Your Local Union Newsletter

Contents

"...the lives of 100 million working people--those who make the US economy and society run--are being routinely ignored, marginalized or inaccurately portrayed in the media."

Jonathan Tasini, 1990 report for Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting.

Why have a union newsletter? 1

The nuts and bolts of a local union newsletter 2

Newsletter content: What must go in, what should go in 4

Getting people to read your newsletter: Easy tips for layout 6

Layout examples 8

Adding content to your newsletter 11

Getting articles – some ideas 12

Let the members speak—interviewing 12

Rewrites 13

Write your own material 16

Planning your article 18

Developing your own style 19

Editing: what is it? 26

The one main thing: your headline 27

What is a "lead"? 30

Borrowing articles 33

Action plan for a revamped newsletter 35

Non-discrimination and accessibility

The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination in employment or in its educational programs and activities on the basis of race, national origin, color, creed, religion, sex, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or associational preference. The University also affirms its commitment to providing equal opportunities and equal access to University facilities. For additional information on nondiscrimination policies, contact the Coordinator of Title IX, Section 504, and the ADA in the Office of Affirmative Action, (319) 335-0705 (voice) or (319) 335-0697 (text), 202 Jessup Hall, The University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, 52242-1316.

Individuals with disabilities are encouraged to attend all University of Iowa sponsored events. If you are a person with a disability who requires an accommodation in order to participate in a program, please contact the Labor Center in advance at (319) 335-4144.

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WHY HAVE A UNION NEWSLETTER?[1]

- **Few members attend union meetings** to get exposure to the union and its concerns because other sources are competing for members' time and attention.
- **Employers are making a more intimate pitch to employees.** The union has to compete with the employer to appeal to employees and show members how the union is serving them.
- **New technology is changing the pattern of work and life**. The union must keep members informed of what it is doing to meet changing conditions.
- **Issues are more complicated**. Seniority, severance pay pensions, health plans, incentive rates, job classifications, safety regulations, and other factors of life on the job can be complex matters. Members can't depend on word-of-mouth or bulletin boards to understand issues and digest important background information.
- **Prosecution of grievances** is one of the greatest protections a union can give its members. Many grievances are so complex that union members seldom understand what is involved merely through listening to the grapevine. If left to the grapevine, personalities may obscure the real significance of the issue to the whole membership.
- **Labor law** imposes obligations on unions and union officers to channel to members official publication of union reports, notification to members of official actions, and the reporting of elections.
- **Regular contact with the community** to let the public know what the union is doing can be accomplished through special newsletter mailings to community leaders and media.
- **Publications are a powerful tool** for building a strong union. They let the membership know that the union is involved in a host of activities in addition to grievance handling and collective bargaining. They create a strong sense of "who we are" and foster the union values of sticking up for each other in tough times.
- **A newspaper or newsletter provides detailed stories** that can be read at leisure and rechecked later to confirm a fact. Because it's generally sent or taken to the member's home, it may get read by family, friends, and neighbors--which helps to spread a union message throughout the community.
- **Most important of all**, an attractive, lively, readable local union publication is a continuing line of communication to all the members. It strengthens the local's position as a "familiar friend." "Merely by publishing a newsletter, a local apparently accomplishes a 24% shift in turning negative feelings into positive member support for (...) the local union."[2]

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[1] *Adapted from a CWA Public Relations Manual*

[2] CWA president Morton Bahr, commenting on results of a nationwide telephone survey conducted by Lake Research for Communications Workers of America, February 1996, on local union newsletters.

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THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF A LOCAL UNION NEWSLETTER

• The newsletter budget

Cost items

How big? You must decide right off on the size of your newsletter. It can range from a single page, to front and back, to a multi-page format. You may want to start small, but you will soon find that you have lots of material to include and should leave yourself the option of expanding.

How often? Frequency can range from once every two weeks to once or twice a year. Many locals aim at monthly or quarterly publication dates. Obviously costs rise with frequency.

Printing
Where? Local is better, and getting to know your printer is essential.
Union bug? Make every effort to locate and use printing companies with unionized workforces. Remember that you must tell the printer that you want the union bug and indicate where on the publication you wish it to appear.

Distribution
Decide:
> mail to homes? If you choose this preferred option, costs can be considerable. Look into the following cost cutting measures.
--bulk mail permit. If you mail to more than 200 people, this is worth getting.
--self mailer? Perhaps you can format your newsletter to accomodate a blank area with address and return address
--mailing labels?
--envelopes?
> distribute at work? This is much cheaper, obviously, but has its limitations, especially if workers are spread out, rather than at a single location.

• Equipment you will need

>For a cut and paste effort, scissors, glue and imagination
>For a more sophisticated look: a computer with word processing and laser printer, desk top publishing, copier with capability to alter the size of copies so you can enlarge and shrink photos and graphics.
>For professional printing--guidelines to tell them what you want. Talk to the printer and get help with the equipment you will need to make the instructions clear.

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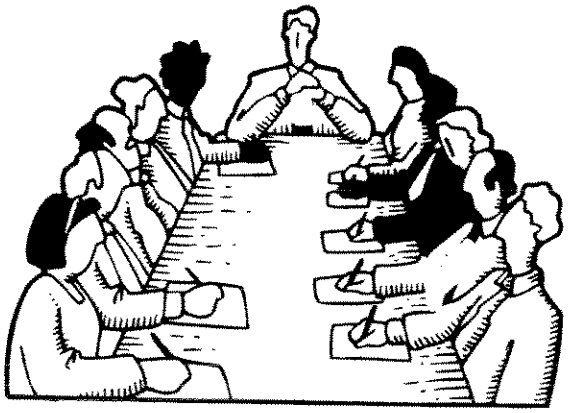
• People to help you

Skills: Try to recruit people with this combination of skills: writing, editing, design, computer, time to help with folding, stuffing, distributing. Often, the more small tasks you can get people to do, the more members will feel a sense of ownership and interest in the newsletter. Even in very large locals, sometimes just one person does all this successfully.

Networking and schooling: Remember to provide educational opportunities to the people who work on the newsletter. Many international unions have newsletter conferences, editor's organizations or self-help groups and publications designed to help out. The University of Iowa runs an annual "labor press" conference which usually combines classes on issues and workshops on specific skills. The Iowa State Labor Press Association brings together newsletter editors from unions across the state in a network of people who share newsletters, ideas and articles.



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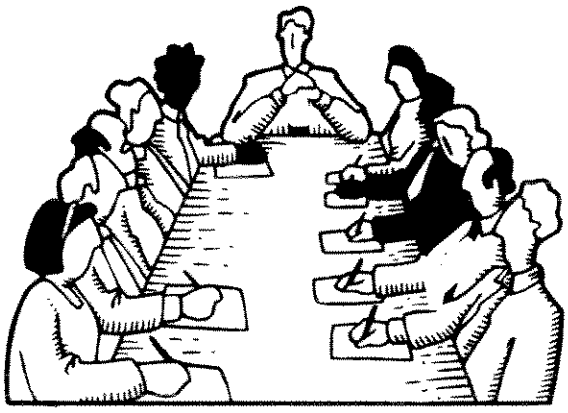

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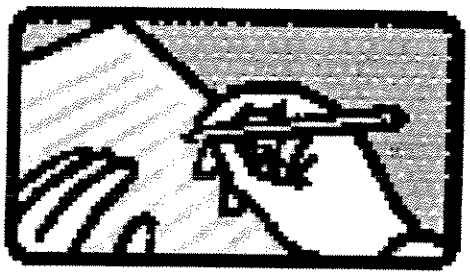
NEWSLETTER CONTENT: WHAT *MUST* GO IN? WHAT *SHOULD* GO IN?

The following are probably the bare bones minimum of what has to go in your newsletter:

- ☐ next meeting--time and date: what will happen
- ☐ last meeting--what happened
- ☐ who are our officers and how to reach them
- ☐ local union election information: candidates, voting information

But once you have these bases covered, you will want to do more.....



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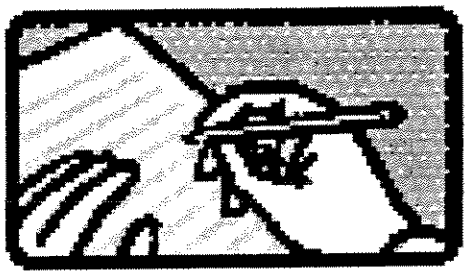

What should go in your newsletter is suggested by the mission of the labor press.

The mission of the Labor Press[3]

- to inform members of events in their local union, their community, and their larger political environment
- to present an alternative source of information tailored to the needs and interests of working people
- to build the solidarity of the local union
- to educate and mobilize members around labor's political issues and agendas

•Prioritizing--you can't get everything in!

Here is a list of items from a selection of local newsletters. You might choose among them for those you feel are most appropriate, if your newsletter is to fulfill the mission of the labor press.

- ☐ What happened at last meeting
- ☐ Grievance report
- ☐ Article on tax fairness
- ☐ NAFTA report
- ☐ Advertisements from local businesses
- ☐ Report from delegates to national convention
- ☐ Dues increase notice
- ☐ Message from the union president
- ☐ Holiday greetings
- ☐ Invitation to union social event
- ☐ Come to our next meeting
- ☐ List of officers' names and phone numbers
- ☐ Message from high-up representative of management
- ☐ Report on plans of employer to outsource jobs
- ☐ Family thank you's for cards and flowers for deceased members
- ☐ Movie reviews
- ☐ Editorial comment
- ☐ Report from City Federation of Labor
- ☐ Steward of the month
- ☐ Meet new members
- ☐ List of "potential members"
- ☐ Report from union members of labor-management cooperation program
- ☐ Interview with one or more members on a political issue
- ☐ Letters from members
- ☐ Report on pre-bargaining survey
- ☐ "For sale by members" list of garage sales, used cars, etc.
- ☐ Report on City Council meeting

[3] as defined by members of the Iowa State Labor Press Association.

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GETTING PEOPLE TO READ YOUR NEWSLETTER: Easy tips for layout and design

"Layout is getting material into your publication in some semblance of order that hopefully looks good. There's one hard and fast rule: it always takes longer than expected."[4]

Basic principles of layout include:

- Most important story or stories first or in key locations
  "key locations" -- front page, back page, inside centerfold, first right-hand inside page. "Top of the fold" is more important than under the fold.
- Same recurring information in same location every issue
- Banner and masthead on front page, usually at the top
- Articles in clear shapes on each page
- Typed material in columns
- Same column style through-out
- Columns narrow enough to read quickly
- Boxes should line up with the sides of the typed column
- Internal bold headings to break up long articles
- White space--use it generously

[4] Borrowed and adapted from CWA Local Editors' Handbook.

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- Graphics: large, bold, surrounded by white space
- Headlines: ditto!
- Balance: use strong diagonals
- Don't use more than two different fonts (type faces or styles)
- Every photo has a caption: short, relevant
- One large photo better than several small (exception: photo essays which take up an entire page--union picnic, for example)

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THE DANGER OF TOO MUCH TEXT.
COLUMN TOO WIDE

White space looks planned

Everything lines up

XXXXX

Bad Use of White Space

NOTHING LINES UP

TOO MANY BOXES; NO STRONG DIAGONAL

HEADLINES BUTT UP

TOO MANY DIFFERENT TYPESTYLES

Not enough white space

Caption too small

Uneven margins

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HOW BREAKING UP YOUR COPY MAKES IT EASIER TO READ

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Boxes help.....

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Photo and headline relate to each other

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Strong diagonal

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Lower case headlines, Arial font, as big and bold as you like!

Times New Roman for text, in 10 point. The "serifs" make it, and other fonts like it, easier to read.

Internal headlines.

These can be sans serif in a font such as Arial.

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To use italics, or not to use italics

You should regard italics -- even in the same font -- as a different font. Use sparingly if at all.

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Margin: .5 inch on all sides

3 columns, with .3 inch space between.

HOW BREAKING UP YOUR COPY MAKES IT EASIER TO READ

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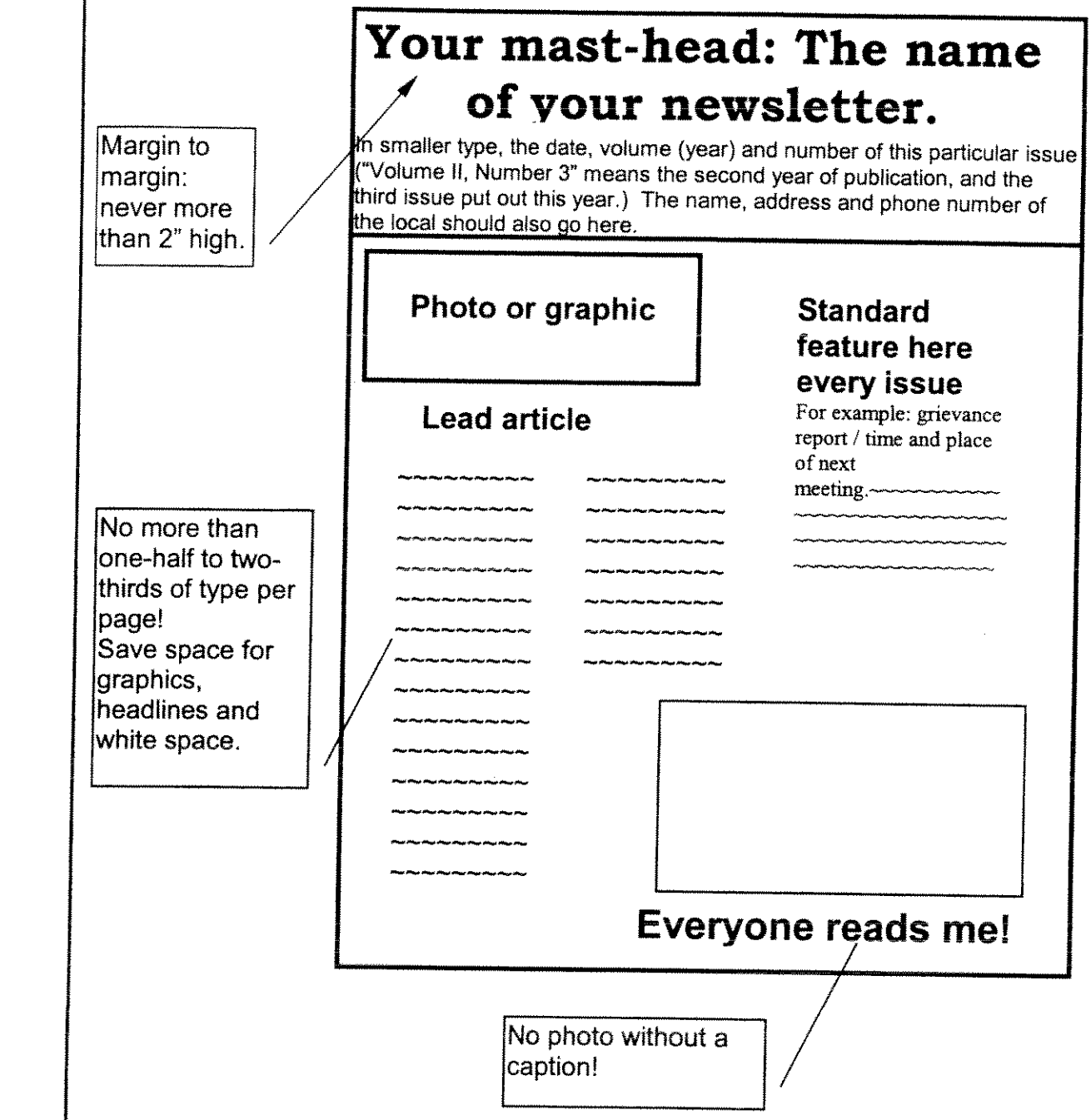
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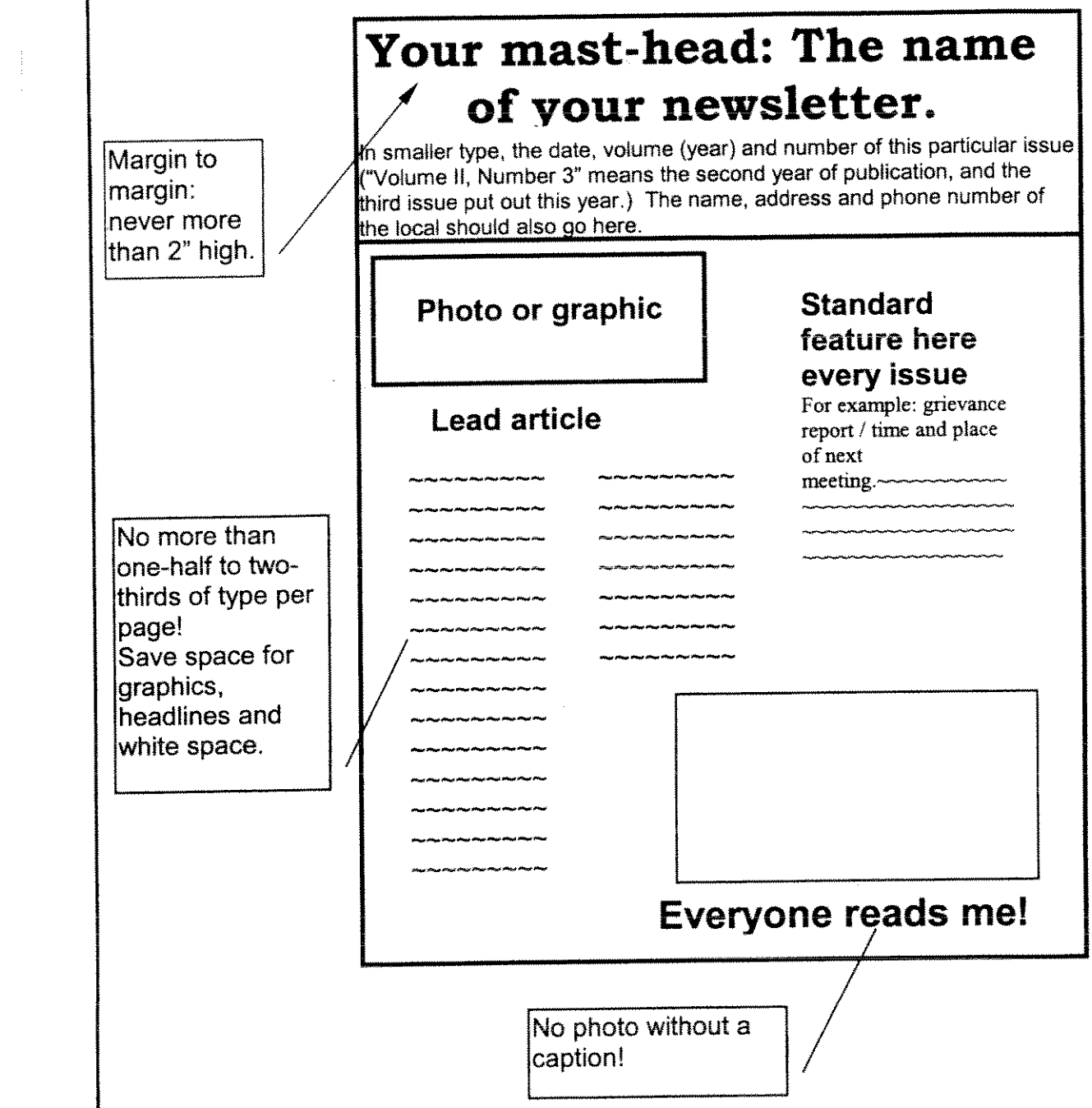
In smaller type, the date, volume (year) and number of this particular issue ("Volume II, Number 3" means the second year of publication, and the third issue put out this year.) The name, address and phone number of the local should also go here.
Margin to margin: never more than 2" high.
Photo or graphic
Standard feature here every issue
For example: grievance report / time and place of next meeting.
Lead article
No more than one-half to two-thirds of type per page!
Save space for graphics, headlines and white space.
Everyone reads me!
No photo without a caption!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ADDING CONTENT TO YOUR NEWSLETTER

How do you get stories or articles? What kind of stories are appropriate? Developing an "editorial policy."

Every newsletter has a policy on what goes in and what doesn't. But often that policy is not clearly expressed or even clearly understood. It can save you much grief if you do express this policy for all readers. Nancy Brigham and Maria Catalfio, authors of the essential *How to do Leaflets, Newsletter & Newspapers*, suggest wording for an editorial policy:

> **Editorial Policy** *"While we welcome your contributions, we ask that they be constructive. All articles should contribute positively to the welfare of this union and its members, and we will accept no attacks on any union leader or member. We will accept a thoughtful discussion of all related issues in the letters column, and reserve the right to reply to those that seem to reflect a misunderstanding of the union and its policies."*[5]

Writing *style* into your newsletter

Writing – with style – is a way to make your newsletter far more interesting to your members. You are competing for their attention with very sophisticated media. But what you have to say to your members is unique and vitally important to them. This gives you an edge over the competition. This manual aims to make writing – with style—easier for the local union newsletter editor.

Writers' anxiety is common, but overcoming it is possible with attention to a few basic pointers. We can't all become great writers, but we can all improve our writing and editing skills with practice and become competent and able to put out exciting and readable newsletters.

Think of your newsletter as consisting of three fundamental elements:

- **Graphics and photos.**
- **Notices and lists (of meetings, events, officers, etc.)**
  Lists and notices are easy to get and easy to print.
- **Articles (regardless of length, and whether they are features, news stories, or reports, they are basically paragraphs describing or informing).** These are not so easy to come up with, and then need to be written! Here are some ways to get articles.

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[5]) Brigham and Catalfio, *How to do Leaflets, Newsletters & Newspapers*, 1991, p. 22.

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Writing – with style – is a way to make your newsletter far more interesting to your members. You are competing for their attention with very sophisticated media. But what you have to say to your members is unique and vitally important to them. This gives you an edge over the competition. This manual aims to make writing – with style—easier for the local union newsletter editor.

Writers' anxiety is common, but overcoming it is possible with attention to a few basic pointers. We can't all become great writers, but we can all improve our writing and editing skills with practice and become competent and able to put out exciting and readable newsletters.

Think of your newsletter as consisting of three fundamental elements:

- **Graphics and photos.**
- **Notices and lists (of meetings, events, officers, etc.)**
  Lists and notices are easy to get and easy to print.
- **Articles (regardless of length, and whether they are features, news stories, or reports, they are basically paragraphs describing or informing).** These are not so easy to come up with, and then need to be written! Here are some ways to get articles.

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[5]) Brigham and Catalfio, *How to do Leaflets, Newsletters & Newspapers*, 1991, p. 22.

Getting articles–some ideas

Let the members speak. Your newsletter can and should function as the voice of the people--helping to counteract the all too frequent and usually incorrect image of the local as dominated by a clique. Ask for and welcome contributions by members about conditions at work, thoughts on the local union, politics, human interest with a union aspect. Some ways this might be done:

- **Letters to the editor.** Try to start a "letters" section. If people will contribute, this may become the most popular part of the newsletter. Obviously, applying your editorial policy will be critical to keeping the letters from becoming personal attacks or things which hurt the union. But criticism of policy which is expressed without personalities will usually be a union building exercise.
- **Ask for articles.** Don't just wait for them--they will probably never come. You must ask! Contact individuals who you know have a gift for writing and ask them to submit occasional pieces to the newsletter. You can develop a system of "reporters in the field" covering different departments, or covering politics, grievances, community events, members "doings'. Be sure and let them know you will help them get started and that you may have to edit for length.
- **Interviews.** Who? Average folks about major events; leaders; big shots, members. As editor, you will become always conscious of the next newsletter deadline. You will find your perspective on everything changing to "is this something for the newsletter?" And you should be aware that talking to people at work, at the union meeting, at political and social events is always a way to liven up your newsletter. People are always interested in what other people have to say, and most people love to see their name in print! So get out that notepad and start interviewing!

Approaches to the interview--[6]

OK to fiddle with quotes. If you need to change a quote--to make it more on target, to correct errors, etc. always be sure and check with the person you are quoting. Nothing makes you more irritated that to be misquoted. But you are also happy to have an alert editor catch an error and give you a chance to correct it before it appears in print.

Q&A One way to get a longer interview in the newsletter is to prepare a series of questions and print them and the answers you get from your interviewee. Or have a couple of questions and lots of members sounding off on the same topic.

Personal story. Has a member gone to convention? Participated on a picket line? Worked phone banks in a recent get out the vote effort? Ask them to tell the story in 2 or 3 paragraphs.

One of several sources. When you are writing your own story, you can make it more lively and readable by inserting members' views on the issue. If they differ from your own, all the better!

One-liners and quotable quotes. Always be alert for quotable one-liners, whether you are chatting with people in the workplace or listening to a speech or sermon. Russ Jones, long-time editor of UAW 1237's *Bear Facts* in Burlington,Iowa, is never without his spiral notepad and will be seen taking copious notes where ever he is. Develop this habit and make your job of spicing up your newsletter much easier.

[6])Brigham and Catalfio, *How to do Leaflets, Newsletters & Newspapers*, 1991, p. 98

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Rewrites. Most of us couldn't be editors if we didn't borrow and use material from each other and from our national and international union press. Most of these publications want us to use their articles and encourage us to do so.
But the challenge we should take up is how do we get our members to read articles written for a different audience and on issues which may seem at first glance to be distant from the local scene?

Tips for rewriting: Turning "canned" articles into exciting and readable stories

Let's face it: as local union newsletter editors, we often do not write our own material and in fact, we shouldn't have to! We should be printing articles contributed by our officers and members, talking about local or national issues of relevance and interest. But we are often faced with contributors who are late in turning in articles or who turn in articles which need some serious editing. So we sometimes end up with deadlines and not much to print.
At these times we all turn to material taken from other newsletters or from International or national union publications, from the state and national AFL-CIO, or from other labor-friendly press sources which want us to use their material freely.

Can we use their material? Most of these publications want us to use their articles and encourage us to do so. The Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO, for example, regularly distributes clipart and articles to assist the local editor, so do UAW LUPA and many other national or international unions. Many of these articles contain information on national or state political issues which we would find difficult to produce on our own. The articles are usually jam-packed with important facts and are written from a union point of view. Our members need this information!
But how do we get our members to read articles written for a different audience and on issues which may seem at first glance to be distant from the local scene?
The answer is: "rewriting." Rewriting is more than editing; we use this term to mean taking a canned article (for which you have copying permission) and making it exciting, relevant and readable for YOUR members.

Some basic principles:

1. Local focus. Give the article a local focus or slant. Write up a paragraph which points out how this issue is relevant to your members. This may take a bit of research on your part, but many times, you know the local connection because you are active in your local community.

2. Interview your members. A great way to do this is to interview someone from your local who can comment on the issue and how it affects them, their family or department at work. Then you get the double advantage of being able to have a local person's name in the article.

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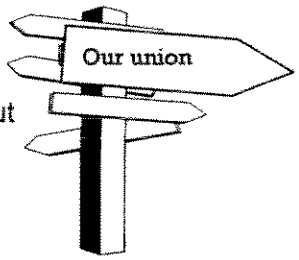

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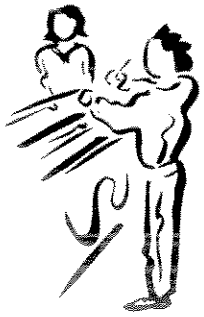


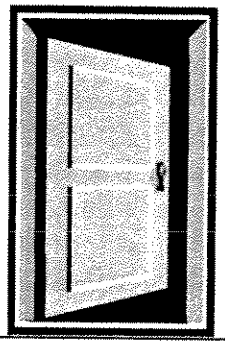
3. Change the headline. Look at the headline. Can it be "jazzed up"? Given a local twist?

Example:

- Main title of original article: **"Unemployment worsens in fourth quarter"**
- Your "jazzed up" substitute title: **"Jobs now harder to get"**
- Your subtitle with a local twist: **"River City impact: <u>we</u> are the most vulnerable workers!"**

4. Change the Length. See if the canned article can be shortened. If so, don't hesitate to cut, but be sure you keep the main points in!

5. Pull quotes. Pick a sentence from the article which is especially "quotable" and put it in a box somewhere in the article. Readers will nearly always read the pull quote first. It serves as a half-open door which arouses readers' curiosity and invites them into the article as a whole.



"A pull quote is like a half-open door...."

6. Placement. You may have (or create) a special section for political articles. Many newsletters like to have the important political articles as lead articles. Think of having them on a right-hand facing page for special emphasis.

7. Graphics. Can you find a graphic or cartoon which ties into the article? You might even consider adding a comment under the graphic: "More? see below!"

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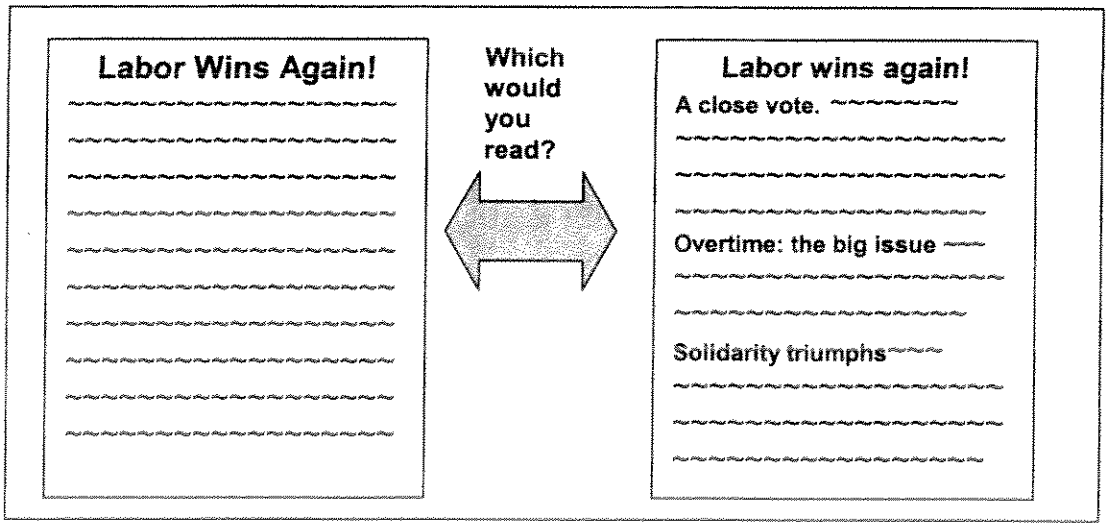

Breaking up a long article with internal headlines makes it more likely readers will read...and keep reading!

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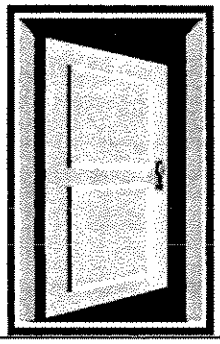

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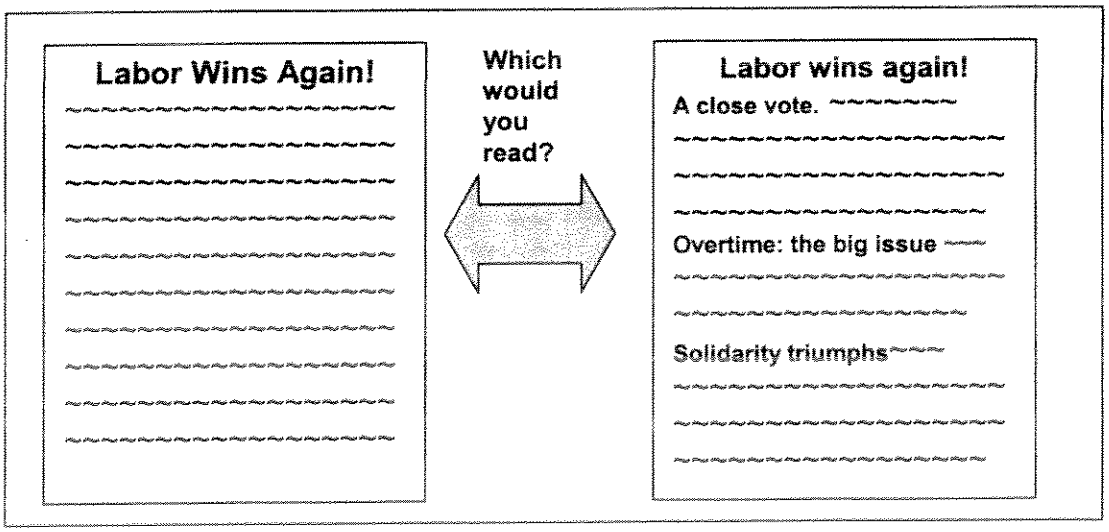

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Unions encouraged to rally for others

By Kristophere' Owens, Gazette staff writer, September 05, 2000

CEDAR RAPIDS -- Two University of Iowa professors encouraged area unions Monday to rally for workers who don't enjoy union benefits.

David Osterberg and Peter Fisher, part of the newly formed Iowa Policy Project coalition of researchers, told more than 6,000 people representing nearly 50 unions that union members make 27 percent more than non-union workers. They spoke during the Hawkeye Labor Council's Labor Day Picnic at Hawkeye Downs.

Fisher, a UI history professor, said although the economy is booming, about 100,000 Iowans work multiple jobs and work an additional 182 hours yearly to get by.

"Our opponents say we're trying to participate in class warfare," he said. "This is something the rich don't want you to know. The '90s may be good for working people, but especially the rich."

Osterberg, a UI adjunct associate professor of geography, said one problem is people work jobs that offer no opportunity for advancement. The solution could be for businesses to create "job ladders" that provide training, and make government pressure those businesses to create them.

Government also could help by boosting the minimum wage for low-paying jobs and giving tax breaks to those who need them the most -- the working class.

Osterberg admits these problem don't affect unions, but knows they're here to help workers in need. Monday was their rally call, he added.

Douglas Peters of the Hawkeye Labor Council said unions will work to solve these problems by encouraging their ranks to vote, and learn about the candidates and their issues.

"The rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer and the middle class are getting wiped out," Peters said. "It's time for the middle class to stand up and raise a level of awareness."

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Write your own material. This is the option that is most frightening to most of us. But it can also become the most personally rewarding part of being the editor. Learning to write well is no more difficult than learning to ride a bicycle or develop your biceps. It just takes repeated practice! Begin with just a paragraph on something you think really should be in the newsletter, but which no one else will write.

Write?? About what??

Politics

- Local, county, state, national.....
- Candidate profiles, voting records, your own interviews with candidates
- Political issues, especially those that most affect your members
- Political processes: how to register to vote, how to participate in your local precinct caucus and county party; how to write resolutions; how to get involved in campaign work
- Party platforms: compare and contrast

Solidarity

- What's happening to unions in other industries, other states, other plants in our town
- Solidarity across borders
- Solidarity in the workplace: across shifts, across teams, across departments

Stories and pictures of union members at work

- Take the union into the workplace!
- Build a sense of closeness between what goes on at work and the local union

Internal union policy debates and events

- Issues, elections, meetings
- "You are the Union"

Contract bargaining

- Membership mobilization around issues
- Discussion of proposals
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- CEO salaries compared to workers' wages
- Globalization of the labor and capital markets
- Technological change as it affects your members

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- Fighting discrimination and harassment
- Union proposals to management to correct problems
- Health and safety hazards in the workplace
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Planning your article

Three questions to ask yourself as you approach writing:

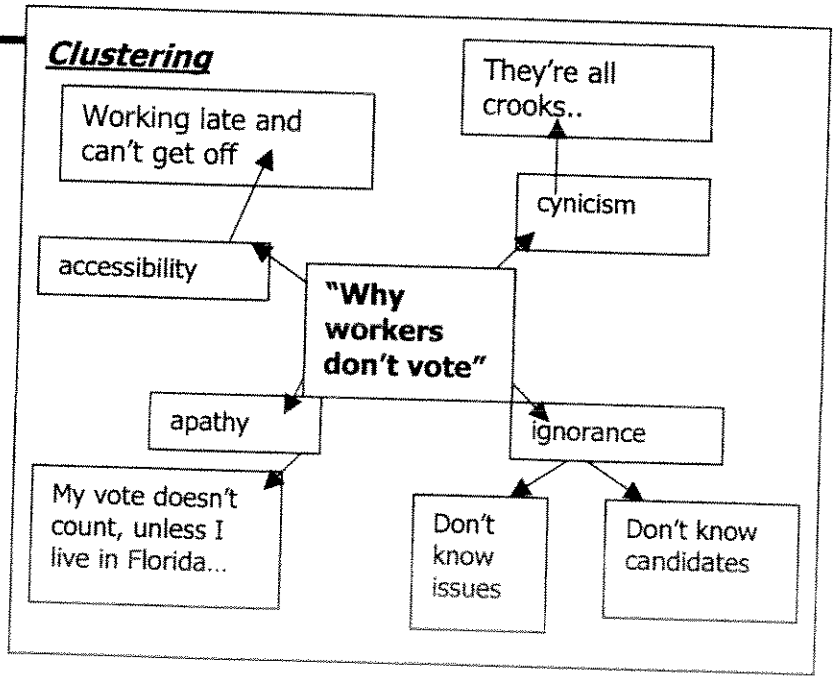
- **Why am I writing this:---to give information? To persuade?**
- **Am I thinking of my readers—local union members (possibly management and community allies)?**
- **What is my topic? And how can I approach it from a unique labor perspective?**

Tips to get started[7]

Free writing.
Write your topic at the top of your paper (or screen)
Under it just starting writing all the ideas that come into your mind—no order, no spelling, no punctuation. Once you've finished, go over it with a red pencil and underline the ideas that seem best to fulfill your purpose and address your members. With a little more work, you've got your outline!

Clustering
In the middle of a page write your topic and circle it. Then start spinning off ideas that come to you in all directions. This method has a little more logic to it than free writing—one idea leads to another, and they are connected with arrows.

Free writing
"Why workers don't vote"
too hard to get to polls, working too long hours, can't get baby sitter, doesn't matter anyway, my vote doesn't count, don't understand issues, don't know candidates, can't get time off work, all politicians are crooks, got better things to do with their time, don't think politics affects their daily lives



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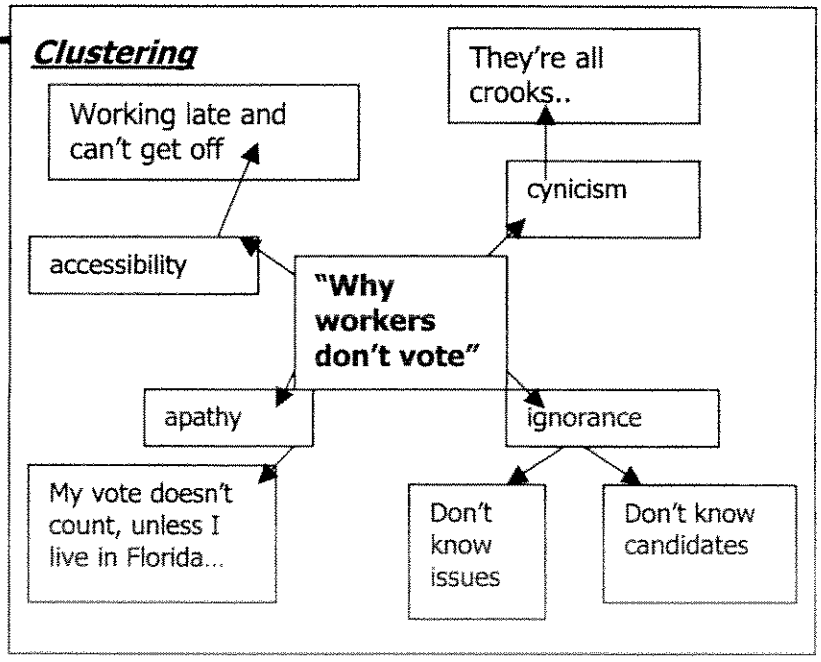

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DEVELOPING YOUR OWN STYLE

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***Active, not passive*:**
"Congress passed a bill..."
Not "A bill was passed by Congress..."

Good Writing

***Verbs, not adjectives*:**
"The announcement shocked....."
not, "It was a shocking announcement...."

Personal and specific, not general and abstract:
"Jenny Farley and Chris Liu...."
not "Two members...."

The Rules of formal and informal writing*

Formal writing
1. No contractions or slang
2. Do not address readers directly—use third person pronouns
3. No sentence fragments
4. A serious or neutral tone

Informal writing
1. Use contractions
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3. Address readers directly as "you" refer to yourself as "I" (or "we" the union)
4. Sentence fragments ok
5. Use more emotional tones – humorous, angry, passionate.....

In union newsletters, informal writing is nearly always preferred.

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THE 25 RULES OF EFFECTIVE WRITING

R. FLESCH

1. Write about people, things, and facts
2. Write as you talk
3. Use contractions
4. Use the first person
5. Quote what was said
6. Quote what was written
7. Put yourself in the reader's place
8. Don't hurt the reader's feelings
9. Forestall misunderstandings
10. Don't be too brief
11. Plan a beginning, middle, and end
12. Go from the rule to the exception, from the familiar to the new
13. Use short names and abbreviations
14. Use pronouns rather than repeating nouns
15. Use verbs rather than nouns
16. Use the active voice and a personal subject
17. Use small, round figures
18. Specify. Use illustrations, cases, examples
19. Start a new sentence for each new idea
20. Keep your sentences short
21. Keep your paragraphs short
22. Use direct questions
23. Underline for emphasis
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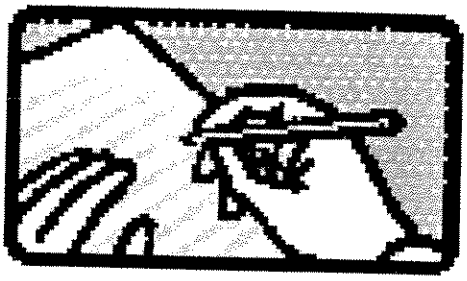

THE 25 RULES OF EFFECTIVE WRITING

R. FLESCH

1. Write about people, things, and facts
2. Write as you talk
3. Use contractions
4. Use the first person
5. Quote what was said
6. Quote what was written
7. Put yourself in the reader's place
8. Don't hurt the reader's feelings
9. Forestall misunderstandings
10. Don't be too brief
11. Plan a beginning, middle, and end
12. Go from the rule to the exception, from the familiar to the new
13. Use short names and abbreviations
14. Use pronouns rather than repeating nouns
15. Use verbs rather than nouns
16. Use the active voice and a personal subject
17. Use small, round figures
18. Specify. Use illustrations, cases, examples
19. Start a new sentence for each new idea
20. Keep your sentences short
21. Keep your paragraphs short
22. Use direct questions
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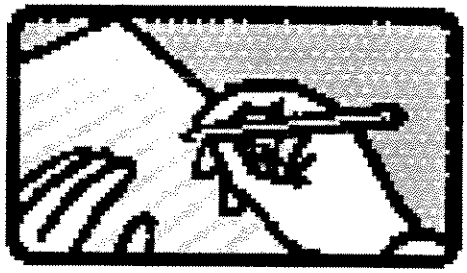
25. Make your writing interesting to look at



WRITING FOR AND ABOUT PEOPLE*

Popular writing features the personal element—references to human beings through use of names and pronouns. You can test your own writing – or someone else's to see how "personable" it is.

Count off a randomly selected 100-word sample of writing. Go through the text, counting the incidence of personal references. Give one point for each time the writer uses:

Personal References:

> Personal name.

> Personal pronoun.

> Concrete nouns which refer to human beings.
("workers" "members" "people" "men and women")

Human Interest Scale
(Number of personal references per 100 words)

Points	Human Interest Level of Prose
19+	Very easy
14 to 18	Easy
10 to 13	Fairly easy
6 to 9	Standard
4 to 5	Fairly Difficult
3	Difficult
0 to 2	Very difficult

* R. Flesch *How to Write, Speak and Think More Effectively*

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Readability: Test Your Prose[8]

General "readability" can be developed by using words that look lively and are attention getting. Symbols, short paragraphs, proper nouns (those which require a capital letter, such as names of people) make your writing look interesting and inviting to a reader. You can test readability:

Count off several randomly selected 100-word samples of your own original writing.

Go through the text, counting the incidence of the formats below. Give the writer one point for each time he or she uses:

***Formats*:**

> Any word with a capital letter.

> Any word underlined or italicized.

> All numbers not spelled out.

> All punctuation marks <u>except</u> commas and hyphens and periods after abbreviations (as in "etc.").

> All other symbols such as $, %, #, &, @, *, +.

> Beginning of a paragraph.

> Ending of a paragraph.

Readability Chart

Points	Readability Level of Prose
Up to 20	Formal
21 to 25	Informal
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Over 35	Very popular!

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IMPROVING A SHORT ARTICLE

EVALUATE AND IMPROVE

With management having the right to manage their business the way they want to, the union has constantly voiced our objection to the nationwide plan of reducing hours. "It has worked in other facilities and it will work here!" has been management's constant response. The fact remains that it isn't working even in other smaller facilities. I feel that the one factor that has not been being considered by management is, the fact that our county is one of the fastest growing areas of development in the country. While management reduces operations time, the volume of work continues to grow.	

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MAKING ARTICLES *LOOK* SHORT

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Break this long piece into several paragraphs, using this mark as a divider: //

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EDITING: WHAT IS IT?

Editing refers to what we've been doing in this manual: reading and seeing if material is clear, gets and holds your attention, doesn't offend, makes its point. It also involves, for local union newsletter editors, choosing headlines, suggesting or creating internal headlines, looking for and coming up with good leads for the article, and making sure paragraphs are short and readable.

Nancy Brigham has come up with some clear guidelines for editing in her classic *How to do Leaflets, Newsletters and Newspapers*, 1982. (borrowed and used with permission).

Editing guidelines

Edit yourself! Have a member of your newsletter committee edit. Have a local union officer look over articles if you have questions about their appropriateness.

Ask yourself some questions while reading....

1) Did you understand it all the way through?
2) Can you tell what the main point of the story is?
3) Do you find yourself reading a sentence twice?
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5) Are there words you don't understand? Ask the writer to replace them.
6) Does the writing sound as natural as someone talking to you?
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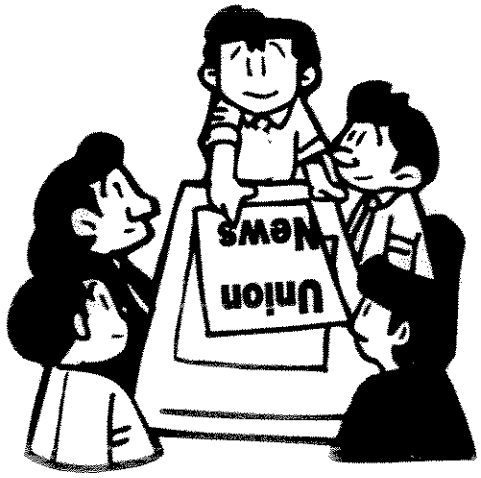
Editing helps make your paper a group effort. If everyone is concerned only with his or her own article, it's more like writing a letter to the editor of someone else's paper than putting out a group publication. People work alone and don't get to know each other. Editing raises issues that should be discussed and keeps members of the group in touch with each other.

One important rule of editing: never, ever make major changes behind the writer's back. If you're really too busy to go over changed with the writer, don't change anything



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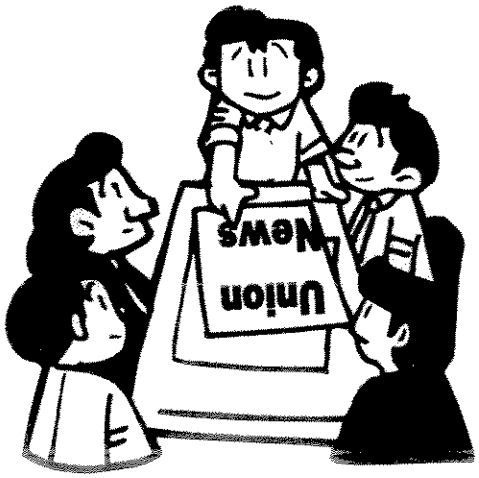

The ONE MAIN THING: Your headline

Headlines are the second thing your readers will look at in your newsletter. (Graphics are the first.) Headlines are your main chance at getting folks to read the important information or feature material in the body of the article. So they must grab the reader's interest, attention, curiosity—and do it in no more that 3 to 8 words! When you finish an article – or get one from a contributor – read it over with a special eye to writing the headline. What is especially important or exciting about the article? What is the ONE THING that this article is mainly about?

Headline basics

Short — just a few words--3 to 8--say the experts. The headline should probably not be a complete sentence. "Comments from Executive VP Burrus on why he believes workers deserve higher wages and cost of living adjustments" is too long, too boring, and makes the reader feel she has the message just by reading the headline! "Burrus: Employer wage proposal insulting." Then your lead sentence can identify VP Burrus for those who don't know him.

Punchy —hard-hitting and direct. Don't meander around the topic. Get it out and done with.

The KISS approach—keep it simply simple! Short words, simple construction—a phrase, a quick question. No convoluted thoughts and meanings.

Target the "one thing" — make sure the central, most important message in the article comes across loud and clear. "The election process" doesn't tell you much or get you at all excited about reading the article. "Our election process needs help: Yours!" involves the reader, suggests that it is our union election process we are talking about, and conveys the urgency of the writer's perceived argument for changing the system. **Avoid cute headlines which provoke the reader's interest, but do not indicate what the story is about.**

Sub-headings okay. Sometimes you can grab attention in the headline and then explain the "one thing" in a subhead. The headline grabs you; the subhead explains. The headline is bigger and bolder; the subhead smaller. Not: "Management approach to automation: Slash and Burn" But "Slash and Burn: Management's approach to automation"

Use the present tense —even if what you're talking about has already happened. "Union wins big" rather than "The union had a big victory".

Be active—talk about events in action, not as static finished products. "Contractor's Association creates violence study group" not "Commission to study workplace violence."

Be big and bold—set the headlines in as big a font as you have room for.

Use lower case, first word only capitalized--- Not "CONTRACTOR'S ASSOCIATION CREATES VIOLENCE STUDY GROUP" or "Contractor's Association Creates Violence Study Group" but "Contractor's Association creates violence study group".

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Evaluate the following headlines to articles discussing the recent negotiations. Which do the best job of following "headline basics" on the preceding page?

- ***Tentative Agreement Is Reached!***
- **More Than Just Wages**
- **Voting NO On The Contract**
- **WE GOT A CONTRACT: MEMBERS TO VOTE ON 2 YEAR PACT**
- **NATIONAL AGREEMENT REACHED BETWEEN UNION AND MANAGEMENT**
- **Tentative collective bargaining agreement reached, rank and file to ratify or reject proposal by Jan. 8, 2001**

Headlines from issues of two union newsletters:

The Counter Coup Has Won!
Minute by Minute (meeting minutes)
See ya...Sister Sarah
Money Matters...(Treas. Report)
Hail to the Chiefs: President's Conference Report
Management is seeing stars
Is the Circus back in town or what?
Insult to Injury..Work Comp Matters and Such

From the President's Desk
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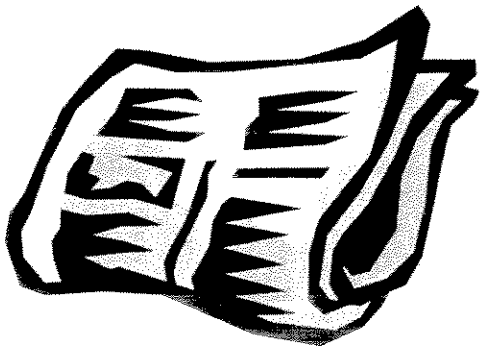

Here are some options for a headline for the Worker Memorial Day article.
Which is best?
Why?
Can you come up with a better one?

➔"Fourteen years...and the injuries don't stop"

➔"A day to remember"

➔"Don't be the "one in four"! Fight for a stronger OSHA"

April 28th has been chosen as Workers Memorial Day, a day to remember workers who have been killed, injured or diseased on the job. 2002 marks the fourteenth year this national day of remembrance will be observed by the U.S. labor movement in order to highlight workers' efforts to reduce the annual toll of workplace death and injury by legislation as well as negotiation.

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What is a "lead?"

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Checklist for Writing Leads:

If you answer "No" to any of the following questions, you may have to rewrite your lead.

1. Is it specific (rather than vague or abstract)?
2. Is it concise? (No more than 3 lines typed)
3. Does it begin with the news? (If you began with the time and place it occurred, rewrite it!)
4. Does it emphasize the most interesting and important aspect of the story--the main thing that happened?
5. If it originated in a distant city, did you begin with a dateline?
6. Have you used a relatively simple sentence structure, avoiding a long beginning clause or phrase?
7. Has it been localized?
8. If you used a question, is it short, simple and provocative?
9. If you used a quotation, does it adequately summarize the story?
10. Does your lead state or suggest the story's importance and its impact on your readers?
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Now let's try putting some better "leads" in the Workers' Memorial Day article—and maybe some internal headings before each paragraph:

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Fight for a stronger OSHA

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What other changes could you make to this article to make it more readable? Put it in columns? Interview a member or local office holder? Add a graphic? Let's see how that would look:

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What other changes could you make to this article to make it more readable? Put it in columns? Interview a member or local office holder? Add a graphic? Let's see how that would look:

Don't be the "one in four"!

Fight for a stronger OSHA

A sad day is coming—but a day that should make us all mad! April 28th is Workers Memorial Day, a day to remember workers who have been killed, injured or diseased on the job. 2002 marks the fourteenth year this national day of remembrance will be observed by the U.S. labor movement in order to highlight workers' efforts to reduce the annual toll of workplace death and injury by legislation as well as negotiation.

A promise made. "We really believed the OSH Act would make a difference," recalls Sam Gompers, who retired in 1986 from our workplace. "And in some ways it has. But we really need stronger standards and more inspectors, and that just hasn't happened. I still remember the local meeting in 1980 when we looked back at the last 10 years and realized we would have to take care of safety through our union." The OSH Act became law on April 28th, 1970, making a promise to American workers. The Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 assured every American worker a safe job. But recent statistics suggest that workplaces, in spite of OSHA, are still dangerous for many workers.

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We mourn.....
We mourn workers who have died in the past and present.
We mourn the losses of those in shirt factories, chicken plants and Bophal. We cry for our members who have died from it all.
We vow to protect our members from the deaths of corporate greed; we declare good health and safety as our creed.
May our tears, sweat and labor strengthen our faith to keep us safe for now and the future.
This we will pledge in solidarity.
Amen

Laverne Mayfield
International Chemical Workers Union

The saddest, but truest words about workplace fatalities: ***"It didn't have to happen."***

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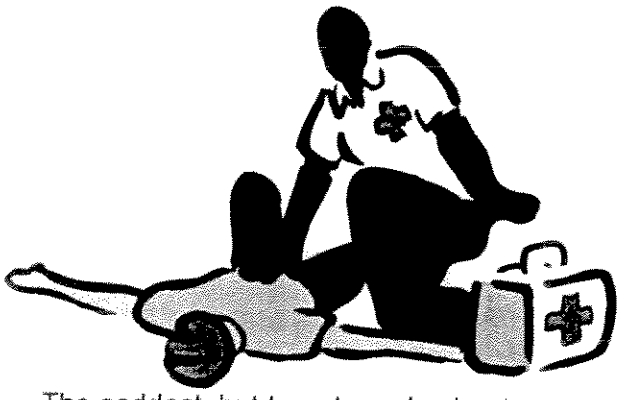

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BORROWING ARTICLES:
LEGAL RESTRICTIONS[9]

What can you borrow from other sources -- legally?

The Federal law protects authors from unauthorized use of their publications. Copyright owners have the exclusive right to reproduce and distribute copies of their work.

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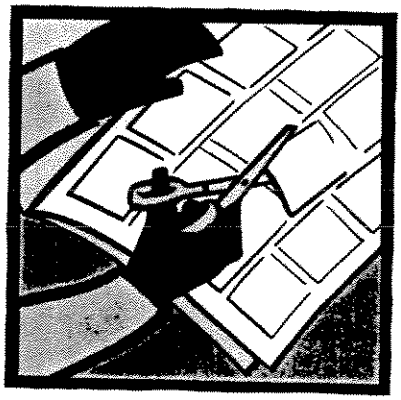

Frequently such permission is readily granted for non-profit purposes, but certain guidelines may accompany that permission. For example, the Des Moines Register requires that only entire articles may be reprinted, and no "high-lighting" of any type may be added. Check with the daily paper in your area. Think twice before "borrowing" from it. If they're hostile to your goals and keep their eye on your activities, they're sure to holler when you reprint without permission.

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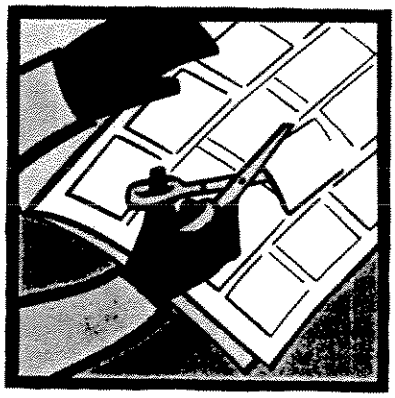

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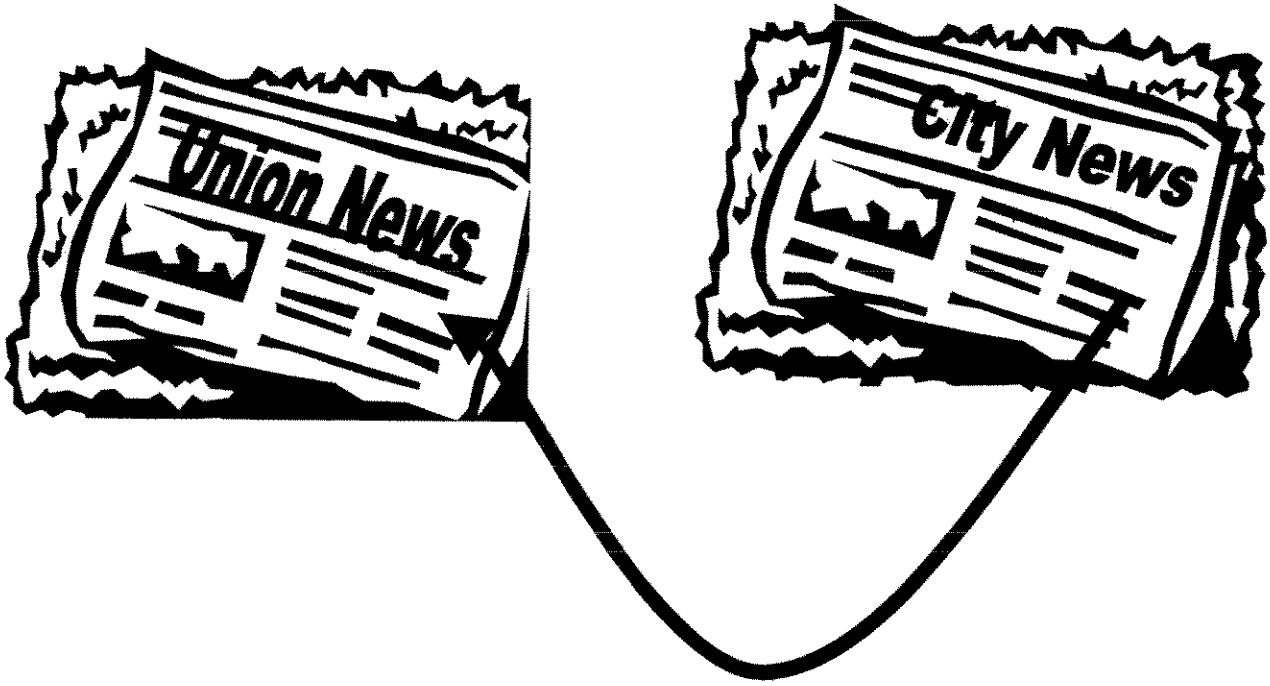
Reprinting photos and articles

No editor depends 100% on original articles and graphics. You'll occasionally reprint interesting articles and cartoons from other papers and magazine. As for whether you need permission, the rules are a bit muddy. Such reprints are policed by the Copyright Act.

The political context

Since U.S. law is vague about "fair use," whether you're safe reprinting something may also depend on your political context. If you borrow a cartoon from a national magazine for a non-profit newsletter handed to a group of neighbors, chances are the big-timers won't know about it and won't care.

The bigger your circulation, the more careful you should be. Many copyright owners worry only about commercial reprints. So if your paper's a money maker, watch out. And don't sneak copyright cartoons into ads.



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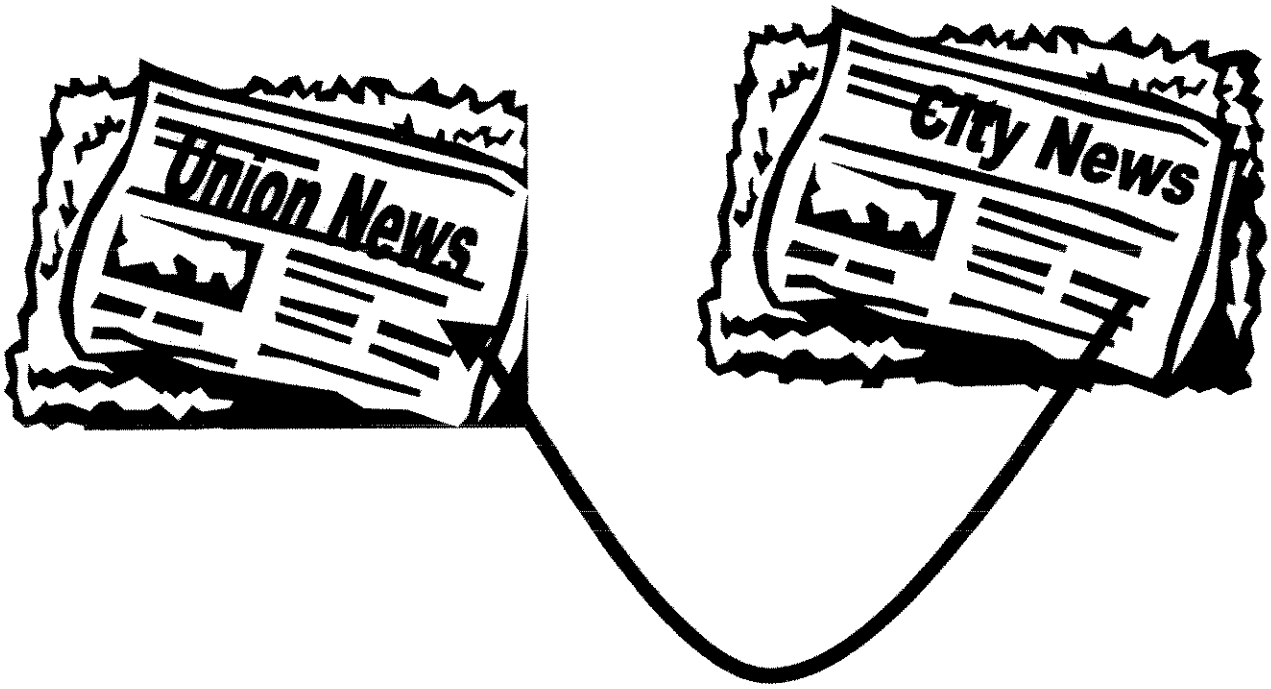

Careful!!

Action plan for a revamped newsletter

Figure out what you want to change about your newsletter.

1. The way it looks

Action	Details	Who does what?	Time frame	Resources needed
Masthead				
Design / layout				
Number of pages				

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2. What is in it

Action	Details	Who does what?	Time frame	Resources needed
Add features				
Add Graphics				
Get regular articles				

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3. When and how it gets done

Action	Details	Who does what?	Time frame	Resources needed
Get more helpers				
Change printing arrangement				
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