A LOOK AT TODAY'S NEWSPAPERS:
THE MAKING OF CONTENT AND FORM

By
Carin T. Ford

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Communication.

August, 1984
Table of Contents

Abstract.............................................................. vi

Chapter 1: Introduction............................................. 1

Chapter 2: Newspapers and Their Readers.................... 17
  "Think Graphics"....................................................... 17
  Readership and Readability...................................... 28
  Newspapers vs. Television........................................ 34
  Looking Ahead......................................................... 39
  The Organization of a Newspaper.............................. 41

Chapter 3: Method...................................................... 45
  Approaching the Problem........................................... 45
  Subjects.................................................................. 51
  Research Design....................................................... 51
  Procedure............................................................... 57
  Data Analysis........................................................ 57

Chapter 4: Results....................................................... 59
  The Interviews......................................................... 65
  Philadelphia Inquirer............................................... 66
  Delaware County Daily Times..................................... 72
  USA Today............................................................. 77

Chapter 5: Discussion............................................... 87
Table of Contents (continued)

Newspapers Changing in Response to Television.................................87
The Cognitive Processing of Newspapers and Television.....................95
Reading and the Impact of Television........................................102
The Making of Content and Form.............................................111
Conclusion.................................................................127
References.................................................................134
Appendix: Sample Letter..................................................146
List of Tables

Table 1: List of Subjects..........................52
Table 2: Comparison of Newspaper Compartments....61
Table 2 (continued): Stories within
    Compartments..................................62
Abstract

Before the arrival of television, newspapers acted as the public's chief sources of news. But TV's steady growth over the past five decades has forced many editors to reevaluate both the function of their newspapers and the public's changing wants and expectations concerning the presentation of news. This study concerns editorial news judgment and has as its primary purpose the determination of criteria used by today's newspaper editors in deciding newspaper content and format, and how these decisions may be affected by the growing influence of television.

Three newspapers -- the Philadelphia Inquirer, the Delaware County Daily Times and USA Today -- representing three different approaches to news dissemination, were selected to attempt to answer the research questions. Personal interviews were conducted with editors and reporters at these papers, and a compounded week's worth of each paper was subjected to a content analysis. Also, relevant
literature related to changes in today's newspapers and the growth and possible effects of television on the public were examined.

As a result of the interviews and research, it appears that the criteria used in deciding a newspaper's content and format are based on three factors. First, news judgment is influenced by the editors' desired image for their newspapers. This was reflected in a paper's packaging as well as the emphasis placed on the covering and writing of news events. Second, TV's method of delivering the news affected news judgment. Some newspapers were interested in supplementing television's news coverage while others attempted to imitate television. Finally, today's editors are facing a TV-oriented public with changing needs and desires regarding newspapers. Research shows that much of the public is less interested in reading and less able to read as well as they did in pre-television days. Newspaper editors, therefore, are attempting to make their papers more visually attractive and easier to read.
Today's newspaper editors seem aware of television's influence while generally expressing optimism about the future of newspapers. The issue at hand appears to be not what will become of newspapers, but how they deal with the public's changing needs and tastes.
Chapter 1

Introduction

Circulation for daily newspapers in the United States has increased by more than 11 million since 1946, according to the latest figures in the 1983 Editor & Publisher Year Book. Daily newspaper circulation for 1982 shows an increase of more than one million above 1981 totals (American Newspaper Publishers Association, 1983). Also, newspapers have been given higher marks for accuracy, analysis, and completeness by their readers than they were given eight years ago (Neuharth, 1983).

This is the good news.

The bad news is that seven daily newspapers have died in the past two years --- Philadelphia saw two of its four papers fold, the Cleveland Press went under during the summer of 1982, and Buffalo, Washington, D.C., Minneapolis and Nashville all have recently lost papers. And in spite of the rise in circulation, total circulation for U.S. dailies
fell below the number of households for the first time since 1970. Circulation may be at an all time high in numbers, but the gap between circulation figures and number of households is consistently on the rise (Bogart, 1974; Editor & Publisher, 1983). The number of daily newspapers gradually has been decreasing during the past decade (American Newspaper Publishers Association, 1983), and the high marks given for accuracy still leave newspapers trailing television by 15 points (Neuharth, 1983).

How true, then, are the dire predictions forecasting the "death of print," and what are the reasons behind the discouraging newspaper statistics? It is important to consider newspapers' competition and the impact of these competing media on newspapers to understand the statistics. A survey of publishers found that free newspapers and direct mail were considered the daily papers' biggest threats. And while a new Nielsen report states that Americans are now watching more TV than ever -- nearly seven hours a day (USA Today, 1983a) -- competition from the electronic media was ranked fairly low on the scale (Neuharth, 1983). Indeed,
in a recent panel discussion by three TV network anchorpeople and three newspaper news executives, A.M. Rosenthal of the *New York Times* offered support for this interesting finding. He commented:

TV is one of the best things that ever happened to the newspaper business... (TV is the) world's best advertiser of the news. TV is one, vast, free promotional machine for us. (Gloede, 1983, p. 38)

And there are, of course, examples in nearly everyone's life of the complementary relationship that can exist between TV and newspapers. A sports fan who enjoys watching athletics on television will doubtless also read the daily newspaper's sports section (Neuman, 1980a).

The relationship among media -- notably between newspapers and television -- is often thought to be more complementary than competitive as indicated in the data yielded from various studies (Burgoon & Burgoon, 1983; Stevenson, 1977; Tipton, 1978; Weaver & Buddenbaum, 1979). Stevenson found that people who are daily newspaper readers are likely to be TV news viewers and news magazine readers as well. According to Burgoon and Burgoon, the public
relies heavily on newspapers as sources of the daily news, with television playing a complementary role:

Despite growing fears among journalists that TV is encroaching on newspaper reading habits, TV news is not competing with newspapers and may in fact be whetting the public's appetite for the more thorough coverage that newspapers supply. (Burgoon & Burgoon, 1983, p. 13)

There is, therefore, a complementary side to the relationship between newspapers and TV. But as another medium in the market, television obviously plays the role of competitor with respect to newspapers in some sense. From a financial perspective, the birth and subsequent popularity of television meant that yet another mass medium would be able to snag a share of advertising revenue from newspapers, magazines and radio (Emery, 1972). And few television critics fail to note that we spend more time engaged in television viewing than in any other single activity during our waking hours (Huston-Stein & Wright, 1979). Thus, it seems likely that there is a certain degree of competition between the two media for an audience. The issue at stake is how will this competition affect newspapers?

Newspapers have previously encountered the challenge
of competing media. According to media researchers Joe Belden and Tom Holbein, radio

took time to establish itself as a purveyor of news and other information. Television took less time. Both
affected newspapers but did not supplant them. The new video developments will not eliminate the newspaper, but they
will certainly affect it...The question is, what role will the newspaper play, what niche will it occupy in this new
world of communication? ...Since competition for people's time is likely to continue, and since we seem to be
producing generations of people with narrower information appetites, the newspaper's role is likely to be less
widespread than heretofore. (Belden & Holbein, 1981, p. 8)

With this in mind, today's newspaper editors are currently reconsidering what the function of newspapers should be. In other words, what kind of information should a newspaper provide and how should it be delivered? It is the primary purpose of this study to determine what criteria newspaper editors are using in deciding newspaper content and format and how these decisions may be affected by the growing influence of television.

For example, a survey of more than 80 newspaper editors found that television has made editors
more aware of the competition, more alert to fresh leads, more conscious of the need to serve readers with analysis and detail and more imaginative in the use of color, graphics and pictures. (Nordyke, 1983, p. 3)

In general, the editors agreed that the "electronic era" has changed the way their work is done, but it has not affected the essence of the work itself. In fact, there are few newspapers today that have not made some changes in the format of their papers. Editors are becoming more conscious than ever of what their papers look like (Rehe, 1981).

Moving away from its conservative image as "the good gray Times" (Salisbury, 1980, p. 30), the New York Times decided to utilize a new format in 1976. A press release stated that the changes in content and design would be similar to those being made by other newspapers. Altering the paper's appearance actually resulted in a loss of type space, and this translates into less news in the newspaper (Shapiro, 1983).

Less news, or a liberal amount of white space is one component of modern newspaper design (Siskind, 1979). Traditional design emphasizes
balance and contrast in a vertical makeup, while modern design relies on a horizontal layout such as the kind used by tabloids and magazines (Stone, Schweitzer & Weaver, 1978).

Many newspapers have switched to a modern format in recent years in an attempt to capture a younger audience (Garcia, 1980). Modern design, or modern format, also includes fewer stories on page one, no column rules, large photos, color photos, six column layout and smaller headlines.

Editors are rightly concerned with using a modern format to encourage "youth brought up in an era of television (to) switch over to print media" (Sissors, 1974, p. 307). A study of the 21-34 year-old market revealed that this age group was less newspaper-oriented than the rest of the population and that this segment reacted more favorably in general toward television than they did toward newspapers. In order for newspapers to reach this age group, it was recommended that editors expand their audience, make the newspaper easier to use, and change their papers' image of being old-fashioned (Larkin, Grotta & Stout, 1977).
Further research has shown that most readers, not just the younger audience, tend to prefer newspapers with a modern front page design. A study conducted in South Carolina asked subjects to evaluate four newspaper front pages that reflected four different design styles ranging from traditional to modern. Not only was the modern design preferred to the traditional format, but the modern design was considered more informative and interesting than its traditional counterpart (Siskind, 1979).

While newspapers may vary in the number of photographs they publish (Trayes & Cook, 1977), readers appear to favor pages with color pictures to those bearing only black and white photos (Click & Stempel, 1976). Newspaper editors as well, are aware that

if you view newspapers as competing with television, then black and white (in newspapers) comes off with all the zest of black and white TV. (Stein, 1983, p. 31)

Color photography in newspapers is on the rise and a 1979 survey revealed that 12% of the 1,730 dailies in the country regularly were using full-color photos. Looking at papers with
circulations of more than 100,000, 33% were using full color (Schoonmaker, 1983). The use of color is considered so vital to the success of USA Today, the Gannett Company's national newspaper, that the company plans to expand its press capacity so that by July 1, 1984 it may double the number of full color pages than is currently possible (Radolf, 1983).

First appearing on the newsstands in September 1982, the early success of USA Today is worth considering for a moment. Preceding the launching of the newspaper, Gannett undertook an exhaustive market survey and essentially "identified a market and tailored a newspaper to it" (Seelye, 1983, p. 27). Through this survey, readers across the country told researchers what they wanted -- and what they did not want -- in a newspaper. What they did want was short stories, sports, charts and graphs, and information that could be absorbed quickly. What they did not want was stories that jumped, or information that demanded careful reading (Seelye, 1983). Managing editor Nancy Woodhull said:

We try to pick the story we think will
mean the most to our readers. We see ourselves not as editors or reporters, but as communicators... We come down heavy on our reporters to write brief stories with who, what, when, where and why leads. We think of ourselves as a daily newsletter to let the reader know as briefly as possible what happened in the country yesterday. (Consoli, 1983, p. 12)

The paper's total compliance with the public's preferences may be somewhat precedent-setting in the world of newspapers, even though the preferences themselves are not. But at USA Today, the preferences are all important:

While other newspapers might feel a constitutional responsibility to give readers what they "should have," even at the risk of boring them, USA Today would not take that risk. "When you are trying to be interesting and relevant," says Tony Casale, USA Today national night editor, "sometimes what (people) want is what they should have." (Seelye, 1983, p. 28)

And what people told USA Today they wanted is not so different from what they have preferred in the past.

A 1980 study (Stamm & Jacoubovitch, 1980), aimed at determining how much people read in a daily newspaper, confirms the fact that actual reading
is not high on the list. Subjects in the study read twice as many headlines as they did units of text and they "read" more photos than cutlines, the captions beneath the pictures.

Although most of the discussion to this point has centered on newspaper format, content is equally vulnerable to change. Newspapers are now finding it necessary to report an event to a public whose opinion has already been formed by another medium (Bagdikian, 1972). Television has altered the criteria of timeliness and in doing so, has replaced the traditional role of newspapers as chief information-bearer (Roshco, 1975). In fact, a 1963 survey found for the first time that more people listed TV as their chief news source than newspapers (Schudson, 1978). A 1982 Roper Poll found that 48% of those surveyed received most of their news about what is going on in the world today from TV, with only 32% citing newspapers as their information source, and 20% listing other sources (The Roper Organization, Inc., 1983).

Will Corbin of the Escondido Times-Advocate,
was quoted as saying:

The 'scoop' has become something of a dinosaur, particularly on those issues that TV covers -- the loud breaking story or national-international news. We don't surprise anyone with a 72-point headline about war or assassination. We continue to have a certain sense of having to handle those stories in that way simply because that's what we've always done. Besides, we'd look silly if we didn't. (Nordyke, 1983, p. 4)

The function of newspaper content, then, needs to undergo some sort of reevaluation. Newspapers need to become more concerned with providing background information and explaining what has happened as well as what is going to happen (Davey, 1981; Kiplinger, 1983).

Changing needs and tastes in newspaper content and format are very real problems facing today's newspaper editors. Not only do editors need to be concerned with updating what their papers look like, they are being hit in another direction by having to reevaluate the very function of newspapers.

What then, does the future hold for newspapers? Broadcast/cable television mogul Ted Turner
suggested that newspapers are presently outdated; they are too expensive a way to distribute information. According to Turner, newspapers will be replaced by the electronic media where information can be delivered in a "micro second" instead of taking nearly 12 hours to print (Katz, 1983).

Many media researchers, however, do not believe that newspapers will be replaced. The central issue seems to be how newspapers will change in the coming years in order to deal with the development of the electronic media. Leo Bogart, a mass communication research specialist, believes

...the "worst" appears to be over. In spite of the losses in the big cities, overall newspaper circulation and readership have stabilized during the past five years, following eight years of steady decline. The real question is not whether newspapers will survive into the 21st century, but rather what kind of newspapers they will be. The answer lies both in the economics of the press and in the perceptions of editors and publishers. (Bogart, 1982, p. 50)

It is the perceptions of newpersons that will form the crux of this study, and what criteria newspaper editors are using in deciding newspaper content and format, and the possible influence of television
on these decisions.

This objective will be accomplished by analyzing three newspapers which appear to be representative of three different phases in the development of newspapers. *USA Today* is the nation's newest paper and suggests a print imitation of television; the *Delaware County Daily Times* (suburban Philadelphia) adopted a modern tabloid format three years ago, abandoning its traditional broadsheet design; the *Philadelphia Inquirer* is a traditional newspaper that has remained relatively unchanged.

Interviews will be conducted with editors and reporters from the three newspapers in order to determine why these three papers look and read the way they do. The interviews will be supplemented by an analysis of a compounded week's worth of each newspaper. Specific categories -- such as sentence length, story length and number of photographs -- will be analyzed as a means of comparing and contrasting the newspapers' methods of presenting the news.
According to Bernard Roshco (1975) there are two basic approaches that may be taken when conducting a study of the news media:

How one frames the problem of analyzing the news media depends upon one's central interest; how press content comes to be what it is or how the public reacts to the reporting of particular events. (p. 6)

This study is intended to examine how press content and format come to be what they are. In other words, what criteria do today's editors and reporters use in deciding upon newspaper content and format.

Understanding these criteria will be an invaluable aid in order to determine how today's newspeople perceive the current media market. For example, the editors at USA Today already have acted upon their ideas of what the public wants in a newspaper. USA Today's market survey revealed a public interested in skimming, as well as a public that enjoyed a highly "visual" newspaper. USA Today is an obvious example of how one group of editors intends to have a paper survive into the next century. The Philadelphia Inquirer and Daily Times are less obvious examples, yet undoubtedly the content
and format of these papers are being shaped by their editors' perceptions of how a newspaper should be delivering the news.

Newspapers always have undergone transformations through the years and today's papers are certainly no exception. The changes are direct results of what editors and publishers consider the important factors in a newspaper's survival. Determining the criteria that editors are using to decide newspaper content and format should give an indication of what they consider most important in today's information market.
Chapter 2

Newspapers and Their Readers

"Think Graphics"

On a daily basis, newspaper editors must decide which stories go in the paper and which stay out. Once a story has been selected for print, they must then decide how to play it, i.e. where it should be placed in the newspaper, what kind of art should be used with it, how attention-getting the headline should be in content and appearance, etc. These decisions are often referred to as news judgment (Roshco, 1975) and frequently are based on such variables as the publisher's preferences, the size of the newspaper, links with other newspaper organizations, the nature of the paper's competition, and the kind of play the competition gives the same story (Mauro & Weaver, 1977; Singletary, 1977).

Many of today's editors believe that to some extent, the presence and popularity of television is having an impact on news judgment (Nordyke, 1983).
The results of this suggest that newspapers are starting to look different by adopting new designs, as their editors are becoming increasingly concerned with how the news is to be delivered (Rogers, 1983).

Graphic arts professor Mario Garcia writes:

Wrapping the day's news in a dull package may alienate prospective newspaper readers. This graphic revolution requires that newspaper editors gain a greater sense of graphic awareness. Anyone who served an apprenticeship at a newspaper years ago can remember an aggressive city editor shouting: "Think news." Today's successful city editor has added two other words to his command: "Think graphics." (Garcia, 1980, p. 1)

At a four-day seminar on newspaper design sponsored by the American Press Institute in 1978, experts in this area offered the following recommendations concerning the principles on which a newspaper should base its approach to design (American Press Institute, 1978):

* newspaper content should determine what the package looks like;
* a good newspaper page must be functional; it must communicate with the reader and transmit information;
* the typographic layout should be invisible; it should not overpower the message;
* the design should communicate in a recognizable and consistent style;
* the design must be flexible enough to allow quick changes in response to changing news;
* a variety of graphics should be used -- photos, illustrations, maps, charts.

These principles or guidelines for newspaper design reflect modern format. Identifying characteristics of modern format are a horizontal makeup (when stories and headlines run horizontally across the page in order to break up long, gray columns of type), six-column format, centered and flush left headlines, and other elements which will be discussed later (Stone, Schweitzer & Weaver, 1978).

The use of a horizontal makeup is almost universal today, and this represents a marked change in the last decade. A study by Click and Stempel (1970), aimed at determining how many newspapers have adopted a modern format, found that the rate of adoption was similar for newspapers under 100,000 circulation as for those with circulations larger than 100,000. It was also found that the 10 elements of modern format most frequently used were (in order): white space between the columns, flush left headlines, horizontal makeup, centered headlines, white space
around the headlines, boxed stories, six-column format, kickers over the headlines, indented headlines, downstyle headlines -- only the first letter of the first word of the headline is capitalized.

The objective of a page design is to attract the reader's attention as soon as s/he sees the page and to make the page interesting enough -- in a visual sense -- to keep the reader's eyes moving on the page. Newspaper editors traditionally composed a front page according to the assumption that the reader's eyes would first look at the upper right corner of the page and then continue in a circular motion around the page. For this reason, the lead story of the day was traditionally on the right. With the increasing interest in graphic design, however, today's editor (or designer) controls the direction of the reader's eyes through different styles of layout and graphic displays that include the use of boxed stories, along with charts and tables (Garcia, 1980).

Although many of the layouts and graphic techniques of modern format may be new to newspapers,
these approaches have been used for years by magazines which have been considerably more "visual" than newspapers (Garcia, 1980). It is perhaps easiest to recognize some of the growing similarities between newspapers and magazines by looking at tabloids.

Newspaper format may be either full or tabloid. Full format is commonly referred to as broadsheet and the pages generally measure 15 x 22 inches. Tabloid, or compact format, is 11 to 13 inches wide and 14 to 16 inches deep and has between four and six columns.

The first tabloid was the New York Daily News (Marzio, 1973) and the tabloid format was based on the idea of convenience. The Daily News, for example, could be easily read on subways or other transportation (Arnold, 1969).

Partly as a result of the success of the Daily News, the second largest daily in the country (American Newspaper Publishers Association, 1983), the tabloid has become a popular type of newspaper format. One of the papers to be examined in this study, the Delaware County Daily Times, changed
from a broadsheet to tabloid format three years ago. Yet convenience is only one of the advantages of a tabloid. Because of its bulkier size, the tabloid gives the reader the impression that s/he is getting more for his/her money. The smaller page size of a tabloid allows greater flexibility in adding pages to accommodate extra advertising. Advertisers like tabloids because smaller ads can gain prominence on smaller pages, and thus it is easier to sell an advertiser a full tabloid page than a full broadsheet page (Arnold, 1969).

The tabloid format also has disadvantages. Undoubtedly because the Daily News was the first tabloid, the word tabloid connotes sensational or "lightweight" journalism. There is more wasted page space in a tabloid because of a higher percentage of the paper area used for margins. Although the smaller page size appeals to advertisers, the newspaper obviously does not benefit from selling small ads. Finally, a tabloid is only a single section. While a broadsheet is easily divided into "sports" and "business" sections, a tabloid comes in one bulky bundle (Arnold, 1969). To deal with this final
problem, many tabloids -- including the Delaware County Daily Times -- have two "front" pages. The traditional front page is used for the major news stories and the back or last page of the tabloid becomes a "front page" for the major sports stories of the day.

The typical front page of a tabloid follows a poster makeup. This type of layout calls for one large picture with one or two headlines, but no text. The lead story runs on page three. Most tabloids are designed for newsstand sales and the large photo serves as an attention-getter for the person passing by. As a broadsheet, the Daily Times sold only 10% to 15% of its newspapers through street sales. Since turning tabloid, nearly 50% of their circulation comes from newsstands (Rose, 1984).

Broadsheet newspapers as well as tabloids are becoming increasingly reliant on photos and similar graphic illustrations to attract attention. Comments from editors of the following newspapers reflect this trend (American Press Managing Editors Association, 1981, p. 43):
Enid News and Eagle -- We are doing more with photos and graphics. We are running pictures bigger...more of them...

St. Louis Post-Dispatch -- If anything, we play our pictures bigger now than in years past. We have added a graphics director and have put added emphasis on graphics.

San Francisco Examiner -- We go for big graphics, big photos.

New Haven Register -- Despite news restrictions, we are probably using more pictures, more graphics than ever and displaying them bigger whenever possible.

Newspaper editors' increasing emphasis on the papers' visual aspects would indeed be a waste if the reader did not approve of the graphics. But studies consistently show that readers do enjoy pages made up according to modern format (Click & Stempel, 1982; Siskind, 1979). The previously mentioned USA Today market survey revealed that readers not only approved of, but asked for charts and graphs in the newspaper. In 1976, Click and Stempel found that readers preferred a six-column horizontal ("modern") format over the more traditional format. In Siskind's 1979 study, subjects were shown four newspaper front pages displaying various formats: traditional, contemporary, well-designed traditional, and well-designed contemporary. Subjects selected
the well-designed contemporary and contemporary pages as their first and second choices, respectively; they claimed these pages were more informative and interesting.

Closely related to use of graphics and more "visual" formats, is a newspaper's use of color. The trend toward more color is also meeting with reader approval. At the Tampa Tribune, managing editor Paul Hogan commented on his paper's use of color:

The competition has a lot to do with it. We sell a lot of papers from the racks. When readers look at a row of racks with color and noncolor newspapers, they're going to pick color. (Stein, 1983, p. 9)

Various newspapers are even running their daily comics in color, in the belief that they will appeal to a wider range of readers (Astor, 1983).

Garcia, Click and Stempel (1981) observed the redesign and subsequent reader reaction to the "new" St. Cloud Daily Times, a Minnesota daily. The redesign was based on making stories easy to find, easy to read and pleasing to look at. To make stories easy to find, teaser heads were inserted
over the nameplate. Teasers are phrases summarizing a story (similar to a headline) followed by the article's page number. Also, graphic displays were developed that would call the reader's attention to the various inside sections such as sports, lifestyle and food. To make stories easy to read, copy was contained within neat modular packages so that the text did not twist around the page. Charts and rules were employed to guide readers through complicated stories, and stories of similar content were kept together on a page. Finally, the paper was made more visually attractive by concentrating on appropriate use of photos and illustrations and type. The paper obtained a "graphic identity" by using its graphics consistently every day.

Two surveys were undertaken to determine reader response to the redesign. Both yielded highly favorable results, with approximately 70% of the respondents claiming they preferred the new look. Only three of the changes made in the redesign were not supported. They were: changes in the nameplate (a traditional eagle with spread wings hovering over the top of page one was replaced with a small,
more contemporary eagle sitting in the corner of the page); changes in classifieds (the new classifieds were made boxier with border tape around each ad); changed layout display ads (these were also heavily bordered and the ads were grouped together).

The trend of using more and better graphics indicates more than the fact that newspapers are merely concerned with being visually attractive. As noted with the redesign of the *St. Cloud Daily Times*, graphics help the reader. They do this by highlighting what is most important on a page or in a story, leading the reader through a difficult story, or merely helping the reader quickly find what s/he already knows s/he wants to read.

Predicting what newspapers will look like, and read like, in the next century, Belden and Holbein (1981) stated:

> By 2000 there will still be many readers, but they will be more demanding. And we predict they will want more functional newspapers, enabling faster, easier choices of what to read from a vastly more sophisticated content...Also, newspapers probably will be much more of a visual medium than ever before, with superb graphics -- color, artistry and
widespread use of devices that "tell the story at a glance" with art and capsulization. The new disciplines required for a videotex medium -- summarization, graphics and design skills, effective color mixtures -- will find their way into the print side of the newsroom. (p. 8)

Readership and Readability

The current emphasis on the use of visual aids is aimed at making newspapers not only more attractive, but easier and faster to read. Editors also need to contend with the fact that reading is a complicated process, certainly more complicated than viewing television (Newman, 1980; Sohn, 1982; Winn, 1977). The newspaper's level of readability, then, becomes even more significant when considering the nation's reading abilities are declining.

From 1963 to 1980, the verbal average of high school seniors taking the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) dropped from 479 to 424. During approximately the same period, mean composite scores based on English, math, social studies and natural sciences for the American College Test (ACT) fell from 20.4 to 17.9 (Mushl, 1982).
The National Assessment of Educational Progress found during the 1970's that students' performance in analysis, interpretation and problem-solving was on the decline, which indicated "students could read, but they couldn't decide what it meant" (Zigli, 1983, p. 2).

An exhaustive study concerned with reading skills was carried out at the University of Minnesota over a 50-year period (Eurich & Kraetsch, 1982). Freshmen entering the university from 1928 to 1978 were administered the same reading examination. It was found that the 1978 freshmen were at least one grade level below their 1928 counterparts in reading ability.

Another university study revealed that entering freshmen between 1973 and 1980 were scoring progressively lower on a reading comprehension exam. The University of Iowa test scores showed "losses comparable to publicized drops in nationwide SAT and ACT scores during the same period" (Muehl, 1982, p. 121).

More recently, 3,000 Florida students failed
a high school literacy test and may be unable to graduate (Adams, 1983). Eighteen states -- including Florida -- currently require a passing grade on a literacy test for graduation, and the Education Commission of the States has just called for an increased national effort on basic educational skills in the high schools (USA Today, 1983b).

With all this in mind, it appears obvious that a newspaper's level of readability -- of the paper in general and an article specifically -- will affect the individual's choice of reading material as well as his/her comprehension (Razik, 1969).

Newspapers today may be more difficult to read than is commonly thought and different articles have varying degrees of readability (Johns & Wheat, 1978). Razik (1969) found that the front pages of metropolitan papers were more readable -- i.e. a lower level of word difficulty and shorter sentence length -- than the front pages of non-metropolitan pages. Metro front pages were ranked at the ninth grade level while non-metro front pages were at the eleventh and twelfth grade levels. Newspaper
articles in general tended to be easier to read in the metro paper than in the non-metro. Razik noted that this difference may occur because metro papers compete with other area newspapers more frequently and therefore, they might emphasize sensational news events to attract readers. Also, the generally larger size of the metro paper staff might enable more articles to be rewritten to easier readability levels.

In a comparison of tabloid and non-tabloid newspapers, Fusaro and Conover (1983) found that tabloid newspapers had a lower level of reading difficulty than non-tabloids. Lead news stories in the New York Times and Wall Street Journal were written at the college freshmen level, while similar stories in the New York Daily News and New York Post were written at the tenth grade level.

Fowler (1978) compared the readability of newspapers during three different time periods: 1904 (the age of yellow journalism); 1933 (between yellow journalism and the most recent period of the study); 1965 (following the arrival of television).
The newspaper study was done in conjunction with similar research based on the readability of novels during the same time periods. Fowler discovered that novels' readability had remained unchanged while newspapers' level had varied. Newspapers were less difficult to read in 1904 and 1965 than they were in 1933. Fowler considered this due to the fact that 1933 newspapers exhibited more "hard" news on their front pages.

Finally, Johns and Wheat (1978) looked at 40 stories in Chicago newspapers and found that political stories were considerably more difficult to read than sports stories, and that wire-service stories were nearly one grade level higher in reading difficulty than non-service stories. Political stories achieved readability ratings of tenth to eleventh grade while sports stories were rated at the sixth to eighth grade levels.

There is indeed a variety of readability levels not only within the newspaper market, but within individual newspapers. In order to understand the important role of readability, two points need
to be considered.

First, people who are reading newspapers are doing so for shorter periods of time than in the past. In fact, between 1965 and 1975, the time spent reading newspapers as a primary activity declined by one-third (Robinson, 1980). Even the readership of newspaper comics has dropped sharply, with youngsters claiming they do not like dramatic, adventurous, romantic or political comics; they just want their comics to be "funny" (Astor, 1983).

Second, students graduating from high school today have poorer reading abilities than in the past (Eurich & Kraetsch, 1982; Fowler, 1978; Muehl, 1982). Thus, if a newspaper is to serve as a source of information or even entertainment, being understood is a top priority.

The newspaper industry should carefully consider the concept of readability and its relationship to mass appeal and circulation growth...The industry must...consider the consequences of isolating large segments of the population by producing a product that is difficult to understand. (Fowler, 1978, p. 592)
In light of the fact that a smaller percentage of the population is reading newspapers (Bogart, 1974) and that there is a distinct decline in reading abilities, making a newspaper interesting and understandable become two important concerns of today's newspaper editors. As noted earlier in this study, numerous papers are making changes in format and content in order to provide the public with a more entertaining news source, as well as one whose information is faster and easier to digest.

Newspapers vs. Television

The greatest decrease in newspaper readership has occurred this past decade with a 10% drop between 1967 and 1977, with the 20 to 29-year-old category showing the largest decline. Low newspaper readership for this particular group causes speculation as to whether its basis is the poor reading ability of 20 to 29-year-olds, or television's greater ease and efficiency than other media (Robinson, 1980).

Certainly the medium with the greatest expansion in recent years has been television. The percentage of U.S. households with television sets
in 1950 was 9%. This figure climbed to 66% in 1955, 87% in 1960 and 98% from 1978 through 1982. Cable TV alone is currently reaching one-third of all U.S. households (A.C. Nielsen Company, 1982).

Television, notably television news, seems to be everywhere. In Washington, D.C. there are only two "full-fledged" local dailies, the Washington Post and the Washington Times. Yet in the Washington area, there are more than 14 hours of news programming on three network stations, two independent stations and PBS (Lichty, 1982).

In an explanation of the decline in direct newspaper competition, Rosse (1979) cited the growth of television as a news and entertainment source. He further noted that

...the development of news magazines, the development of new recreational outlets and the magazines that go with them, the growth of professional sports, and changing demographics, all conspire to affect the amount of time and/or resources that households may be willing to spend acquiring newspapers. (p. 69)

Television also was offered as the main reason by non-readers in relating why they do not
read newspapers (Poindexter, 1979). Use of radio was listed as the second most popular reason followed by the time required to read newspapers, lack of desire, newspaper cost, lack of enjoyment of reading, too many advertisements, perception of newspapers as biased, poor eyesight, lack of interest in current events.

Various demographic studies have been undertaken to determine what characterizes the newspaper readers and what qualities are held by television viewers. Education and income are key factors in determining media use (O'Keefe & Spetnagel, 1973; Rarick, 1973). Individuals with high educational and income levels are usually newspaper readers and those standing at lower levels tend to watch more television. Also, older adults watch more television and read newspapers more often than younger adults, while women tend to watch more television and read newspapers less than men (O'Keefe & Spetnagel, 1973).

College students, because of their higher educational level, might be expected to prefer newspapers to television. Yet in a study of 130
University of Oregon students compared with 238 non-students, students were only slightly less likely to choose television for general use than other subjects (Cushing & Lemert, 1973).

In a survey of more than 400 students at a mid-western university, 76% preferred television to newspapers based on the believability of each medium for national and international stories. In this study, television was favored by a three-to-one lead over newspaper news (Lee, 1978).

A more recent study of 250 students at Cleveland State University found that 89.8% of the respondents had two or more television sets and only 4% had no TV set. But newspapers came out slightly ahead when students were asked on which medium they tend to rely for most of their news. Nearly 47% said newspapers, while 33.6% cited television (Perloff, Jeffres, Kopec & Ulaszewski, 1982).

It seems apparent that television, as an increasingly popular medium, would naturally cut into the ranks of newspaper readers:
The impact of television, as radio before it, has unquestionably diminished the number of newspaper readers, not because the content of the television news is better quality or more understandable but because it is effortless. It requires little thinking, almost no analysis and is, in fact, nothing more than a headline service until that moment when the camera can actually be turned on the event in progress. (Fuller, 1981, p. 9)

The decline, then, in the percentage of Americans reading newspapers may be connected to the popularity of television. The changes in newspapers' content and format also may be connected to TV. But to what degree these changes can be considered reactions to television cannot be said for certain. Perhaps newspaper editors are not consciously reacting to the influence of television but merely responding to their perceptions of what their readers want in a newspaper, and precisely who they believe their readers are. As Burton (1983) stated:

...You don't need research to tell how few young people are reading your paper. Just think when was the last time you saw a youngster voluntarily pick up a newspaper? Even then, the chances are he was checking the TV guide to plan a
night's viewing. (p. 16)

The interesting question is, what do the changes currently being undertaken by so many newspapers -- whether it be redesign or an awareness of the paper's readability level -- suggest for the future of newspapers? Are newspapers going to fill in the informational holes left by television? Are they going to imitate the most appealing aspects of television?

Looking Ahead

Lawrence B. Sackett, vice president of telecommunications at USA Today is confident that in the coming years, Americans will continue to get most of their news from newspapers. The newspapers of the future will continue to provide specialized information concerning sports or business, and advanced technology will produce better graphics, stronger reproduction, and the satellite delivery USA Today is presently employing.

Some media researchers and newspaper editors seem to agree with Sackett's assessment. Improvements
in technology will enable most papers to use color freely, papers will continue to be compartmentalized and will offer more soft news articles as well as more background stories (Bernbach, 1982; Davey, 1981; Mabry, 1981; Maupin, 1981).

If the emphasis on the newspaper's appearance seems a superficial concern, many editors look at it differently. Robert Lockwood and Jeff Lindenmuth, newspaper design consultants who together redesigned the Allentown (PA) Morning Call and the Philadelphia Bulletin, write:

Editors who say "content is more important than design" have too simple a view of communications. You can't give more weight to the words of a headline than to the way it's presented. The same headline printed in 60 point extra bold Helvetica communicates a different message when printed in 18 point Bodoni. If the structure of the type face is poor and reproduces soft rather than sharp, crisp edges, the message the reader gets is different still. If the reader isn't getting the right message then we aren't communicating. (Lockwood & Lindenmuth, 1981, p. 20)

Thus, the editor of the future appears to need a visual sense as well as word skills, and news judgment will very likely be based upon visual and contextual criteria.
The Organization of a Newspaper

In examining how those news judgments are made at newspapers, it is important to understand who is responsible for making them. Like any organization, newspapers are set up in specific ways and the personnel have specific functions.

A newspaper is a staff and line organization. This means that control is graduated down in levels with each having its own final authority. Departments are headed by executives who must report to a superior executive, yet each executive has full responsibility and authority within his/her own department. The staff and line organization is best suited for a newspaper because it provides controls over all departments while permitting each department freedom of operation (Rucker & Williams, 1965).

The departments of newspapers are set up according to the size of the paper. Weeklies and small dailies are usually divided up into just two departments -- one concerned with the business of putting together the newspaper, such as the actual
news copy and advertisements, and the other is concerned with the mechanical work necessary to print the paper (Rucker & Williams, 1965). Most larger papers are divided into three areas -- editorial, business and production. The business section is responsible for advertisements, promotion, bookkeeping and accounting. The production department runs the printing plant which puts out the newspaper. The function of the editorial department is to "gather information, judge its importance, evaluate its meaning, (and) process it into forms that will attract and hold the attention of readers" (Hiebert, Ungurait & Bohn, 1974, p. 216).

The editorial department probably shows the greatest diversity of organization in the paper. The typical arrangement is as follows: the editor is at the top of the hierarchy, followed by the managing editor and the editorial writers. Next, in descending order, are the city editor, assistant city editor, copy desk chief, sectional editors such as sports or business, followed by the reporters and photographers (Hiebert, Ungurait & Bohn, 1974; Pollard, 1937; Rothenberg, 1948).
The news gathering process is as organized as the staff. Reporters are assigned different "beats," locations that regularly provide the reporter with a flow of information. The beat system allows the newsgathering person to stay at this location while receiving a wide range of news concerning actions and events (Roshco, 1975).

Three major factors determine the size and character of a newspaper's staff: the size of the paper, the form of ownership or operation and the extent and condition of the equipment. A paper's size can range from a small weekly to a metropolitan daily with a circulation greater than 500,000; ownership may be individual, corporate, published with another paper; equipment conditions may be modern in which case fewer employees would be needed to run the machines.

It is important to bear in mind that papers which are similar in the above three factors, still may be run differently depending on the personalities of the staff. For example, since the late 1960's, the news media have been reexamined to determine
if they were really telling the whole truth. There was a rising consciousness among reporters and they wanted to have more of a say in which stories they covered and how these stories would be played in the paper (Connor, 1976). Thus, reporters may have varying degrees of freedom depending on the newspaper at which they work, and occasionally "editorial" news judgment may be expanded to include reporters as well.

News judgment, then, is a complex concept. Those who exercise it fill different positions at different newspapers. What it consists of is also full of variety -- what goes into the paper, how a story will be played, what graphics will accompany a story, etc. Editors' and reporters' concepts of news judgment and how they make the decisions that produce the paper are the most important factors in this study.
Chapter 3
Method

Approaching the Problem

To ascertain how today's newspapers are delivering the news, it would seem appropriate to go directly to the source and ask. The source in this case would refer to the editors and reporters, both of whom help shape a paper's content and format. This study is concerned with the decisions that govern how each of the three newspapers -- the Philadelphia Inquirer, Delaware County Daily Times and USA Today -- present their news and the criteria upon which these decisions have been made.

Denis McQuail and Michael Gurevitch (1974) established guidelines for the action/motivation perspective of audience behavior, and these guidelines seem appropriate for the present study. The researchers recommended the following: 1) ask viewers, listeners or readers why they attend certain media; 2) do not assume a unitary meaning for any experience;
3) focus on anticipated outcomes when asking questions; 4) concentrate on the communication experience or the relationship between the message and the recipient.

These guidelines may translate into the following boundaries for the present study of how newspapers are disseminating their information: 1) newspersons should be asked how they determine what goes into the newspaper and why they are making these particular news judgments; 2) each respondents' explanation of his/her news judgment criteria should be regarded as unique and not altered to fit predetermined categories; 3) questions concerning the role and function of newspapers should focus on the future; 4) the relationship between each respondent and his/her newspaper is of utmost importance.

As McQuail and Gurevitch point out, this research approach is best suited for situations in which respondents are consciously aware of why they are doing what they are doing, as in the present study. News judgments are well-thought out decisions
based on a variety of factors which includes newspaper size, preferences of the publishers, type and nature of the competition, and audience demographics (Mauro, 1977; Singletary, 1977).

Interviewing is an appropriate technique for the action/motivation perspective (McQuail & Gurevitch, 1974). This study will involve interviews, consisting of open-ended questions, with editors and reporters. This approach will allow the interviewees to give a wide range of responses and thus, they will establish what is important in the development of newspaper format and content.

Upon the completion of the interviews, the resulting data will be a description of editors' and reporters' decision-making criteria. It is a criticism of qualitative research methods that the data will be "polluted" with the researcher's subjective bias. Yet there are

important differences between the subjectivity of the participants and that of the researcher who is careful never to abandon himself to these perspectives. The discipline of the research tradition calls for him to constantly monitor and test his reactions. (Wilson, 1977, p. 259)
In order to avoid a subjective bias, both the interviewees and the researcher play an active role during the interview process. The researcher is required to do considerably more than ask a given question. S/he must be continuously aware of the following: 1) what the interviewee says in response to a question; 2) various nonverbal signals about the issue, such as body posture and facial expression; 3) what the interviewee does not say in response to a question (Wilson, 1977).

It is also the researcher's task to interpret the data by looking at the information from the interviewee's perspective, within the context of previously published relevant literature, as well as using the researcher's own perspective. In deciding how to interpret his/her data, the researcher also needs to employ what is referred to as "critical common sense" (Morgan, 1983, p. 92). By employing the three perspectives just mentioned, the researcher may determine the most plausible interpretations of the data.

Further guidelines for interpreting data
involve the following process: 1) the data should first be read to gain an understanding of its surface content -- perspectives, biases and prior knowledge of the issue should be put aside and the major points made by the interviewee merely summarized; 2) be aware of what an interviewee could have said but did not -- frequently what someone does not say is as important as what s/he does say; 3) keep in mind the context in which the data were received -- the interviewee will answer questions according to his/her background, experience and knowledge of the issue; i.e. a newspaper editor and an academic researcher will undoubtedly answer the same questions quite differently (Davidson & Lytle, 1982).

Interviews with editors and reporters will yield a description of decision-making criteria at three of today's newspapers. Good description can lead to good explanation and in this way it may be possible to determine how and why newspapers are changing.

The primary objective of a study conducted by Rubin and Rubin (1982) was to obtain a description
of aged persons' TV viewing patterns and motivations. The researchers included open-ended interview questions as part of their study in order to provide an in-depth analysis of the issue. While Rubin and Rubin's findings were generally of a quantitative nature (much of the study was based on responses to a questionnaire), the interviews provided a depth the research might not otherwise have yielded.

According to the two researchers:

Univariate cause and effect solutions are less suitable for gaining a clearer understanding of the interconnectedness of television use motivations and viewing behaviors (p. 289)

A qualitative approach provides heightened understanding, good description and ultimately good explanation.

The research for this study will be based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data will come from personal interviews with editors and reporters at each of three newspapers. Interview questions are aimed at determining how newpersons decide a given paper's content and format. The quantitative data will be
a result of a content analysis of a week's worth of each newspaper and will yield information concerning a newspaper's actual method of presenting the news. This study's design is discussed more thoroughly in the following pages.

Subjects

Participants for this study were selected from employees of the following three newspapers: Philadelphia Inquirer, Philadelphia, PA; Delaware Country Daily Times, Primos, PA; USA Today, Arlington, VA. Participants were employed as either editors or reporters -- two editors and one reporter were selected from each newspaper.

Interviewees were selected for interviews based on their seniority and availability. All interviewees were informed about the nature of the study in the same manner and were told that their comments would be quoted in the thesis.

Research Design

Interview questions were designed to elicit in-depth, subjective responses from newpersons
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Date Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael Coakley, rewrite man</td>
<td>Philadelphia Inquirer</td>
<td>Feb. 29, 1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward Frank, news editor</td>
<td>Philadelphia Inquirer</td>
<td>Feb. 29, 1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max King, asst. managing editor</td>
<td>Philadelphia Inquirer</td>
<td>Feb. 29, 1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Alnor, reporter</td>
<td>Delaware County Daily Times</td>
<td>Mar. 20, 1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda DiMeglio, managing editor</td>
<td>Delaware County Daily Times</td>
<td>Mar. 20, 1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuart Rose, editor</td>
<td>Delaware County Daily Times</td>
<td>Mar. 20, 1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Kelley, reporter</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Mar. 27, 1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gene Policinski, page one editor</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Mar. 27, 1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Walston, deputy managing editor</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Mar. 27, 1984</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
concerning how information is disseminated to the public. These questions have been divided into two general categories: news judgment and predictions.

**News Judgment**

1. What kind of look is your paper trying to achieve? (i.e. what type of impression are you trying to present to your readers?)
2. Is there a particular style you feel characterizes your paper? (style encompasses both the appearance of the paper as well as the manner in which articles are written and selected for print)
3. How are your lead stories selected?
4. How much freedom do you permit your writers? (are you permitted?)
5. How important do you consider the use of graphics for any given story? For the overall look of your paper?
6. What image are you most interested in presenting to the public?
7. Do you feel television has in any way been responsible for any changes in the content and format of your paper?
Predictions

1. What changes do you foresee for your paper in the future?

2. What changes do you foresee for newspapers in the future?

3. What kind of relationship do you anticipate existing between television and your paper? Between television and newspapers in general?

All questions were asked of all editors. Reporters were asked questions 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 in news judgment and questions 1, 2, 3 in predictions.

This study has been designed to allow personal, uninhibited responses. It should be noted that while the interview questions are specific and are listed in a specific format, the questions served more as guidelines throughout the interview and were not necessarily rigidly adhered to. It was anticipated that the information from these interviews would reveal how decisions are made -- i.e., according to what criteria -- when determining what goes into a newspaper and how it will look.

Interview recording methods consisted of
hand-written notes.

In addition to the interview questions, a week's worth of newspapers was selected for analysis. The categories and method of analyzing each category were based on a similar study in which USA Today was compared with 10 other major dailies in such areas as number of photographs, use of color, etc. (Associated Press Managing Editors Association, 1983). The papers in the present study represented a compounded week and were selected at the same time, i.e. a Monday edition of all three papers was selected one week, a Tuesday edition the next week, and so on. Selecting the newspapers in this manner ensured the sample was representative of the paper's content and format and would not be biased as a result of a specific news event occurring during one specific week. Newspapers were examined for content and format and categories were developed in order to compare/contrast the newspapers' methods of presenting the news.

Categories included: story length (measured in inches and including news briefs), sentence
length (one story from each daily section from each paper), number of photographs (numerical count), number of graphical illustrations (numerical count), number of front page stories (numerical count), number of stories that jump to other pages (numerical count), number of compartments (specialized sections with stories related to the same theme, such as "food" -- numerical count), number of stories within each compartment (numerical count). The figures obtained from the analysis were compared/contrasted to determine differences and similarities among the papers.

The previously mentioned categories were selected as the major facets comprising a newspaper's format. In other words, although format may be discussed in the general sense, breaking it down into its various components allowed for a more precise, detailed analysis.

A careful study of these categories also helped substantiate (or refute) the information yielded from the interviews. If an editor claimed his/her paper placed an eight inch maximum on
story length, an actual study of that paper's stories supported his/her statement.

Procedure

A letter of introduction was sent to the editor holding the highest position at each of the three newspapers, informing him that he would be contacted in the near future concerning the scheduling of interviews. The letter explained the author's educational background, outlined the research objectives and suggested a general time frame in which the interviews could be held. A copy of this letter may be found in the Appendix. These letters were followed up by telephone calls to the recipients shortly thereafter and interview dates and times arranged.

The newspapers were visited based on when interviews could be arranged.

Data Analysis

Interview data from this study was analyzed for the following information based on the interviewees' opinions/perspectives concerning:
1) newspaper format and content -- how the paper looks and the way it reads will be an important indicator of whether newspapers are catering to a more visually-oriented public.

2) news judgment criteria -- on what basis are today's editors and reporters deciding what goes into the paper and how it will look?

3) predictions -- what changes do editors and reporters anticipate for their newspapers and newspapers in general, and what is the expected impact of television on newspapers?

Interview data were interpreted by incorporating three perspectives: the interviewees', the researcher's, and viewing the data within the context of already published relevant literature. These perspectives were consciously used in order to most objectively analyze the interview material. Also, and perhaps most importantly, data yielded from the interviews were incorporated with current literature. This included comments from numerous other reporters and editors as well as research findings from relevant studies, so that similarities, differences and inconsistencies could be seen.

The comparison process was vital because when interview data were similar to findings in the literature, then descriptions and ultimately explanations derived from this study received more support.
Chapter 4

Results

The quantitative results from the content analysis of the three newspapers -- the Philadelphia Inquirer, the Delaware County Daily Times and USA Today -- will be discussed first in this section, followed by the qualitative data yielded from the personal interviews. All interviewees agreed to be quoted in this study. The newspapers were selected on the following dates: Thursday, Mar. 8, 1984; Friday, Mar. 16, 1984; Monday, Mar. 19, 1984; Tuesday, Mar. 27, 1984; Wednesday, Apr. 4, 1984.

Results from the content analysis offer a detailed look at the major components comprising each newspaper's format. The results also offer support for statements made by the interviewees concerning their paper's content and format. Categories covered by the content analysis include: story length, sentence length, number of photographs, number of graphical illustrations, number of front page stories, number of stories that jump to other
pages, number of compartments, number of stories within each compartment. A Table of Results viewed in terms of a bar graph is included in this section for an easy assessment of the data on a percentage basis. For example, the newspaper bearing the longest stories, most photos, etc. is represented by 100%, and the remaining newspapers are seen as a percentage of that paper based on the length of their stories or number of photos.

The Philadelphia Inquirer displayed stories of greater length than either the Daily Times or USA Today. The average story length in the Inquirer was 8.47 inches; the Daily Times averaged 5.21 inches; USA Today followed with an average length of 5.01 inches. It is important to keep in mind that these figures include news briefs.

The Inquirer also showed the longest sentence length with an average of 24.8 words per sentence. The Daily Times followed the Inquirer with an average sentence length of 21.45 words, and USA Today trailed the other two newspapers with an average of 19.73 words per sentence.
### Table 2
Comparison of Newspaper Compartments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Story Length</th>
<th>Sentence Length</th>
<th>Photos</th>
<th>Graphics</th>
<th>Front Page Stories</th>
<th>Jumps</th>
<th>Compartments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Inquirer</td>
<td>Daily Times</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Inquirer</td>
<td>Daily Times</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Inquirer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75%</td>
<td>Inquirer</td>
<td>Daily Times</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Inquirer</td>
<td>Daily Times</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Inquirer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Inquirer</td>
<td>Daily Times</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Inquirer</td>
<td>Daily Times</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Inquirer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Inquirer</td>
<td>Daily Times</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Inquirer</td>
<td>Daily Times</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Inquirer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
USA Today led the newspapers in number of photographs, with an average count of 65; the Inquirer had 59 and the Daily Times averaged 53.

USA Today easily led the three papers in use of graphical illustrations with an average of 29.5. The Daily Times averaged three and the Inquirer had two.

USA Today displayed seven stories on the front page, the most of the three newspapers. The Inquirer averaged six stories on page one, while the Daily Times' tabloid style kept its front page limited to one large photograph, one large headline and an average of 5.5 teases.

The Daily Times did not have any of its news stories jump to other pages, although it averaged 2.5 sports stories with jumps. USA Today regularly had four stories jump to other pages, by selecting one story from the front page of each of its four sections to jump daily. The Inquirer averaged 18 stories per edition that continued onto other pages.
Both the *Inquirer* and the *Daily Times* totaled seven compartments, five of them appearing daily and two appearing on Wednesday and Friday, respectively. The *Inquirer* ran daily compartments of news, city/suburbs/region, people/home/entertainment, sports and business. A food section ran on Wednesday and a tabloid weekend section on Friday. The *Daily Times* offered daily the following compartments: news, local events, business and sports. Similar to the *Inquirer*, the *Daily Times* ran a food section on Wednesday and a weekend section on Friday. *USA Today* regularly ran four sections: news, money, life and sports.

*USA Today*'s news compartment contained more stories than either of the other two papers. The news compartment yielded an average of 109.5 stories; the money section contained 31 stories; the life section had 45 stories; sports had 71 stories. The *Daily Times* news section had the second largest amount of stories with 75; the people section had 8.5 stories; sports averaged 30 stories; the local events section averaged 14.5 stories; business averaged 6 stories; the food compartment averaged
3 stories; the weekend section averaged 8. At the Inquirer, the news section averaged 50 stories; suburbs had 34 stories; the people compartment averaged 29 stories; sports had 28 stories; the business section had 24 stories; food had 12 stories; the weekend pull-out tabloid compartment had 43 stories.

The Interviews

The data yielded from the interviews conducted at the Philadelphia Inquirer, Delaware County Daily Times and USA Today, reflect three distinct approaches toward the dissemination of news. All editors and reporters interviewed did indeed have a clear idea of what "look" their paper was trying to achieve, and interestingly -- if not surprisingly -- employees at a given paper were generally in agreement as to the news judgment criteria used at their newspaper.

The basic research question posed in this paper has been how today's editors and reporters decide what will go into the newspaper and how it will look. There appears to be a concrete answer
to this question. As will be seen in the discussion that follows, the desired image of a newspaper as well as the perceived impact of television on newspaper readers, plays a large role in determining news judgment criteria. In order to get a sense of each newspaper's approach towards news dissemination, it will be easiest if the interview data is first examined by briefly looking at each paper individually.

**Philadelphia Inquirer**

One of the more revealing comments about the *Philadelphia Inquirer* was made by night rewrite man Michael Coakley, when he stated that his paper wanted the look of a national newspaper, "the equivalent of the *New York Times*" (Coakley, 1984). This aspiration can be traced to the *Inquirer's* executive editor Gene Roberts, who came to Philadelphia from the *New York Times* in 1972 (Bogart, 1982; Kaiser, 1982). In the past 12 years, Roberts' determination to make his paper one of the best metropolitan dailies in the country has been no secret. He has worked hard to attract major talent
and strongly encouraged the writing of major (i.e., investigative, in-depth) stories (Bogart, 1982; Kaiser, 1982). The strategy appears to have been successful thus far. As of 1982, the Inquirer has won six Pulitzer Prizes since Roberts joined the staff (Kaiser, 1982). Another example of Roberts' success has been the Inquirer's battle with the now-defunct Bulletin, an afternoon daily that held a 56,000 lead in daily circulation over the Inquirer as late as 1975. By covering major stories in a big way, such as the nuclear plant accident at Three Mile Island in Middletown, PA, Roberts enabled the Inquirer to provide more information about a major news event than any other paper in the Philadelphia area (Kaiser, 1982). In 1979, the Inquirer edged out the Bulletin in weekday advertising and three years later, it surpassed the Bulletin in total circulation (Bogart, 1982). The Inquirer is now ranked 11th in the nation in daily circulation, totaling 553,582 (American Newspaper Publishers Association, 1983).

Assistant managing editor Max King agrees that the Inquirer is very concerned with what is
called "a major enterprise story," such as an in-depth investigative piece or a five-part series:

We make available to the editors and reporters all the time and resources they need to pursue a story to its ultimate conclusion. If someone comes up with a good idea, they are freed up from everything else and are given all the time and money necessary to follow that story...We pride ourselves on being very aggressive when a big story comes along. (King, 1984)

King notes that at least 85 reporters covered the Three Mile Island incident and he reiterates Coakley's sentiment that the Inquirer strives to be one of the best papers in the country. And this, he adds, is accomplished through solid writing and reporting.

In keeping with its desired image as a "responsible" paper, news editor Edward Frank describes the newspaper's style as sedate and sober, not sensational. "You read it in the Inquirer and by golly, it's true," he says (Frank, 1984).

In terms of design, this translates into a simple, clean, uncluttered approach. King states that the paper goes to a lot of trouble to package the news. The paper is organized so that the reader can conveniently find everything that is related
to a given subject. Although the editors are interested in putting out a paper that is both attractive and appealing, clarity and utility are not sacrificed to that end, King says.

Because the Inquirer is concerned with being a paper that emphasizes solid news and good reporting, it has acquired the reputation of being a "writer's paper," which means the writers are given considerable freedom in what they write and how they choose to write about it. Says Coakley:

It's been my experience that the editors trust the reporters here. If a story appears controversial, a hot potato, the editors don't ask the reporter to back away or soften up. And there's no style the writers must adhere to...Feature stories can run from a news-feature format to something whimsical and off-the-wall. (Coakley, 1984)

King also states that the Inquirer writers are given a lot of freedom. If a reporter needs 30 inches to tell a story, s/he is generally allowed to write to that length. There are no set rules regarding story length, and statistics from the content analysis bear this out. The Inquirer's average story length of 8.47 inches is more than
3 inches longer than the *Daily Times* average length of 5.21 or *USA Today*’s 5.01 average.

Although it appears a contradiction of terms, King says the *Inquirer* is probably one of the most heavily edited papers in the country. Each story goes through a three-tiered editing system comprised of the assignment desk, copy desk and news desk. But that is where the contradiction ends. Although a story may well be shot at from all angles, the editing is always done in collaboration with the writer, according to King.

The emphasis on writing easily overshadows a not-so-strong emphasis on graphics at the *Inquirer*. Although King, Coakley and Frank claim graphics are important, little was actually said during the interviews about the function of visual aids within the newspaper. Results of the content analysis support this assertion. For all its pages -- the fattest edition in the week’s collection was more than 100 pages, while the thinnest was 60 pages -- the *Inquirer* only averaged 59 photos per edition. This figure is put into perspective when compared with
the average 53 photos run by the *Daily Times*, a paper with a smaller tabloid size that usually ran slightly more than 60 pages. According to Frank, the *Inquirer*’s interest in graphics seems to extend to giving photos big play and using a number of photos. Occasionally a photo may dictate how large a headline will be or even determine the size of a story. "And it bugs me when a picture dictates over something more important," Frank says (Frank, 1984).

Pages do tend to be designed around one dominant picture, according to King, and Coakley notes that the editors usually try to set off a good story with a graphic display that will grab the reader's eye, even if that merely means using border tape around the article. In fact, the *Inquirer* is not a heavy user of graphical illustrations. The paper averaged only two such visual aids per edition.

An interesting and recent change at the *Inquirer* is having an artist, rather than a news editor, lay out certain pages in order to make the
paper more visually appealing. Although Frank admits he "doesn't care for the concept" on the front page, he says it seems to work out well for feature pages (Frank, 1984).

**Delaware County Daily Times**

In 1976, a century after it was founded, the *Chester Times* left Chester, PA and moved some 10 miles east to suburban Primos, PA and became the *Delaware County Daily Times*. Five years later, this conservative afternoon broadsheet changed to a morning tabloid, dropped its price from 25 cents to a dime (although it has since returned to 25 cents), and watched its circulation nearly double from 39,000 to 65,000. Changes in emphasis accompanied changes in format. As an afternoon broadsheet, the *Daily Times* carried only local news on page one and covered only local sports. Now the front page carries international, national and local news and the sports staff has doubled in order to cover professional athletics (Rose, 1984).

"No one has ever made a change this radical before in American journalism," states editor Stuart
Rose (1984), who joined the paper for the 1981 restyling.

The *Daily Times* is owned by Ingersoll Publishing Corporation, and the "Ingersoll concept" is fairly precise: fill the paper with lots of news stories, keep the stories short and do not let news stories jump to other pages. As Rose puts it, "Tell a story and tell it tight" (Rose, 1984).

Yet the editor admits his paper is still casting about looking for a particular style:

There are a lot of contradictory things we're trying to do with this paper and it shows. Should we have a variety of stories on page one or should we make it a billboard? Are we national or are we local? Should we cover professional sports or just local sports? I'm greedy. I want to do it all. (Rose, 1984)

Rose also professes to being greedy about page one. Most tabloids are designed for newsstand sales and the front page usually contains one large photo which serves as an attention-getter for passers-by (Arnold, 1969). The *Daily Times* is no exception. As a broadsheet, the paper could only
claim 10 to 15% street sales. Since turning tabloid, nearly 50% of its circulation comes from newsstands (Rose, 1984). Managing editor Linda DiMeglio says the front page is aimed at catching the public's eye, and this is done through large photos, big headlines and the use of spot color on page one. Reporter Bill Alnor looks at it another way:

We're trying to reach an audience. We want something that will attract someone's eye. That's the key to our package. So we're always trying to scare people. We hype up everything. (Alnor, 1984)

It is the format of a tabloid that lends itself so easily to "hype." Tabloids were designed to be eye catching, and what works for a tabloid is not expected to work for a broadsheet. Rose states:

You can take a tab page and really hit someone with it. You don't get this kind of impact with a broadsheet. It would look silly. Can you imagine a broadsheet with one headline on it? Tabs are great for concentrating on one thing. A tab is a hammer. It's not a lace handkerchief. We use ours to tell people what we've got inside and we try to give them one big story. (Rose, 1984)

This idea is supported by a study of the Daily Times' front pages. The average number of stories appearing
on page one was zero, since the paper relied daily on one large photograph and one large headline. Surrounding the photo and headline was an average of 5.5 teases, phrases aimed at luring the reader inside.

With the front page serving as the paper's window, visual aids play an extremely important role at the Daily Times. DiMeglio notes that while the paper is limited to using only spot color (just one color, frequently used to enhance a paper's flag), if it had improved technology, the editors would like to make the paper as colorful as USA Today. She also wishes the paper could do more with graphics -- perhaps include more charts and tables -- but the newspaper does not have the space because of the large number of stories it runs. The first five pages usually contain at least 30 stories, according to Rose (1984). In fact, the paper appears to use very few graphical illustrations, and averaged only three per edition in the content analysis. Photos yielded quite a higher average with 53. The paper is indeed loaded with stories, as can be seen by just considering the average number
of news stories per issue -- 75 -- and the average number of sports stories -- 30.

The large number of stories fits in with the mandate of "keep 'em short." Writers are usually told to limit their stories to eight inches, DiMeglio says (1984) and each story is carefully edited. This fact was borne out in the content analysis. The paper's average story length (including all the news briefs) was 5.21, considerably shorter than the Inquirer's average of 8.47 inches. Even the Daily Times' sentence length was shorter than the Inquirer's -- 21 words per sentence compared to 25 words per sentence.

As a reporter covering major investigative stories, Alnor claims he is given considerable freedom in selecting his subject material

...but I know if I write a 20 inch story, it will be chopped in half. So either I chop it or someone else does. (Alnor, 1984)

In commenting on how stories are selected for page one, the editors' remarks are similar to those made at the Inquirer. The editors of the major
sections meet and essentially decide what story will have the most impact on the readers. Since only one story is promoted with a large photo and/or headline, the rest of the page consists of teases (DiMeglio, 1984). Rose says he asks himself whether or not a story will have an immediate effect on the lives of his readers,

not whether some foreign policy analyst from the New York Times thinks it's important. My idea of a great story is the Pope getting shot. People know who the Pope is, and it's important to them. (Rose, 1984)

USA Today

It is known as "McPaper" within the industry, and the reigning joke is that the paper will win a Pulitzer Prize for the best investigative paragraph. But despite the wry remarks, few editors or reporters -- including those at the Philadelphia Inquirer and the Daily Times -- fail to mention USA Today when discussing the changing format and content of today's newspapers.

USA Today first appeared on the newsstands in September 1982 and its 1.5 million circulation
is higher than what the Gannett Company had anticipated for the two-year mark. And although the paper is not currently making a profit, it was not expected to until 1987 (Walston, 1984).

The atmosphere at USA Today is one of energy and optimism. No one interviewed expressed any doubts about the future success of the nation's newest newspaper that has attracted so much attention (Kelley, 1984; Policinski, 1984; Walston, 1984).

What is so unusual about USA Today is that it is the result of a market survey in which readers across the country stated what they wanted in a newspaper. The paper firmly reflects the public's desires -- short stories, lots of sports, stories that do not jump, charts and graphs, and information that can be absorbed quickly (Seelye, 1983). The newspaper consists of a vast coverage of national news and is intended as a "second buy" (Kaiser & Stadtman, 1982). But according to reporter Jack Kelley, the paper is turning into a first buy for many readers "because people don't have time for the New York Times. It's boring and it's too long."
You can get 100 pages of news condensed into 40 pages with us" (Kelley, 1984).

This is also the cause for derision among editors and reporters at other newspapers. USA Today keeps its stories short, with editors usually applying a 10 inch limit on articles (Kelley, 1984). Including news briefs, the content analysis revealed that USA Today had the shortest story length of the three papers: 5.07 inches. Charts and graphs proliferate in the paper (an average of 29.5 visual aids per edition; photos averaged 65 per edition), and are not merely used to supplement stories, but as often as not are used in place of stories (Walston, 1984). And the ultimate insult to hard-core journalists is the paper's optimistic view of the world. Al Neuharth, chairman and president of Gannett Company, Inc., calls his paper's style the "journalism of hope" as compared to most newspapers' "journalism of despair" (Ventigniglia, 1983). Kelley notes:

Most papers report dreary news. Their news above the fold concerns death, war, recession and unemployment figures. We know you can pick up any paper across the U.S. and
read that. We're trying to produce a paper in which people can say, "This is something I haven't heard in my local or metro paper." We're taking an optimistic look at the world. (Kellely, 1984)

According to Gene Policinski, page one editor, USA Today wants to be known more than anything as a paper that is literally filled with news. USA Today aims to give the reader a quick and comprehensive report of the most important and the latest news. Policinski says:

We want to be perceived as that best informed source in the morning. We're the one that knows what went on yesterday. We'll tell you about it in a quick, capsule way. (Policinski, 1984)

An analysis of the paper reflects this desire. USA Today's news compartment is packed with an average of 109.5 stories, compared to the news section of the Daily Times -- 75 stories, or the news section of the Inquirer -- 50 stories.

Reporter Kelley agrees that writers are instructed to get as many facts into the allotted 10 inches as possible. He further notes that working for USA Today has turned him into a better writer,
since he is forced to choose his words carefully. Kelley came to USA Today from the Washington Post because he felt the paper was new and exciting and he "knew if would take off" (Kelley, 1984). Although he is a firm believer in USA Today's philosophy of delivering the news, Kelley occasionally regrets leaving the Post. For example, he had planned on writing a story on runaway children while he was at the Post, but never got around to it. He undertook the same story for USA Today. Whereas Kelley planned on conducting lengthy interviews with runaway youths and writing an in-depth piece on the problem, the USA Today product was reduced to a series of statistics and two-sentence blurbs on several different runaways. Kelley notes that the Post "would have let me write my heart out" (Kelley, 1984).

But the USA Today writing style is a style based on brevity and conciseness. An analysis of the average sentence length for the paper showed USA Today to have the shortest sentences of the three newspapers with an average length of 19.73 words.
John Walston, deputy managing editor of graphics and photography, believes USA Today may probably be the most heavily edited newspaper in the nation. And, he adds, the paper wants to be recognized as well-edited. USA Today is the newspaper equivalent of the "no frills" section in supermarkets, Walston claims. The paper is merely interested in presenting the facts (Walston, 1984).

This sense of filling the paper with the latest news, and presenting the reader with all the information, is almost an obsession at USA Today. Conference rooms inside the sleek, modern building in Arlington, VA contain coin boxes with the day's newspaper inside. Policinski says this is done so that editors will always be conscious of what the paper looks like above the fold. The upper half of page one is expected to convey a sense of urgency and completeness in the range of news of the day. The fact that the coin boxes resemble television sets also supports this theory. Just as you can flick on the TV for an up-to-the-minute report, so can you get the same immediate information inside USA Today (Policinski, 1984).
A paper so concerned with presenting a particular image needs to rely heavily on graphics as a reflection of content. One look at *USA Today* confirms this. The most obvious graphic element of *USA Today* is the paper's heavy use of four-color (full color). Color is emphasized because, according to Walston, "Life isn't black and white. It's in color and it's real. So are we" (Walston, 1984).

As a graphics specialist, Walston claims the use of color makes the paper easier to understand. Shades of color make it easier to show trends. As with the rest of the paper, there is no "fluff" in the use of color. It is not meant to decorate the paper, but to aid the reader in his/her quick comprehension of articles.

The use of graphics in general is an intrinsic part of *USA Today*. Walston (1984) will not even call visual aids "graphics," but refers to them instead as "informational graphics" (1984). The idea behind this is that if information appears in a graphic display, it should not be in the accompanying story, and vice versa. "We don't use
an illustration to illustrate. It should tell you something more," says Policinski (1984).

Many of today's newspaper editors are admitting that one of the major effects of USA Today is that it has brought the importance of graphics to everyone's attention. Managing editor Jim Houck of the Baltimore Sun believes it is the influence of USA Today that has made editors more aware of graphics and the entire packaging of the news (Bradford, 1983). At the Denver Post, managing editor Tim Kelly says USA Today has emphasized the value of using graphics to present information (Bradford, 1983). Dave McCoy, managing editor of the York (PA) Daily Record claims USA Today has demonstrated "You don't necessarily need 18 inches to tell a story; graphics offer an alternative presentation of the news" (Bradford, 1983).

Walston considers his paper the "number one graphics newspaper in the country" (Walston, 1984), and believes USA Today has opened up the world of graphic design to other newspapers. Executive editor Ron Martin expects the very concept of a
national newspaper to be attempted by other publishers. He also believes, at the very least, that the paper's style of straightforward writing and brighter, shorter stories will be imitated by other papers (Coffey, 1983).

Life section editor Sheryl Bills compares USA Today's style to the old wire-service, in that it offers clarity and brevity. Yet she feels USA Today takes this a step further by giving "meaning as well as impact" to stories (Coffey, 1983, p. 15).

It is the impact of a story that will ultimately determine where it is placed within the pages of USA Today. According to Policinski, the selection of stories for page one is more complicated than at most dailies. Because the newspaper sees the entire nation as its market and because 60% of its circulation is street sales, the editors aim for a healthy mix of front page stories (Policinski, 1984). He says:

Page one has to relate to the nugget, the kernel, the most important thing. Standard news judgment is used -- how many people does it affect, is
it a long or short term effect, is it an event that's major by the standard definition of news? Then finally, how does it affect the United States? How does it affect our readers? We might pick a mortgage interest story over the latest burp on Capitol Hill, just because it affects more people. (Policinski, 1984)

Perhaps it is this complicated process of how to appeal to such a diverse market that has thus far kept advertisers away. But there is room for optimism since Kelley says the paper is adding eight more pages in July and they will consist mainly of advertising. According to Kelley (1984), advertisers are wary of USA Today because it is something new. They want to make sure the paper will last. Or maybe the problem is as Walston claims:

We've got some barriers to break down in advertising. We're a different kind of animal. Advertisers have budgeted for newspapers, TV and radio, but they didn't budget for USA Today. We're different. And every paper has its own personality. You should do things that reflect the personality of your paper. (Walston, 1984)

USA Today appears to be doing just that.
Chapter 5

Discussion

Newspapers Changing in Response to Television

Based on their comments, the editors and reporters at the Philadelphia Inquirer, Delaware County Daily Times and USA Today appear to have fairly clear-cut ideas about what criteria need to be adhered to in determining what information goes into their newspapers and how they will look. These decisions are based, in part, on the desired image of each newspaper. The Philadelphia Inquirer aims to be a responsible, nationally recognized metropolitan daily and therefore the emphasis is on solid reporting, and all-out coverage of major news events in a conservatively attractive package. The Daily Times yields to the demands of a tabloid and looks for sensational, eye-catching stories on the front page, accompanied by bold headlines and large photos. USA Today wants to be perceived as newsy and up-to-the-minute. The paper's use of "real life" color and the packaging of many short
stories throughout the paper reflect this desire.

The image an editor desires for his/her paper could likely be the sole criteria used to determine a newspaper's content and format if a given newspaper were the only medium within the information market. In other words, without any form of competition, it is possible that an editor could select and display the news based solely on his/her personal preference of what a paper should look like and how it should read.

But competition -- first among newspapers themselves and later among various media -- has always been an important factor in shaping a paper's content and format. In the late nineteenth century, the flourishing competition in the newspaper market gave rise to the growth of "yellow journalism" in which stories based on sin, violence and sex replaced accurate accounts of news events (Emery, 1972). The sensational reports found within Joseph Pulitzer's World in the 1880's boosted that paper's circulation and led to an imitation of the style by competing dailies.
A century later, newspapers are faced with competition not only from each other, but the broadcast media as well. Television has emerged as the most popular medium in the market and naturally has affected newspapers -- both their appearance and their role as a source of information (Belden & Holbein, 1981). The question then, of how today's editors decide a paper's content and format can only partially be answered by considering the desired image of each newspaper. The other side of the issue is how these newspapers perceive the effect of the growing influence of television.

As a competitor, television has supplanted newspaper's former role as the chief bearer of information, it has cut into the amount of time people are willing to spend reading a newspaper, and TV has forced editors to pay more attention to the visual appeal of their newspapers (Bagdikian, 1972; Nords, 1983; Roshco, 1975; Rosse, 1979). To what extent, then, has television been responsible for changes in the content and format of the three newspapers in this study?
According to Max King at the Philadelphia Inquirer, it boils down to being aware of what TV is capable of giving the public that newspapers cannot, and in what areas newspapers have the edge over TV:

We're trying not to stint on our coverage just because TV covered it. We're cognizant of what TV can't do and it can't give detail. There's a lot of enterprise reporting that TV can't or won't do. We can give good analysis stories, while TV can't give you that kind of depth or breadth. So we spend a lot of time on our writing. We put a high premium on this. Now, TV has us whipped in terms of graphic presentation. But there's a lot you can do with writing. You can evoke images and feeling which TV can't do. (King, 1984).

This limited function of television has been referred to as TV's "headline service" (McClure & Patterson, 1976). Fast-breaking spot news is now the domain of the broadcast media. Newspapers no longer print "extras" (Reinhardt, 1983). While this headline service puts television ahead of newspapers in offering the public the most timely stories (Shelton, 1978), it allows newspapers to fill in the supplementary role of providing more in-depth or analytical articles, as both King and news editor
Frank mention. It is, therefore, important for newspaper editors and reporters to be conscious of this shift in media roles. According to Bagdikian, who has worked both as an editor and a media critic, "Newspapers now have to report an event to a public whose opinion has already been formed by another medium" (Bagdikian, 1972, p. 101).

The changing role of newspapers was observed in a study conducted when television was first introduced in South Africa in 1976. Giffard (1980) was able to report directly on television's impact on newspapers. He found that because television was scheduled for broadcast only from 6 to 11 p.m., circulation for afternoon newspapers dropped while morning circulation figures rose. The morning papers, however, adapted to the challenge of TV by carrying more background, more in-depth material, and more editorial content in general than they had in the past.

Many newspapers in the United States, however, are not devoting enough space to interpretive writing as opposed to straight reporting. According to
Bagdixian (1973), most afternoon dailies surveyed approached a completely televised event as though the public knew nothing about it. During the televised Watergate hearings, few papers provided analytical pieces about the hearings' significance.

This finding is further supported by Atkins and Elwood's (1978) study of high school students. Citing their reasons for not using newspapers, students responded that "too much news repeats what has been on TV" (p. 599).

Then the role of the in-depth reporter seems right for newspapers. A variation on this theme is reflected in the comments of graphic specialist Walston at USA Today. He notes that the information explosion, caused in part by television, has contributed toward redefining the function of newspapers:

I don't think the newspapers that have died have died because of television. But they didn't manage to change with it. We came out as a hybrid -- a cross between a newspaper and a news magazine. We think newspapers can use television to help present the news. If there's a major news story on TV, the next day the reader wants to read about it. So we'll give them a little different angle. We want them to say,
"TV told us that it happened, now you tell us what will happen next." We're constantly looking ahead. (Walston, 1984)

At USA Today, reporter Kelley believes his paper comes close to imitating TV and he highlights many of the similarities between his paper and television. For example, story length, diversity of story selection and an emphasis on what is famous and important are stressed by both television and USA Today. But front page editor Policinski insists USA Today does not want to copy television. He prefers to say of television's influence: "We have felt the impact, absorbed it, shaped it and used it. We react to what's on the nightly news and then go much further" (Policinski, 1984).

Although DiMeglio of the Daily Times is hopeful that a television-oriented public will turn to her newspaper for details, she and editor Rose are quick to point out that the changes in content and format at the Daily Times have been largely in response to the influence of television. The short-story formula of this tabloid is based on the assumption that people are no longer willing
to wade through a 30-inch article, according to DiMeglio. And Rose believes that TV's selection of news -- stories that fit the definition of human interest, and interviews with famous people -- definitely has lured viewers to the TV screen. Although he says the Daily Times is not in the entertainment business, Rose admits that the message his paper has learned from television is "don't bore people to death" (Rose, 1984).

Reporter Alnor believes TV's impact on the Daily Times is even more obvious:

TV has influenced the Daily Times pretty heavily. TV's treatment of stories are on a surface level, so are the Daily Times'. TV gives people a little of everything and so does the Daily Times. We know readers don't have a lot of time. I think we're imitating television in a sense. Or maybe it's not that we're imitating, but we are writing for people who don't have time. (Alnor, 1984)

DiMeglio believes the public not only lacks the time it formerly had to read newspapers, she says television has hurt readers' attention spans. Therefore, the Daily Times keeps its news stories under eight inches, with the most important facts
in the first couple paragraphs.

The theory that television viewing has hurt Americans' attention spans is not new. Educators and researchers have speculated that one influence of TV has been the shortening of attention spans (Feinberg, 1977; Hutchison, 1979; King, 1982; Morgan, 1980).

The Cognitive Processing of Newspapers and Television

If television actually is shortening the public's attention span, then TV may indirectly be forcing many newspaper editors to alter their papers' formats by offering shorter stories. Daily Times editor Rose speculated that the average story in his paper ran about six paragraphs --- never more than 10 --- because what we know about readers is that most of them will read a headline and the first paragraph and that's all they want to know. If we've got a 20-paragraph story, the last 10 paragraphs are only being read by 5% of the readers...TV is why people want to read short stories. And TV changed us into a tabloid. (Rose, 1984)

At USA Today, short articles are the mainstay
of the paper's "newsy" format:

We're a quick read and that's part of what makes us so enticing. On any major story, we've got a paragraph on it in the paper. (Walston, 1984)

The new look of many newspapers, then, may be an obvious attempt to cater to the changing needs and desires of a TV-oriented public. It is therefore important to understand the different cognitive skills required for watching television as compared with reading printed material.

Reading theorists are presently debating two approaches concerning how we read. The traditional view held is that the core of the reading process is the initial identification of the letters or words on the page. In other words, reading is based in the stimulus. But theorists now are questioning whether we actually begin with seeing the printed material on the page and expand on that to comprehension. An alternative view suggests that we start with a basic idea of what might be written on the page and we use this idea as a guide for creating meaning (Otto, 1982).
It is this creation of meaning on the part of the reader that sets the reading process well apart from the act of TV-viewing:

The printed page offers nothing but uninking; the reader provides his own mental props, his own emotional and physical detail...Because it is uncontrolled and totally free, this process offers unexpected, unchanneled associations, new insights into the tides and drifts of one's own life. The reader is tempted to venture beyond a text...Television though doesn't demand any such inner reconstruction. Everything is already there, explicit, ready to be watched, to be followed on its own terms, at the speed it dictates. The viewer is given no time to pause, to recall, to integrate the image-attack into his own experience. (Sohn, 1982, p. 355)

In her book "The Plug-In Drug," Marie Winn wrote a similar description of the differences between TV viewing and reading. Symbols on the printed page need to be transformed or decoded by the reader, she wrote, whereas television images do not demand a similar manipulation. "A reader is required to concentrate far more than a television viewer," she claims (Winn, 1977, p. 51).

In a review of current research on the relationship between television and reading, Guthrie
concluded:

When parents or children do not watch television, some other diversion is usually initiated. Few normal people stare at a blank box for extended periods of time. Although some TV shows certainly cultivate mental development, without special arrangements, the general principle is that cognitive learning processes are turned off when the television is turned on. (Guthrie, 1983, p. 734)

According to Feinberg (1977), this "turning off" seems to occur even when the viewer is away from the television set. Feinberg is a junior high school teacher who suggests that because students have been raised with a lifetime of commercial messages that regularly bombard their concentration and redirect their train of thought, students have developed eight-to-12 minute attention spans...Teachers have always made provisions for the short attention span of the slow learner and the less mature student; now they must plan rapidly paced activities for even the bright. (Feinberg, 1977, p. 79)

Then where does this leave television? Exactly what cognitive demands are placed on the television viewer? Studies have shown that TV viewers, notably children, are able to recall facts and details
pertaining to specific TV shows with retention improving as age increases (Singer, 1982). Many educators even perceive television as a useful instrument for teaching reading skills (King, 1982). But the images on the TV screen hold one's attention by a different means than material on the printed page. Television retains a person's attention by a constant sensory bombardment. The rapid shifts of focus, the quick 30-second commercials, the speed of the dialogue, hold a young child's attention so well that this information simply never has time to be processed. (Neuman, 1980a, p. 16)

Rose Goldsen, a sociology professor at Cornell University, was interviewed on a February 1982 edition of "Nova." Goldsen compared the process of watching television with "cutting off the top of somebody's head and pouring information into it" (WGBH-TV, 1982, p. 9). She added that television simply imposes itself upon your mind's eye as it enters your visual field, and you accept it uncritically without paying attention. It's a vastly different experience in terms of reading versus television. (WGBH-TV, 1982, p. 9)

Research aimed at determining what factors
on television caused children to pay more or less attention to the screen included the following results: inactive stationary activity and still drawings depressed attention, while animation, active movement, sound effects, camera cuts, lively music and puppets elevated attention (Levin & Anderson, 1976). A similar study by Welch and Watt (1982) found that the more objects appearing on the screen and the more unpredictable their pattern, the lower the viewer's attention.

The "marker" theory (Collins, 1981) offers yet another explanation for the attention-getting ability of television. According to this explanation, TV has various formal programming features which signal or "mark" the presence of significant content. When one of these features is heard or observed, the viewer responds by paying closer attention to the television. For example, a child will pay more attention to the screen after hearing a female voice (as opposed to a male voice) because the child already has acquired the expectation that this auditory cue signals important content.
Children appear to apply selective attention to TV viewing and indeed, studies in which normal auditory cues on TV have been distorted, reflect a definite lack of interest on the part of the child to the content on the screen (Collins, 1981). Making sense of the televised content, then, is obviously a prerequisite for gaining the viewer's attention. If a distorted auditory track depressed attention, elevated attention requires the child's ability to make sense of what s/he hears.

Television, therefore, requires some degree of comprehension and control (Levin & Anderson, 1976). But watching television and reading print involve two quite different ways of being intelligent (Olson, 1977), and if people are favoring TV, then they are favoring the "viewing way."

Even at the Philadelphia Inquirer, which likes to consider itself a "writer's paper" (King, 1984), the public's enjoyment of viewing rather than reading has been taken into account. Editor King mentioned the importance of graphics (including photos) and stated that considerable space was
devoted to illustrations:

We've got an assistant managing editor who's in charge of the graphics department. He's given a lot of authority and freedom. That department and the editors in it have as much authority as the city or news editor. They are not the servants of the news editors. (King, 1984)

The stress on graphics at the Daily Times and USA Today is further evidence of the recognized popularity of "viewing." This recognition is something newspapers have been forced into by television, says DiMeglio at the Daily Times, and it has manifested itself in newspapers' use of "short stories, bold headlines, lots of photos and the use of color" (DiMeglio, 1984).

The preference for viewing rather than reading appears as well to be having a negative effect on our reading abilities, another factor which is not being ignored by newspaper editors when determining what stories will go into their papers and how they will be played.

Reading and the Impact of Television

As noted previously, Stamm and Jacoubovitch
(1980) conducted a study to determine how much people read in a daily newspaper. They found that subjects read twice as many headlines as they did units of text, and more photos were "read" than the captions beneath them.

Graphics are used at USA Today in order to make the printed information easier to understand. As Managing Editor of Graphics and Photography, Walston claims "There are just some things I can tell better visually" (Walston, 1984).

When discussing the importance of graphics, both Walston and DiMeglio of the Daily Times noted that the public is reading less than in previous years. This decline in reading -- whether based on lack of interest or ability -- is reflected in scores for both the Scholastic Aptitude Test and American College Test, which have dropped significantly in the last 20 years (Muehl, 1982). Studies conducted at universities across the country also have found that students are scoring lower in reading ability than they did a decade ago.

When an advisory team was established by
the College Entrance Examination Board in 1977 to examine the reason for the declining SAT scores, committee members could not point to one single cause but they mentioned television as a contributing factor (Hutchison, 1979). This possible linkage between television viewing and declining reading abilities in general, has resulted in numerous studies, many of which tend to implicate TV as the culprit (Comstock, 1982; Guthrie, 1983; Hornik, 1978; Hutchison, 1979; Lehr, 1981; Morgan & Gross, 1980; Neuman & Prowda, 1980; Wagner, 1980).

In a study of fourth, eighth and eleventh graders from Connecticut, it was found that students viewing four or more hours of television a day scored lower on reading tests than those students who watched less TV (Neuman & Prowda, 1980). It was also concluded that media preference -- reading or watching TV -- changed over time. Eleventh graders viewed considerably less television than fourth or eighth graders, and older students appeared to read more than younger students.

Hornik (1978) participated in a study
conducted by Stanford's Institute for Communication Research from 1969 to 1973. Researchers looked at the impact of television on reading skills for 2,000 students in El Salvador. Possible effects were divided into two categories: 1) the effects on short-term classroom achievements; 2) long-term growth in basic cognitive skills. Questionnaires were used to determine the students' TV viewing habits and exams were administered to find out achievement levels. Although there was little evidence that television affected short-term subject achievement, there was a "striking negative association" between television exposure and long-term growth in reading skills (Hornik, 1978, p. 10). Therefore, television appeared to have a cumulative negative effect on reading skills and Hornik speculated that TV possibly takes children's attention away from more intellectually stimulating activities such as reading.

Certainly, some editors believe TV is taking time away from newspaper reading. At the Daily Times, Rose (1984) made this assertion, adding "If not for TV, we'd be sitting pretty."
Frank of the Philadelphia Inquirer noted that the competition of television -- particularly cable TV -- will cut into the circulation of newspapers in years to come.

The potential negative impact of TV viewing on reading skills is then, only part of the concern for editors. If given the choice, will the public ultimately select viewing over reading based on sheer preference?

A study currently in progress is aimed at determining just how much time students spend viewing TV compared to the time the students spend reading. California students in the second, third and sixth grades were surveyed about the amount of time they spent in each of the two activities. Findings from the first year of this three-year survey showed a negative relationship between the amount of TV viewing and reading. This relationship remained consistent when the overall sample was combined as well as when the students were analyzed according to individual grade levels (Bachen, Hornby, Roberts & Hernandez-Ramos, 1982).
Neuman (1982) undertook a study to examine whether students' preferences for reading or TV viewing were in any way related to the quality of their leisure reading choices. Close to 200 students in the fourth through sixth grades kept daily television and reading logs (with the help of their families). IQ and previous reading achievement scores were also obtained for each child. Neuman found that students who tended to be heavy TV viewers (three or more hours a day) and who did not read much (fewer than two books per month), chose books of significantly lower quality than other students who were light readers and light viewers. Once again, television is implicated.

In a summary of relevant literature concerning TV's impact on reading abilities, Wagner (1980) concluded that while more studies are needed in this area, a negative relationship does appear to exist between the two activities of watching and reading:

Intelligence affects a child's viewing and reading habits. Students of lower intelligence watch more TV, while those of higher ability turn to reading with increasing frequency
as they mature. However, if they continue their extensive TV viewing, their ability to achieve declines. (Wagner, 1980, p. 205)

As Wagner noted, the intellectual ability (as opposed to the reading ability) of an individual may be the crucial factor in predicting how television viewing will affect a person. According to a three-year survey of New Jersey students (Morgan, 1980), an interesting pattern was discovered to exist between students’ TV viewing and reading achievement. Students who began as light TV viewers turned into light readers two years later. Morgan’s explanation of the results obtained from this study was that early adolescents may possess a certain intellectual curiosity which could lead them to view television. And, taking this idea a step further, viewing TV early on may actually encourage and stimulate reading.

In another study, Morgan and Gross (1980) found an overall negative correlation between TV viewing and achievement scores, and TV viewing and IQ level. But, a positive relationship existed between TV viewing and reading comprehension for
girls with low IQs (negative relationships appeared for all high IQ students as well as low IQ boys with regard to TV viewing). Thus, heavy viewing has different implications at different IQ levels. For the low IQ girls in the study, TV viewing may have meant greater exposure -- through educational shows and print messages on programs and commercials -- to written words than these students might normally have received.

These studies of television's relationship to reading leave us with no firm conclusions, only Morgan's suggested explanations for the findings: 1) TV takes time away from reading, thus leaving reading skills undeveloped; 2) TV viewing detracts from academic endeavors; 3) the symbolic structure of television is affecting our cognitive abilities to process information through reading (Morgan, 1980).

Putting these speculations in terms of the future of newspapers, the outlook appears bleak. Television seems to pose as a competitor from all angles. As a partial solution to this problem, King said the Inquirer in recent years has come to devote
a lot of space to writing about television,

probably more than any other paper
in the country. We come close to two
full pages a day on TV coverage. We
do that because we think TV is right
up there with automobiles, sex and
liquor as far as a dominant influence
in our lives. (King, 1984)

As previously mentioned, the Inquirer's
method of dealing with the intrusion of television
into newspaper readers' lives has been to supplement
the information provided by TV. The Inquirer has
tried to emphasize good writing and in-depth
reporting, since these are aspects of journalism
which television cannot -- or does not -- offer its
viewers.

But both the Daily Times and USA Today have
chosen to focus on the apparent negative relationship
between TV viewing and reading. Since television
seems to be hurting reading skills and interest,
these two papers have countered by accomodating
the public with short stories and lots of graphic
aids. DiMeglio of the Daily Times said she believes
that

newspapers that don't recognize the
changes in the reading habits of the
American population are not going to make it. I think USA Today will make papers like the Inquirer adjust. You've got to get people's interest. We've seen a lot of newspapers die in the past decade and it's sad. Newspapers are being forced to react to TV. I don't think TV is impacted by us. We have no bearing on their life. But they have indeed affected us. (DiMeglio, 1984)

Reading printed material and interpreting visual images on the television screen appear to be on opposing ends of the information-processing spectrum. Yet the most basic function of newspapers is that of an information source (DeVito, 1978). Since the public is relying less on reading skills and also appears to have poorer reading skills on which to rely, newspaper editors are forced to consider different ways for delivering today's news.

The Making of Content and Form

Various factors, then, seem to influence how a newspaper delivers the news. And according to the data yielded in this study as well as relevant literature, the criteria used to decide a newspaper's content and format would appear to be based on the editors' desired image for the newspaper, plus the
impact of television -- both as a successful media competitor and as a medium that has caused a change in the public's needs and desires. Thus, it seems that news judgment is a three-fold process:

1) The image editors wish to create for their newspapers.

2) A recognition of TV's method of delivering the news. This recognition may result in:
   a) Newspapers filling in the informational holes left by TV.
   b) Newspapers imitating television's method of news dissemination.

3) The changing needs and desires of a public that has become a heavy user of television.

It may be speculated that it is a combination of the above three factors that explains why newspapers look and read the way they do. Each of the factors will now be discussed individually.

The importance of a newspaper's desired image came across during the interviews at the Philadelphia Inquirer, Daily Times and USA Today. The Inquirer's interest in producing a responsible newspaper as well as one that is a top metropolitan
daily, is borne out by its emphasis on "major enterprise stories," those stories that are in-depth, investigative and the result of careful research. This push toward giving thorough coverage of the news has also resulted in the paper's reputation as a writer's newspaper. Rewrite man Coakley noted that writers are given a good deal of freedom not merely in selecting a subject for a story, but in their choice of a style for writing a story. In keeping with the emphasis on being a responsible paper, the Inquirer does not rely heavily on eye-catching graphics. Instead, news editor Frank stated that pages are frequently designed around a dominant picture, but rarely does a photo dictate the length of a story or size of a headline. While all persons interviewed at the Inquirer believed their paper to be interested in using graphics, the newspaper's packaging is best described as conservative or traditional.

The image of the Daily Times is carried out by the paper's emphasis on attention-grabbing devices, such as bold and oversized headlines, and large photos. The Daily Times' concern with not
wanting to appear boring is also apparent in its wide diversity of stories. Editor Rose's comment that "a tab is a hammer" comes across in the content and format of the Daily Times. Stories are frequently of a sensational nature and the Daily Times spares no effort in playing up these articles. As Bill Alnor, the investigative reporter, notes: "We're always trying to scare people. We hype up everything" (Alnor, 1984).

USA Today, with its coin boxes that resemble television screens and its use of vibrant color splashed on page one, wants recognition as a paper filled not merely with news, but with up-to-the-minute news. In order to appear this timely, USA Today has intentionally adopted many TV-like aspects -- the coin box, use of "real" color, many short stories covering a variety of subjects, and the use of graphic aids alone to tell a story. By imitating television in these respects, the paper's editors hope to create the same sense of urgency and immediacy created by TV (Policinski, 1984).

Therefore, editors have a specific idea of how they want their papers to be perceived by
the public. Whether they want their newspapers thought of as responsible, entertaining or immediate, the editors have molded their papers' content and format to fit predetermined ideas. Their news judgment is then based, in part, on what "look" the editors are trying to achieve. News judgment, that combination of opinions and decisions concerning what goes into a newspaper and how it is played, is rooted in different philosophies depending on the newspaper. When an editor defines what is meant by "important" and what is "major," s/he is shaping the news judgment of his/her paper. "Important" to the Inquirer's King and Frank translates into what will affect the lives of their readers (Frank, 1984; King, 1984). At the Daily Times, DiMeglio and Rose also view "important" as what kind of impact a story will have on that paper's readers, but the definition is expanded to include "attention-grabbing" as well (DiMeglio, 1984; Rose, 1984). "Important" at USA Today includes how many people will be affected by a story and whether or not that effect is long or short term. So, according to Policinski (1984), size -- in terms of the number of readers and the
degree of impact -- comes into play here.

The image editors wish to create for their newspaper is only a third of the process that contributes toward a paper's content and packaging. The second of the three factors involves the editors' recognition of television's method for delivering the news. This factor may be divided up into two areas. A newspaper may be interested in picking up where TV leaves off by providing background pieces and in-depth articles to supplement television's headline version of the news. Or, a newspaper may have witnessed television's success and popularity and may attempt to imitate (not necessarily identically) TV's method of news dissemination.

At the Inquirer, the approach is one of giving the public the in-depth information that television does not provide. Both King and Frank, editors at the paper, commented on TV's superficial treatment of most news stories, and they believe the Inquirer has the capability for offering detailed accounts, good analysis stories and careful, in-depth coverage of news events (Frank, 1984; King,
1984). The paper's interest in writing and reporting complements this approach.

The increasing awareness of the role that newspapers may play as a supplement to TV coverage, is confirmed in a study conducted by Nordyke (1983) of more than 80 newspaper editors. The editors were cognizant of the need to provide readers with more analysis and detail than they had formerly been offering. Nordyke also found that editors realized newspapers have been replaced as the medium containing the latest "scoop."

Television's reigning popularity has indeed forced many editors to reevaluate the function of their papers and caused researchers to suggest that newspapers become more concerned with "filling in the blanks" by providing background information and lengthy explanations of what has happened in the world of current events (Bagdikian, 1972; Davey, 1981; Kiplinger, 1983; Roshco, 1975).

But the Inquirer's decision to offer the detailed coverage not found in television has not been echoed by all newspapers. Both the Daily Times
and USA Today have actually adopted some of television's devices for appealing to the public. Rose frequently referred to "the challenge of television" and how the Daily Times has learned from TV that people want their news to be entertaining (Rose, 1984). So, the Daily Times' stories are short, numerous, and often deal with famous individuals. As already noted, USA Today's desire to appear up-to-the-minute stems from an awareness of television's popularity and the public's obvious interest in obtaining "current" current events.

Thus, the influence of television as a competitor in the media market has helped shape what newspapers look like and how they read. Much as some editors would prefer it -- such as the Inquirer's Frank who claims he prefers not to think about television because it refuses to be a responsible medium (Frank, 1984) -- television defies being ignored. Research shows that TV has indeed cut into the ranks of newspaper readers.

The greatest decrease in newspaper readership has occurred this past decade, with the largest
decline in the 20 to 29-year-old category (Robinson, 1980). Not so coincidentally, this age group was found to react more favorably toward television than they did toward newspapers (Larkin, Grotta & Stout, 1977). Combined with the drop in newspaper readership, television has been witnessing its greatest period of expansion. While only 9% of all U.S. households had TV sets in 1950, this figure jumped to 98% slightly more than 25 years later. And cable television alone is currently reaching one-third of all American households (A.C. Nielsen Company, 1982).

As a source of most news, newspapers edged out television 57% to 51% in 1959, yet fell behind television in 1982 with only 44% compared to TV's 65%. Newspapers also have watched television take the lead as the most credible news source, with papers losing their 3% margin over TV in 1959 and receiving only 22% of the vote to television's 53% in 1982 (Roper Organization, Inc. 1983).

Television, then, is a medium to be reckoned with. Depending on an editor's estimation of what
the public wants and/or needs, a given newspaper may react to the influence of TV either by serving as a supplementary news source or by imitating some of television's devices for appealing to an audience.

So far, then, the desired image of a newspaper combined with an editor's recognition of TV's method of delivering the news (and his/her subsequent response to that recognition) affect how today's newspapers look and read. But there is a third factor involved in news judgment -- the changing American public.

Television has made its presence known in another, less obvious manner, although one which newspaper editors may find even more difficult to ignore. The public's exposure to television appears to have brought about changes in our reading habits as well as our expectations of how news should be delivered. It is widely recognized that Americans are becoming a more "visual" public (Garcia, 1980). This emphasis on the visual may be replacing the former stress on content, because editors are also
having to deal with the public's shortened attention span for the printed word, along with declining reading abilities. It is this notion of a changing public that forms the final third of the process which determines a paper's content and format. Editors must be concerned with their paper's image, they must recognize the strong points and shortcomings of television's method of news dissemination, and they need to be aware of the changes in their readers -- changes which appear to be the result of exposure to television.

What exactly is meant by a visually-oriented public? When given the choice, subjects have been found to prefer a modern, i.e. visually appealing, newspaper design over a more traditional format (Siskind, 1979). Modern design relies on horizontal layout, fewer stories on page one, no column rules, large photos, six column layout and smaller headlines. Readers also favor color pictures on their newspaper pages as opposed to pages bearing only black and white photos (Stein, 1983).

Reader preferences such as those mentioned above have brought forth what is frequently called
a "graphic revolution" among newspaper editors. Editors are encouraged to package their papers attractively (Garcia, 1980; Larkin, Grotta & Stout, 1977), and editors throughout the country appear to be responding to the challenge. More than ever, editors are concerned with how their papers look, using large visual aids and lots of them (Mabry, 1981).

This interest in appearance seems to be a by-product of television. Black and white photos in a newspaper are often compared to black and white television: boring (Stein, 1983). The obvious reliance on visual aids on television has encouraged an imaginative approach toward the use of graphics in newspapers (Nordyke, 1983). If the public has been visually spoiled by TV, it is up to newspapers to cater to this preference.

The market survey conducted for USA Today bears out Americans' interest in charts, tables and photos, all essential graphic devices used by newspapers. The survey also revealed a public desirous of short stories, stories that do not jump
to other pages and information that does not demand careful reading (Seelye, 1983). These preferences seem linked to the purported shortened attention spans of the public. *Daily Times* editors Rose and DiMeglio both felt TV was responsible for the shortened attention spans of newspaper readers which is the rationale behind the paper's publishing stories that are eight inches or shorter. People simply will not read anything past eight inches, they claimed (DiMeglio, 1984; Rose, 1984).

Educators such as Susan Feinberg point to television as the culprit behind students' shortened attention spans. She believes that the onslaught of commercial interruptions found on TV has reduced students' attention spans to eight-to-12 minutes (Feinberg, 1977). It has also been speculated that the "sensory bombardment" of television shortens attention spans by presenting information so rapidly, a person is unable to process it (Neuman, 1980a). And this leads to the major problem with television in the minds of many researchers: TV is too easy to watch and thus, it is easier to watch than to read.
The ease and efficiency of television is perhaps another factor responsible for driving people away from newspapers and toward the TV screen (Robinson, 1980). Television is effortless, it is a passive experience and our cognitive processes appear to shut down once the TV is on. We simply do not need to actively work at interpreting the information presented on television (Fuller, 1981; Guthrie, 1983; Sohn, 1982; WGBH-TV, 1982; Winn, 1977).

In light of this information, it seems understandable why today's newspaper editors are emphasizing graphics which are visual aids that can tell a story without words -- as is frequently done in USA Today -- or aid the reader's comprehension of a story. Also, offering short stories, as the Daily Times and USA Today do, caters to the public's shortened attention spans. Even at the more conservative Inquirer, an artist was recently employed to lay out pages in order to make them more attractive as well as to make stories easier to read (Frank, 1984).
Careful packaging of a newspaper allows readers to find stories with greater ease, read them with greater ease and gives the paper an attractive visual effect. The redesign of the *St. Cloud Daily Times* was based on precisely these three factors (Garcia, Click & Stempel, 1981). The majority of readers surveyed claimed they preferred the paper's new look.

By making newspapers easier to read, editors are coping with another problem afflicting their readers, a problem that also appears to have been induced by exposure to television: declining reading abilities. Scores on standardized college tests have been sinking the last two decades, college freshmen's reading scores are also plummeting and there recently has been an increased national emphasis on ensuring the literacy of high school graduates (Eurich & Kraetsch, 1982; Muehl, 1982; *USA Today*, 1983b). Consequently, studies have been undertaken to determine the cause of this decline and numerous results have come back implicating television as the culprit (Comstock, 1982; Guthrie, 1983; Hornik, 1978; Hutchison, 1979; Lehr, 1981; Morgan & Gross,

Morgan (1980) has suggested three basic explanations for the negative impact of television on reading: TV has altered our ability to process information through reading; TV detracts from academic endeavors; TV takes time away from reading and so hurts the development of reading skills.

It is not surprising, then, with reading interest and ability seemingly on the wane, that even those people who do read newspapers are reading them for shorter periods of time. According to Robinson (1980), the time spent reading newspapers as a primary activity has declined by a third between 1965 and 1975, and even the readership of newspaper comics has fallen (Astor, 1983).

Thus, the final third of the news judgment pie involves the changes brought about on the public by viewing television. Exposure to TV has increased the public's interest in visual effects, it has shortened our powers of concentration, it has presented us with a medium that is easier to use than newspapers, it has harmed our reading abilities,
and it has generally cut into the amount of time we used to spend reading newspapers. Watching television involves different cognitive processes than reading printed material. TV viewing appears to be the easier method by which an individual deciphers information. And while the assertions just made may not necessarily be regarded as facts, research indicates that TV is definitely doing "something" to us, and that something appears to coincide with a declining interest in reading as well as our ability to read.

**Conclusion**

An awareness of the changing needs and desires of a TV-oriented public, along with the recognition of TV's method of delivering the news, is causing many of today's newspapers to change in both content and format. As in the case of the Philadelphia Inquirer, the changes may only be apparent in the enlarging of photos and the analytical nature of some of the stories. The changes are more apparent in the Daily Times, which three years ago underwent a complete restyling and now looks
and reads quite differently than it did prior to 1981. USA Today is the nation's newest newspaper, and by its staff's own admission, owes much of its bold look to the direct and indirect influence of television.

As a direct influence, television may be seen as just another competitor in the media market, but it is a competitor that has experienced enormous success. On an indirect level, television has caused changes in us by offering us new ways of receiving information. These ways are not necessarily good or bad. They merely tap different processes within us than we have previously experienced by reading print.

Yet literature concerning the impact of television on the American public suggests that the effects have only started to be felt. If we are to increase the amount of time we spend watching TV -- and this trend has not yet shown signs of peaking -- then how are newspapers to compete? Time devoted to television cuts into time spent reading newspapers, and our reading skills and
interest can only be further diminished by a reliance on viewing, rather than reading, our information.

Predicting what is in store for the newspapers of the future, the newspaper editors and reporters who were interviewed admit that their products will have to change in order to cope with declining reading abilities as well as competition from other media for people's time and competition from television's method of delivering the news. It has been discussed earlier in this study that there will be an increased emphasis on graphics in the newspapers of the future, both because the public is so accustomed to the visual presentation on television and because graphic design is a way of making papers easier to read.

USA Today is undoubtedly the most design-oriented newspaper in this study, and Kelley, Walston and Policinski all see their paper becoming even more conscious of graphics in the future. Both Kelley and Policinski see an increase in the use of color, while Walston says he expects the paper to become "more sophisticated graphically" (Walston, 1984).
But a change in appearance can mean something even more drastic than a new graphic approach. All persons interviewed speculated whether or not a century from now there would be such a thing as a newspaper. In other words, will the news appear literally on paper, or will it appear on the TV screen? Coakley of the Inquirer notes:

There may still be newsstand sales in the next century, but home delivery will be done on cable. We'll be reading the paper on a screen. You can get cable now for the New York Stock Exchange. If you can do that, you can certainly supply newspapers. Newspapers as we know them are on the way out, but news is not on the way out and definitely in-depth news is not on the way out. But technology may spell the demise of the newspaper. If we can find a faster, smoother, less expensive way to deliver the news currently in a newspaper, we'll do it. And that's the way it should be. And I think cable will do it. (Coakley, 1984)

Change is preferable to extinction, and either because the thought is comforting or because they truly believe it, the editors and reporters did not worry that newspapers would completely die out in the future. Yet Coakley's words reflect a rising sentiment among many editors that technology,
and so ultimately the public, has become more sophisticated. Newspapers will therefore be forced into delivering the news in faster and better ways (Kiplinger, 1983). But of what these ways will be, most newsenders are still unsure. Says Walston of USA Today:

Newspapers are here to stay but they will change. Everything will be distributed electronically. Now you can hold the paper in your hand and flip through it at your leisure. We'll have a hard time doing that with a computer. Can the American public adjust to this? Books are still here. Maybe it will come down to supply -- there won't be enough newsprint. Maybe it will end up with a printer in your own home. Who knows? It's as unlimited as your imagination. (Walston, 1984)

At the Daily Times, Rose predicts that within 50 years there will no longer be a newspaper to hold in our hands. And although Frank of the Inquirer expects the proliferation of cable TV stations, he also expects that "there will always be a solid basis of people who want to read papers" (Frank, 1984).

The question then becomes how the newspapers of the future will adapt to this era of new
technology, which seems to already have begun with the advent of television. And literature concerning the changing appearance and function of newspapers supports what the editors and reporters at the Philadelphia Inquirer, Daily Times and USA Today have stated: newspapers have become a more visual medium than they were in the past, and editors are consciously reevaluating what role their particular paper will and should play as a disseminator of information.

What is important is that today’s newspaper editors recognize the impact of television and that they consider what image they desire for their papers. By carefully thinking about their desired image, TV’s method of delivering the news, and a changing television-oriented public, editors may indeed have reason to be optimistic about the future of newspapers. The question is not what will become of newspapers, but how they will deal with the public’s changing tastes and needs. If this question is given serious thought, there may well be reason to believe the comments of the Inquirer’s Max King:
I see newspapers changing, not dying. The dominant trend is an explosion of information. People want more information than anybody ever thought they'd want. We almost can't overload this desire. The overall trend is encouraging. The market seems bottomless, endless. (King, 1984)
References


Consoli, John (1963). A brief look at two "editors' newspapers." Editor & Publisher, 116, 42.


Editor & Publisher Year Book (1983). New York: Editor & Publisher, Co.


American Newspaper Publishers Association
News Research Report No. 32.


Hutchison, Laveria F. (1979). Since they are going to watch TV anyway, why not connect it to reading? Reading World, 16, 236-239.


Rogers, Jay (1983). VDTs, TV haven't shocked editors. *APME Writing and Editing Committee*, 1-2.


Appendix
Sample Letter

Dear __________,

I am a graduate student in Communication at the University of Delaware and am presently working on my Master's thesis. For my thesis, I am looking at why particular newspapers look and read as they do, and your newspaper is one I will be studying.

I am hoping to obtain an interview with you, along with another editor and a reporter at your paper in order to discuss your newspaper's format and content. Each interview will only take about a half-hour and I would like to conduct the interviews during the early part of March.

I will be calling you within the next week to hopefully schedule interviews and to further explain the nature of my research if you have any questions. I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,
Carin T. Ford