carroll News* or have done in the past.

The survey was intended for all Communication majors because they are the most familiar with design concepts mentioned in the survey among John Carroll's student population and have frequent exposure to journalism. Many of *The Carroll News* staff are Communication majors, with some specialized in Journalism. The introductory Journalism course offered each semester is also a popular elective course for Communication majors specializing in other areas.

The survey respondents were asked to assess their personal reading habits with *The Carroll News*, compare the visual aspects of *The Carroll News* with other college newspapers, indicate whether they thought it would be possible for *The Carroll News* to have a separate design team, and define their overall expectation of *The Carroll News*' visual overhaul. The survey was distributed to Communication students via email in a period of one week, from November 2, 2015 to November 9, 2015. It received 40 responses out of 145 students who got access to the survey, which yielded a response rate of 27.5 percent. The vast majority of them

(75%) had never been involved with *The Carroll News*. The survey contained two main sections: The first part concerned their own reading of *The Carroll News* and the second part gathered respondents' inputs on its visual appeal and design. The questionnaire was designed to contain various graphical and visual elements. In a couple of questions, sample front pages and website layouts from big-name and award-winning colleges were shown so students could rate each sample. These samples were picked from the list of *College Media Association Pinnacle Award* and *College Press Award Design of the Year* finalists and winners in the past. Each of these samples represented a different design focus and layout, which allowed students to consider different design styles and pick the ones they believed would best fit *The Carroll News*. For example, *The State News* from Michigan State University and *The Heights* from Boston College featured strong use of photo and simplified layout for their front pages; *Minnesota Daily* from University of Minnesota and *The Harvard Crimson* from Harvard University had a similar traditional style but with a modern touch of color infographics.

(see Appendix for the list of Questions)

Four interviews were conducted, including one with Robert Noll, who has been the advisor for *The Carroll News* for 21 years, one with Margaret Turbett, an award-winning photo journalist who is also the photo advisor for *The Carroll News*, one with Alex Higl, former editor-in-chief of *The Carroll News* during 2014-2015 academic year, and one with Katie DeBaun, the current editor-in-chief for the 2015-2016 academic year. Their diverse expertise and experience provided the researcher with new understanding of *The Carroll News*' inner operation. Turbett focused on the photo features of the newspaper; Noll offered some insights on the management; Higl recounted her experience and challenges in adopting a new look for *The Carroll News* last year; and DeBaun talked about some latest design changes for the newspapers.

Data from the survey were then compiled to determine the way a portion of John Carroll students perceive newspaper design and their preference for a redesign of *The Carroll News*. Several newspaper website mockups were created based on these results. Insights from interviewees were combined to assess the potential of improvement for *The Carroll News*' visual design and the challenges of having a separate design team from the managerial perspective.

Results

Analyzing Perception of the Current Visual Design. Based on the sample of Communication majors, the readership of *The Carroll News* stood as follows: nearly half of students (48%) rarely read the newspaper and nearly one-third (28%) picked it up every week. There is little correlation between the small readership and the current visual design. Most respondents who rarely read the newspaper explained that reading newspapers was not a habit in their daily lives (47%), nor did they hold strong interest in newspapers. However, those people who casually picked up *The Carroll News* said it was because they genuinely wanted to keep up with campus affairs and have a fun reading experience.

This low readership does not seem to affect the way students view the importance of visual appeal for a college newspaper. When asked to rate how much they agree that a good newspaper design can help attract more readers, students gave an average rating of 7.88 out of 10 and strongly disagreed with the statement that visual design is not important to a college newspaper. Students' ratings for the current content and visual appeal of *The Carroll News* stood at average, with an average rating of 6.18 for the content and a slightly lower 5.45 for the design. Compared to other college newspapers, half of the students (50%) agreed that *The Carroll News* was around the middle on the visual scale. The two more extreme opinions, "generally unappealing" and "nice and professional" were evenly distrubuted, with 25 percent each.

Despite having a dedicated staff and an overall dynamic content, *The Carroll News* currently does not have a strong visual appeal, especially on the digital platform. Former Editor-in-Chief Alexandra Higl, commented that the design aspect has been "really sacrificed" due to the lack of interested staff members and graphic design training at John Carroll (A. Higl, personal communication, November 21, 2015). Higl attempted to give the newspaper a new look during her time as the editor-in-chief for the academic year 2014-2015. Below are three representative designs of *The Carroll News* before, during, and after Higl's decision.
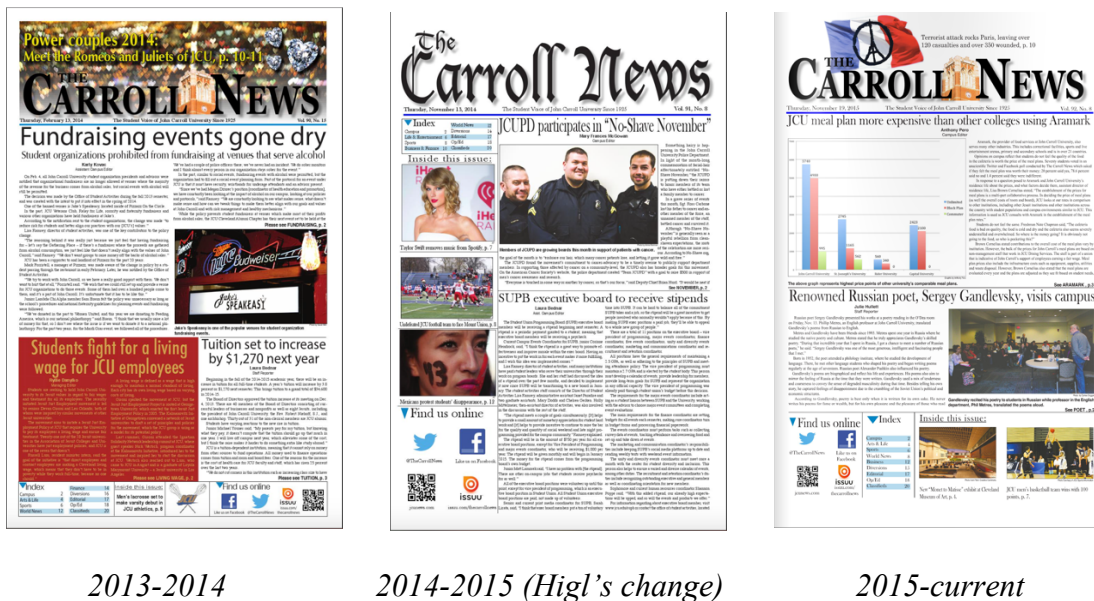
2013-2014   2014-2015 (Higl's change)   2015-current

Figure 12. The Carroll News front pages from 2013-2015
(The Carroll News, 2014a, 2014b, 2015a)

The most significant difference between the three designs is the nameplate. The oldest design featured a dominant photo background, while not providing enough contrast between the text and the image, subsequently reducing the legibility of the nameplate. According to Higl, this design had served as the main look for *The Carroll News* for the preceding ten years, before the 2014-15 redesign. When she was appointed as the editor-in-chief in the spring of 2014 for the following year, she had a chance to attend a conference for college editors in Georgia. After presenting a

few samples of *The Carroll News* to other conference attendants, she received some critiques on

the design, especially on the crowded nameplate that was hard to read. Inspired by what she

learned from this opportunity, Higl was determined to give *The Carroll News* a new look. She

proposed some ideas to the staff and finally decided to strip down all the heavy images in the

nameplate. The title was replaced with a different font. Higl explained that the font was picked

because of its Gothic look that corresponds to the Gothic architecture of the John Carroll

buildings, and because it got the highest support from the staff members. Another design change

was the layout of the front page. Higl decided to move the social network icons, index and photo

summary of the issue from the bottom of the page to the left column in order to secure a more

prominent space for them (A. Higl, personal communication, November 21, 2015).

Higl's intention was to build a cleaner look for *The Carroll News* by adapting the white

space trend in layout design. Although Higl followed the feedback she received at the

conference, her decisions were met with some resistance among the staff. Some members were

reluctant to create a different look and there was controversy surrounding the 2014-15 design of

The Carroll News. The Gothic font might have been too drastically different for people who had

acquainted themselves with *The Carroll News* and, according to Margaret Turbett, looked a little

old-fashioned for a newspaper (M. Turbett, personal communication, November 12, 2015).

The current design of *The Carroll News* for the 2015-2016 academic year combines both

old and new elements. Editor-in-Chief Katie DeBaun wants to preserve a traditional look for the

print version, which has generally been well-perceived by students, faculty and staff alike. She

also went back to the old nameplate, which includes John Carroll's iconic clock tower, rather

than a font-based nameplate (K. DeBaun, personal communication, December 3, 2015). Some of

Higl's ideas were preserved: While there are various graphic elements on the nameplate, the

removal of a full background photo allows enough white space to make the title stand out. The

sample issue above also incorporates a basic piece of infographics, which adds a taste of

modernity in an overall traditional design. It also shows that *The Carroll News* has the potential

to make contemporary design changes. However, due to the varied nature of different articles

and stories and the limited number of visual staff members, the newspaper may not be able to

apply refreshing visual elements to every issue.

On the digital platform, *The Carroll News* website, which is located at

www.jcunews.com, underwent a major overhaul in December 2013 as seen below.
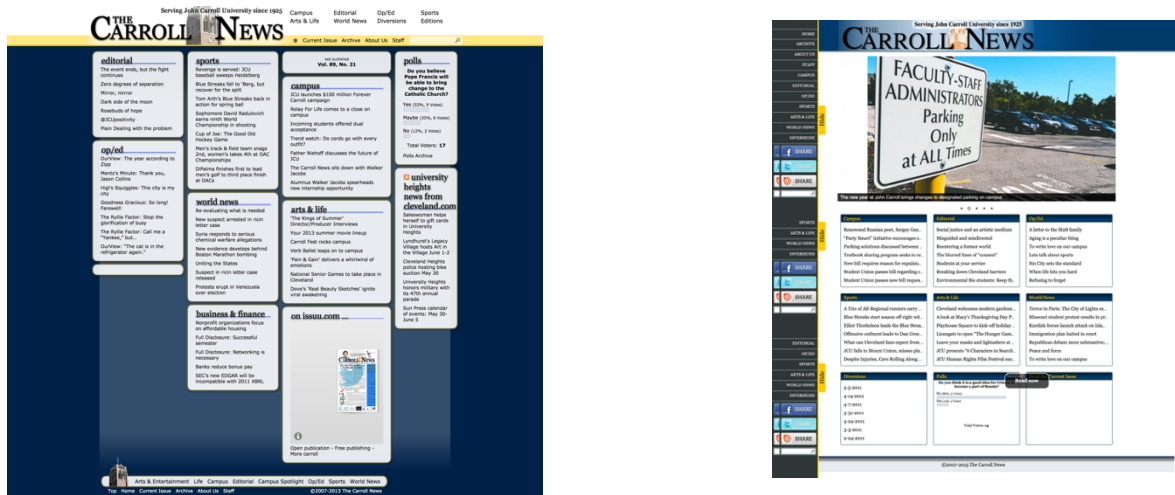
Figure 13. The Carroll News website reconstruction since 2013 (right)
(The Carroll News, 2013b, 2015b)

Both the old and new websites take advantage of the grid layout – which is the most common

and effective format for a news platform. However, the new website has a more appealing design

thanks to a photo slide, more balanced grid size, a more user-friendly navigation column and

more prominent presence of social networking icons. The color scheme also looks closer to the

official colors of John Carroll, which are gold and blue. Using a completely white background

instead of a solid blue one produces more contrast, therefore increasing the legibility of the text.

Despites these changes, the current website still lacks visual appeal, which explains why many readers see a digital redesign as necessary for *The Carroll News*. According to research done by Alex Higl last year, readers asked for a "visual facelift" for the website with more addition of multimedia and photo features and easier navigation. The current design is powered by an old WordPress format and a free theme, because using a more professional layout would require monthly fees. Higl also pointed out several weaknesses of the site, such as a plain and unorganized look, the missing "Business and Finance" section and the little-to-none featuring of pictures and videos (Higl, 2014). DeBaun explained that the former web manager said it was an issue with the old format of the Wordpress theme, and one that the team would plan to fix in the future. (DeBaun, personal communication, December 3, 2015). Turbett also noticed the small number of photos on *The Carroll News* website. Unlike the print edition, the web landscape is vast enough to allow room for more visual elements. She suggested instead of using plain text inside the grid, adding just one image to each grid would also help improve the overall look (M. Turbett, personal communication, November 12, 2015).

Assessing Potential for Visual Improvements. The survey data showed that most students are positive *The Carroll News* could have its own design team that would be responsible both for designing the print edition and managing the website (68%). Some respondents pointed out that a design team is not necessary for the current scope of *The Carroll News* because the current editors are proficiently trained in design and having many people trained in the same job would be redundant. Further research with *The Carroll News* insiders showed that a radical change may not be happening in near future due to various challenges. From her involvement with *The Carroll News*, Higl observed that the editorial team had many other tasks on their shoulders and could not fully devote their time to design. She concluded, "Ideally, having a

design team would be great, but realistically speaking, it would be really challenging for the

current situation of the newspaper." (A. Higl, personal communication, November 21, 2015)

In particular, the digital presence has been a struggle for *The Carroll News* for years.

According to Robert Noll, the student who helped build the current website is not active and has

not been actively involved in the newspaper business. Over the years, the management team has

tried to get people interested in helping out with the web maintenance but they would quit after a

while due to the lack of monetary compensation. Noll also mentioned that the editors had

attempted web designs, but they were not qualified enough in this area (R. Noll, personal

communication, November 19, 2015). Survey results also indicated that 40 percent of

respondents were not aware that *The Carroll News* has a website and 25 percent think it is not

very developed. Nevertheless, this seems to be a common situation among college newspapers.

In an article published by the Poyter Institute, the print version of college newspapers "continue

to thrive" as it has become sort of routine for the students. While most major news platforms

have transited from print to digital, college students tend to go "against the grain," preferring the

traditional format even though they immerse themselves in technology in their daily lives. Lloyd

Goodman, director of student publications at the University of Texas at Arlington explains,

"College newspapers are niche publications ⋯ Students like to pick it up, read it over lunch. It's

still a community newspaper" (Krueger, 2010).

Since college students still prefer the print presence on campus, *The Carroll News* is

under no pressure to undergo a massive overhaul for its web design. DeBaun said those who visit

The Carroll News online will most likely read the print issue through its Issuu account, so a

boost in the web presence is not her primary aim (DeBaun, personal communication, 3

December 2015). However, if it is in genuine interest of the students, a steady yet comprehensive

plan needs to be built to achieve the best visual appeal.

The following assessment follows a multimodal approach to break down five core visual

elements and examines their potential in improving the overall design of *The Carroll* News both

in the print and web environment.

- *Photojournalism*: Photojournalism emerges as the most helpful and feasible visual

  enhancement for *The Carroll News*, as perceived by interviewees and survey takers.

  When asked to rate the degree of effectiveness for each of the five elements, students

  gave "a stronger photo feature" the highest average rating of 7.40 out of 10. Noll and

  Higl observed that there have been students who are genuinely interested in doing

  photography for *The Carroll News* (R. Noll, personal communication, November 19,

  2015; A. Higl, personal communication, November 21, 2015). Turbett mentioned that the

  Photojournalism course offered by the Communication department also helped students

  interested in photojournalism with basic training (M. Turbett, personal communication,

  November 12, 2015). There are two notable challenges when it comes to featuring more

  photos for the newspaper: the space limitation of the tabloid format that the print version

  is using and the lack of "newsworthy stories" on campus (Higl, 2014). DeBaun also

  added that there are many high-priority stories for which the staff was unable to find

  suitable pictures. The former can be resolved by utilizing the digital platform, since the

  web offers much more generous capacity for storing pictures. The latter problem,

  according to Turbett, should not pose much difficulty for the staff members if they are

  trained in photojournalism. A bit of training would help photographers to determine the

  right angle and perspective to take the best photo, even from a visually uninteresting

event (M. Turbett, personal communication, November 12, 2015). Students can also use

illustrations in place of photographs or resort to Creative Commons stock photos that are

royalty free and applicable for non-commercial use.

- *Infographics*: Infographics averaged a rating of 7.25 out of 10 on the effectiveness scale

   in the survey. As demonstrated in the sample issue, the current staff has become more

   aware of the usefulness of infographics. Sections featuring heavy statistics, graphs, maps

   or numbers such as Diversions, Business and Finance, or the rate card that shows

   essential information for ads in Classifieds, are potential areas to feature infographics. A

   major difficulty involving using infographics is the lack of color in the print version.

   While this can be resolved by shifting any article with infographics to the front page, the

   front page contains limited space, and sometimes those articles may not be notable

   stories. Inside infographics may suffer from the lack of color. Even though professional

   designers can play with their graphics so black and white works well, this can pose

   challenges for the staff members as they are not familiar with the necessary computer

   tools.

- *Layout*: With an average rating of 6.78 out of 10, an updated layout was perceived as

   fairly helpful in enhancing the visual design for *The Carroll News*. It can be speculated

   that while doing the survey, the students mostly associated the layout with the print

   version and thus see no need to change. In contrast, the top choice of style for the website

   exhibits a very modern vibe with huge white space, sans-serif fonts and recognizable

   color palette. It is possible for the print version to include these factors as well, although

   such changes in the print may not be as radical as on the web.

- *Color*: Color may seem insignificant in making visual changes for *The Carroll News*, yet

  it was considered fairly effective at an average rating of 6.33 out of 10. There was a

  strong interest in seeing the newspaper adopting the official color palette of John Carroll,

  which consists of gold and blue. Due to the paper and printing quality, the print version

  may not benefit much from more sophisticated use of colors. However, colors can be

  powerful for the web if properly implemented. An iconic color palette would help

  solidify *The Carroll News* as a brand on its own.

- *Typography* and *Logo*: These two elements are strongly correlated as a newspaper's logo

  often uses a fixed typeface with a few or no graphic elements. Although they are

  frequently discussed as important design elements for a newspaper, respondents did not

  think they would be particularly effective in enhancing the look of *The Carroll News*.

  Respectively, they averaged ratings of 5.58 and 5.40 out of 10. The popular font types for

  The Carroll News are the traditional-oriented serifs, for both the web and print editions.

  Fonts for the headlines in the current print edition tend to vary in the print version,

  depending on each section editor's choice. Picking a fixed set of both serif and sans-serif

  fonts could help reduce the monotony while still maintaining the visual consistency of the

  newspaper.

Limitations

Although the research method was successful in learning about the perception of

newspaper design among a portion of students, and about the inner workings of *The Carroll

News'* operation, some limitations still exist in the survey design.

First, the sample audience of Communication majors was fairly small compared to the

campus-wide audience of *The Carroll News*. While these students were chosen because of their

familiarity with the media field, factors involved in this project such as branding or marketing

can also be associated with Business and Marketing majors. The staff members of *The Carroll*

News are also not limited to Communication majors only. However, since Communications

majors have the most direct exposure to journalism and news media during their academic and

professional careers, they may feel a stronger incentive to make suggestions for *The Carroll*

News' design.

Second, the survey was perceived by some students as being biased and negative towards

the newspaper. This may be due to the cultural differences between the researcher (coming from

a country with strong word use and direct criticisms) and the respondents (coming from a

country that gives generous compliments and constructive criticisms) that led to several instances

of ambiguous and negative wording. Some of the respondents sent feedback indicating the belief

that the redesign proposed in this project would be adopted to by the actual *Carroll News*, which

is not necessarily the case. An explanatory email was sent to dispel such misconceptions and

generate a few more responses.

Third, since the research used a free platform to build the anonymous survey, no email

registration or any other form of identification was required of respondents. Thus, it was

suspected there might be a case when the same person did the survey twice, once before the

explanatory email and once after. Since the speculation was made based on the similarities in

comments and rating style without hard evidence, all the results presented above were calculated

using all 40 reports. The variation in results could be expected to be about one or two percent.

Finally, as briefly mentioned above, while the survey intended to refer to visual

improvement of both the print and the online newspaper, in a couple of questions, there was no

indication whether it referred to the print or the digital version. Thus, students might tend to

associate these questions with the print version, since it has a more dominant presence on campus. This may have affected the way some people rated how each visual element would affect the design of the newspaper. Nevertheless, the majority of people agreed that the print version and the website should share a similar visual style to some degree (76%). That means if an element is successfully employed in one platform, it is possible to translate it efficiently to the other.

Proposing A Digital Redesign

As indicated in the survey results and insights from *The Carroll News* editors and advisors, students are more interested in seeing a visual overhaul for the website. In order to maintain the visual consistency between the two platforms, a redesign for the print version was also executed. This section proposes a print mockup and three web mockups, and assesses the advantages and disadvantages for each.

There is a discrepancy in the survey result with regards to visual coherence between the print and the web. Most respondents expect to see some similarity in visual design between the print and the web versions of the newspaper. However, when asked which design style they preferred for the print version, 38 percent wanted a traditional look and 30 percent leaned towards contemporary design. For the web, 45 percent pick the design of FNewsMagazine from the School of Art Institute of Chicago (as shown below), which exemplifies a very modern take on newspaper web design: prominent white space, high contrast between colors, modular layout and sans-serif fonts. This preference might seem to threaten the coherence of *The Carroll News* as a brand. However, the proposed design solutions tackle this challenge by including both traditional and contemporary visual features in each platform – which means no platform is purely traditional or ultra-modern.

Figure 14. Difference in preferred design style between the print and web versions for The Carroll News: Traditional (left) vs Modern (right)
(Friedman, 2008; F Newsmagazine, 2015)

Turbett suggested one way to reconcile these differences would be to apply web elements to the print edition instead of doing the reverse. For example, several newspapers have adopted the wide landscape, banner style photo format in their print design. Turbett remarked that while this is not a proper format for photojournalism, it illustrates how an element of the digital can exhibit well in print (M. Turbett, personal communication, November 12, 2015).

Based on this consultation, three mockups design for the home page of *The Carroll News* were designed. The first design (seen below) adopts a layout similar to FNewsMagazine, which consists of a modular grid lying below the heading photo slide and a sidebar on the right. Each

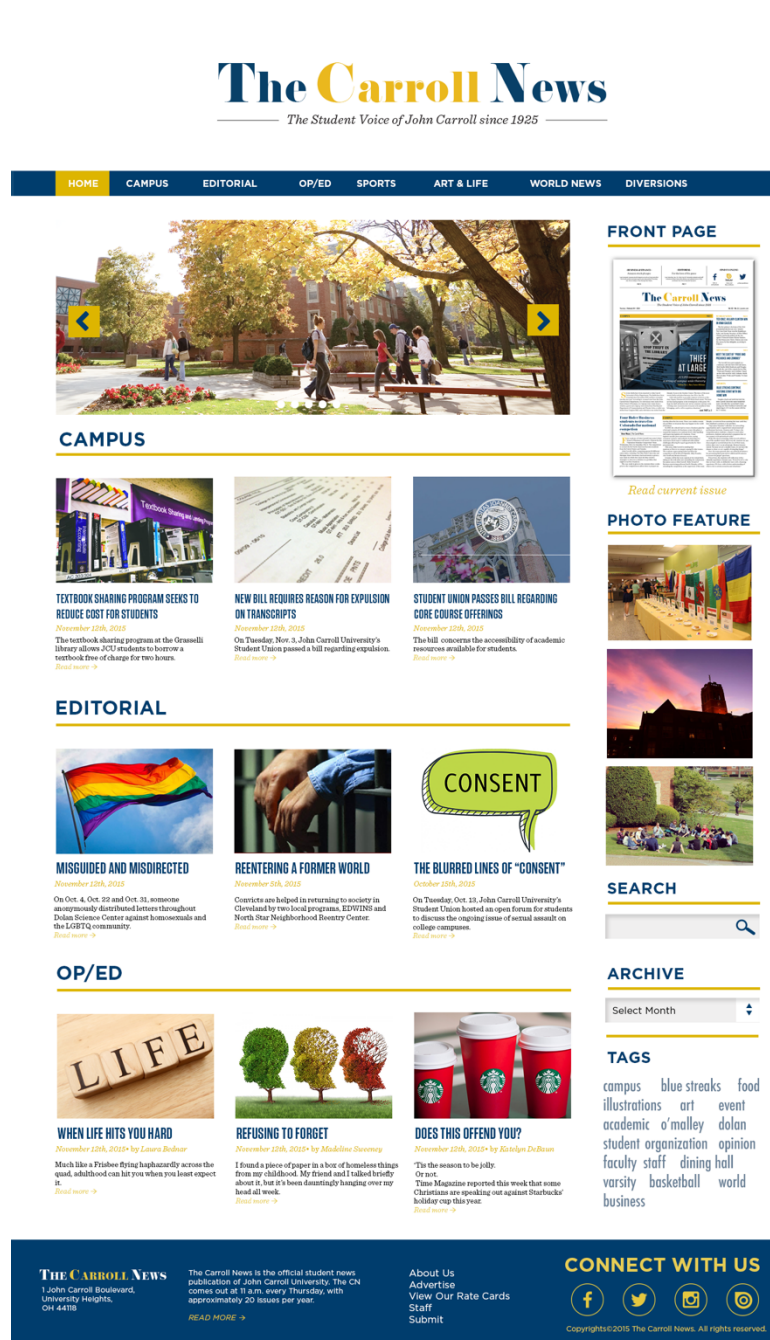photo serves to illustrate its corresponding article. The font choices are the same as the official fonts that John Carroll often uses for high-level marketing: two san-serif fonts, Gotham and Tungsten, serve as the subheadings and headings respectively, while the serif font Sentinel serves as the body text. Apart from the font choice, this design differs from FNewsMagazine in its placement of the newspaper logo and the navigation bar, which are centered instead of left and right alignment. This is due to the diverse sections of *The Carroll News*: There are too many sections to fit in the right-aligned navigation space, yet not enough sections to build a drop-down menu. Overall, this design is straightforward and easy to manage, which is suitable for the current scope of *The Carroll News*.
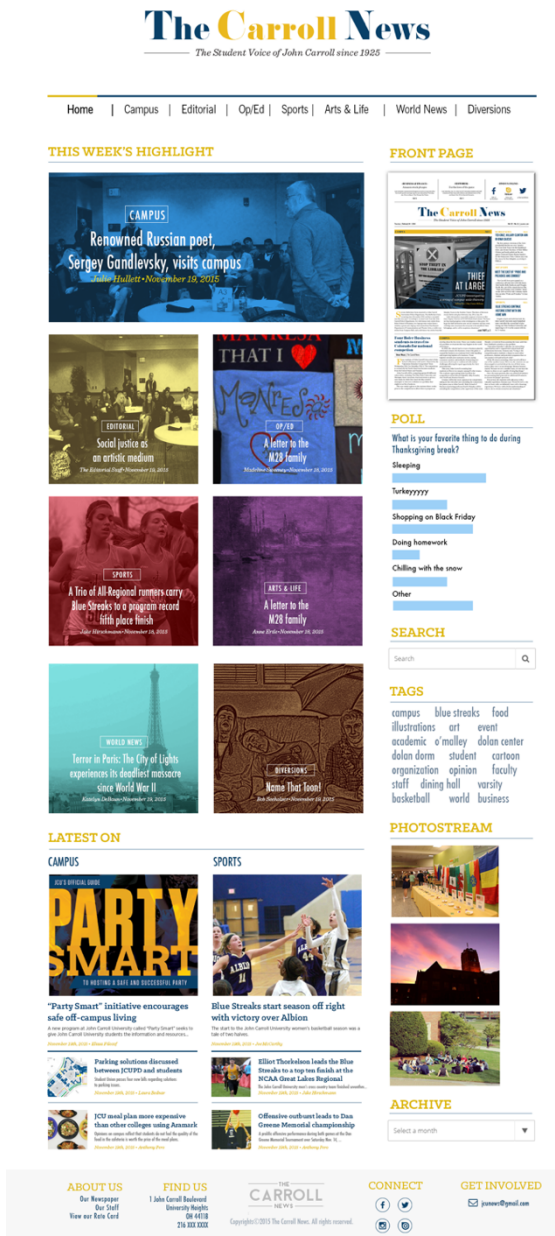
Figure 15. The Carroll News Website Redesign Mockup 1

The second mockup employs more colors, with different color overlay for different sections. This design shares a similar approach to *USA Today*, with different colors representing different sections of the newspaper. A *USA Today*-inspired look was also suggested by one survey respondent. While this design employs versatile design components and a more complex modular layout, it may be difficult for the current staff to maintain, as there is little web development training at John Carroll. If the editors decide to continue with WordPress, which is one of the best Content Management Systems, once a similar web template is built, the website maintenance would be manageable. The use of color overlay can also generate concerns about using complex graphic software. However, this effect can be implemented with built-in photo filters in the programming languages for the web.
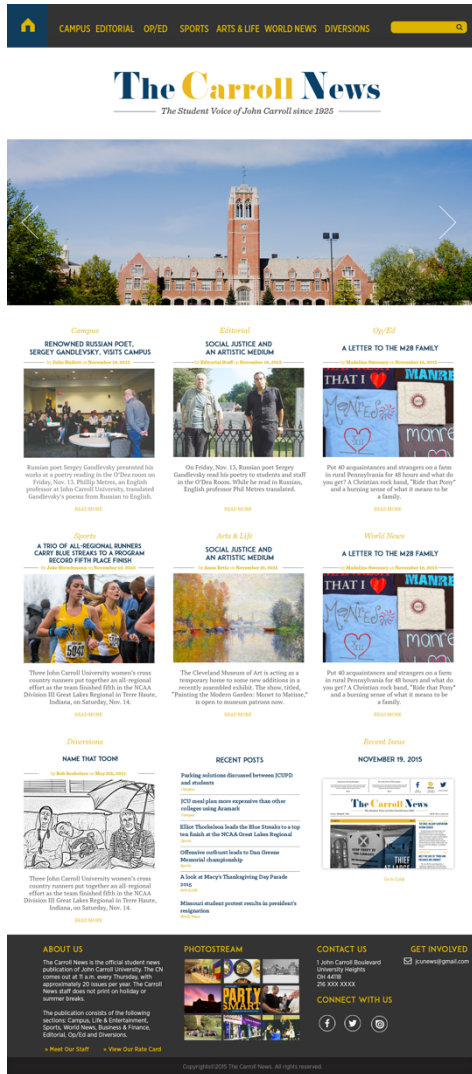

Figure 16. The Carroll News Website Redesign Mockup 2

*Figure 17. The Carroll News Website Redesign Mockup 3*

The third mockup retains many similar elements to the current design of *The Carroll News* website. This structure includes a banner photo slide and a balance grid layout below. The difference lies in the horizontal navigation instead of the current vertical bar, a bigger and more packed footer area, and each grid containing an article from a certain section rather than a list of articles. This design resembles the current look, thus it would be easier for staff members to implement and acquaint themselves with this template. However, the home page of this design is not particularly informative, as there is little space for other items such as related articles, polls or an archive. There are eight sections, so when put in this 3x3 grid layout, there may be a visual imbalance between the article grid (grid that contains article) and the non-article one.

Similar to the website redesign, the redesign for the print version also combines modern and traditional features. Modern visual elements of the web design, such as bigger white spaces, more color contrast, the John Carroll brand's color swatch, and sans-serif typefaces are incorporated to provide a thorough visual link between the two platforms. These changes occur mostly on the front page. On the other hand, traditional layout, serif body fonts and the inside content were preserved. DeBaun expressed that it is in the interest of students, staff and faculty

alike to keep a traditional look for the print version (K. DeBaun, personal communication, 3

December 2015). The print sample below adapts Issue 11, Volume 92, published on Thursday,

February 04, 2016.

Figure 18: Print redesign mockup of the front page and the campus section.
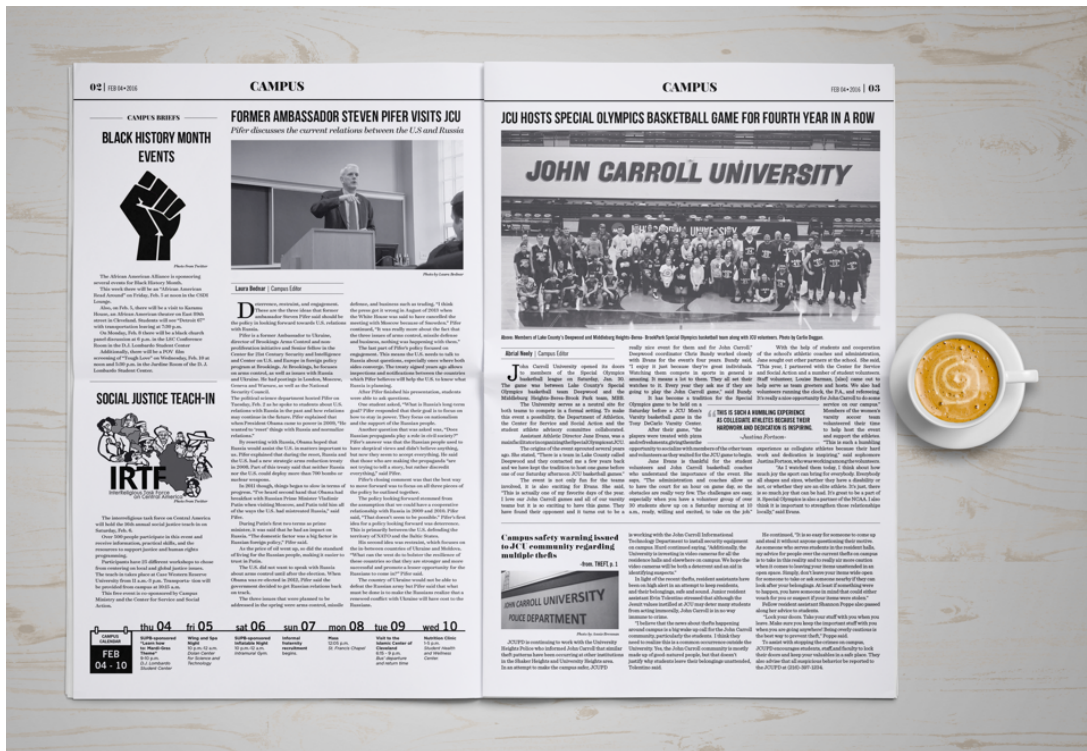
For the print redesign, the most dramatic changes are displayed on the front page. First, the nameplate was simplified, adapting the minimalist approach in design. *The Carroll News*'s nameplate has traditionally been adjusted to suit special occasions that coincide with the release of certain issues, such as Valentine's and St. Patrick's days. However, the use of heavy graphics in the background interferes with the readability of the text, due to the low contrast between the text and the image. This is not the best approach to incorporate special elements on the header, especially when the current nameplate already uses the clock tower graphic in the middle. In the redesign, the minimalized nameplate focus on the contrast between two colors of the John Carroll brand: gold and blue, and since they are in a simple type form, their colors and graphics in the nameplate can be manipulated for special occasions without affecting the readability. The white space is also large enough to give rooms for clipping graphics that can be inserted using the traditional method.

Figure 20: The many faces and themes of the nameplate (Standard, Valentine, St. Patrick's Day and Politics): Old Design and Redesign. (The Carroll News, 2016a, 2013, 2016b)

The layout of the front page maintains the position of two main headline articles and top stories. To replace the static Index that has assigned each section to a fixed page number throughout many years, teasers for articles from different sections are suggested. Each teaser for an article includes the name of the section that article belongs to, a short summary of the content and the page number. Readers can easily find articles that most interest them and navigate through the rest of the newspaper. Compared to the front page, the section pages undergo less significant changes. Some of the notable differences include a modern-looking campus calendar, the use of drop caps and pull quotes, a new set of fonts and the styling of the section headers.

Conclusion

Visual journalism manifests itself in newspapers in many shapes and forms. The newspaper itself is a coherent package containing several modalities, each with its own characteristics and appeal to attract readers. Information cannot survive on its own, especially in the age of technology. Because designing involves lots of technological components, seeing the newspaper from the visual perspective proves to be an efficient and modern way of dealing with information and data. This can benefit both the newspaper producers and the audience: Visual journalists are constantly challenged and motivated to present seemingly dry information with originality and experimentation, while readers are constantly exposed to innovative visual treats while still enjoying the act of reading.

Such grandiosity of visual journalism in general, and newspaper design in particular, can be too intimidating and unrealistic for college journalists. However, there are many potential ideas for an update in the visual identity of a college newspaper. In the case of *The Carroll News*, the staff has become more aware of the visual appeal of the newspaper, which signals a slow yet steady change. A visual transformation for the newspaper requires a multimodal approach that

begins with small steps. A more prominent photo feature is within reach and should be improved

upon before tackling other visual elements. Staff members can start taking advantage of the

digital environment by putting more images on the website. Knowledge of visual design can be

gained from these small changes. The proposed website redesigns are also among these steps.

However, if the lack of people with expertise in web design poses serious challenges, investing

in buying a professional web template and tweaking it to fit the desired look could always be an

option.

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Appendix: Survey

The College Newspaper Design Survey

Thank you for participating in this survey. These questions are designed to examine how college

students perceive visual journalism. Visual journalism refers to "the ability to project a news

story to readers and audiences through image and design as well as through text." The purpose of

this is to help me gather your news design preferences and allow me to construct a complete

redesign of *The Carroll News*. There is no risk in taking this survey and the decision to

participate or not is entirely up to you. All information collected will be used only for my

research, which is subjected to be presented at the Celebration of Scholarship and in my online

portfolio. There will be no connection to you specifically in the results or in future publication of

the results. In the meantime, if you have any questions please ask or contact tle16@jcu.edu.

(*): Required questions.

Demographics:

1. Please select the gender you identify as

a) Female b) Male c) Preferred not to answer

2. What's your major/concentration/ minor?

3. Have you ever been involved in *The Carroll News*?

a) Yes b) No

Readership

1. How often do you pick up a print copy of *The Carroll News*? *

A. Every week it's published   B. About once a month

C. Rarely   D. Never

2. If you still read *The Carroll News* once in a while, what are the reasons that make you

pick up TCN? You can select more than one reason.

A. To stay informed with campus news   B. Interested in journalism

C. Support the staff's effort   D. For fun

E. Other

3. If you do not pick it up every week, why don't you read *The Carroll News* more often?

You can select more than one reason.

A. Reading newspaper is not my habit.

B. I do not care enough about campus affairs.

C. It does not look professional and interesting enough for me.

D. I'm generally uninterested in newspapers.

E. Other

Design

4. Here are a few front-page design examples from nationally ranked college

newspapers. On a scale from 1 to 10, how would you rate each of them?

A. The Harvard Crimson, Harvard University *****

B. The Daily Gamecock, University of South Carolina *****
College Media Association Pinnacle Award Best Newspaper Front Page 2013-14 Finalist

C. Minnesota Daily, University
of Minnesota *****
The Associated Collegiate Press Design of
The Year 2015 Finalists

D. The State News, Michigan State
University *****
The Associated Collegiate Press Design of
The Year 2015 Finalists

E. The Heights, Boston College*****

The Associated Collegiate Press Design of

The Year 2015 Finalists

F. Indiana Daily Student, Indiana

University*****

The College Press Design of the Year 2013

Newspaper Page One First Place Winner

5. Do you think *The Carroll News* has a good design compared to other college newspapers?

A. Yes. I think it looks nice and professional.

B. About average. I've seen better and I've seen worse.

C. Generally unappealing. Could be improved.

D. Other

6. Do you think *The Carroll News* should, or could, have its own design team? *

A. Yes   B. No   C. Not sure

7. In what way do you think a design team might benefit *The Carroll News*?

If you pick Other, you can type your response after you click the option.

A. The design aspect would be more focused and improved.

B. Offer practical opportunities for students who are interested in the field (editorial design,

web management, art & technology, etc.)

C. TCN would function more like a professional newsroom.

D. Other

8. What are some of the challenges of having a design team for *The Carroll News*?

If you pick Other, you can type your response after you click the option.

A. Graphic design training does not have a strong presence at JCU.

B. Separate editorial and design teams could lead to disjointed content and visuals.

C. It's not very cost-effective. For example, a nice web presence may require regular fees to

maintain.

D. It's not necessary for the current scope of TCN.

E. Other

9. What design style do you prefer for *The Carroll News*? *

     A. Avant-garde/ experimental   B. Traditional

     C. Contemporary   D. Mixed

10. What do you think about *The Carroll News*' web presence? *

If you pick Other, you can type your response after you click the option.

     A. It's very good.   B. It's adequate.   C. It's not very developed.

     D. It's there, but it's not well-marketed enough

     E. I've never been aware that TCN has a website.   F. Other

11. Do you think the website and the print edition of *The Carroll News* should be in the same visual style? *

A. Yes. They should also share the same visual elements with JCU's brand (for example: color should be yellow & blue, same font choice, modern and sleek look)

B. Yes. The digital and the print can be independent in terms of visual design but they can still share similar elements.

C. No. They don't necessarily need to have the same tone with JCU's brand but can have an independent visual identity.

D. No. They can be totally different.

12. Which newspaper website layout below do you think most suitable for *The Carroll News* website redesign? * Please pick your favorite 3. If you have another favorite news outlet web design that you think would fit *The Carroll News*, please identify in the field "Other."

A. The New York Times (nytimes.com)

B. Substance on Medium (medium.com/@substancedotcom)

C. The Lantern from OSU (thelantern.com)

D. F Newsmagazine from School of the Art Institute of Chicago (fnewsmagazine.com)

E. The Harvard Crimson from Harvard University (thecrimson.com)

F. The Temple News from Temple University (temple-news.com)

G. Other. If you have other favorite news outlet website design that you think would fit TCN, please identify.

14. To what degree do you agree or disagree with these following statements?

A. Good visual design can improve readership of a small college newspapers.

B. I would personally pick up TCN more often if it had a better design.

C. A more magazine-oriented design would also work for newspapers.

D. I am interested in learning about the visual aspect of newspapers.

E. A visual identity is not important to college newspapers.

15. Rate your interest in TCN on a scale from 1-10

16. Rate the current content of TCN on a scale from 1-10

17. Rate the current visual appeal of TCN a scale from 1-10