

4

Production

Preliminaries

The process of turning raw copy (material to be published) into a concrete finished product (pieces of paper ready to send through the mail) can be as simple or as complicated as you choose to make it. It won't surprise you to learn that there is a pretty direct correlation between the amount of care you take with the task and the quality of the results. You'll discover soon, though, if you haven't already, that it is often just as easy to turn out work that looks polished as it is to do it haphazardly. Practice does build skill and speed, and after a time many of the niceties become second nature.

"Production," in our context, means generating camera-ready copy. Lya Korda defines camera-ready copy as "copy that is ready to be taken to the printer to be reproduced without accidental pencil marks, pen marks, or coffee stains," adding, "drink tea." The first part of this chapter explains the steps in the production process as they apply to the majority of Mensa newsletters—those of the offset-printed, booklet-format variety. Within that general category there is a wide range of options that influence the overall appearance and readability of the newsletter.

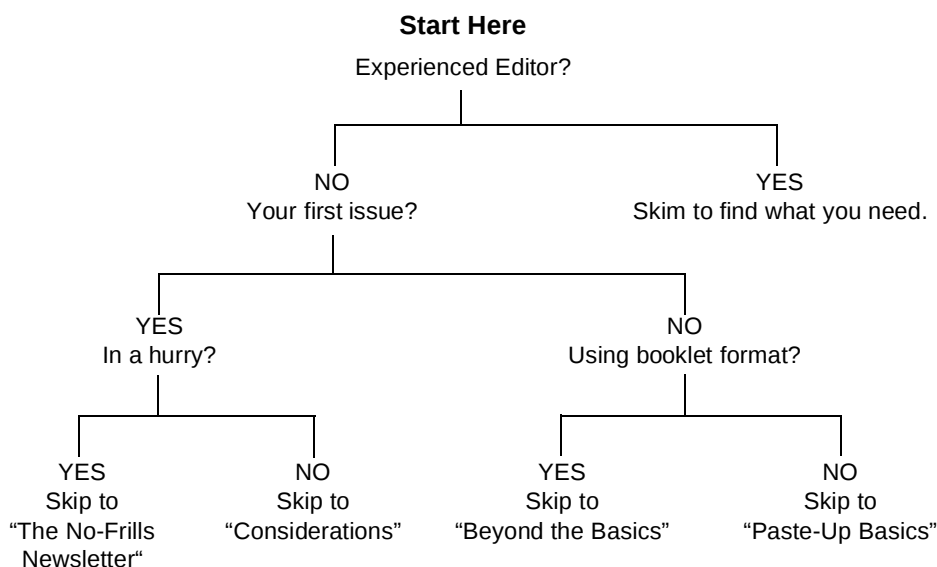
Editors who are ready to try the booklet format for the first time will find here a step-by-step production recipe to follow: not the only approach, by any means, but one that works. Editors who are already familiar with the style may learn new techniques for what they are now doing, discover ways to improve upon their present work, or pick up helpful tips from other editors. Even Mensa editors of long experience may gain something practical from the material here. While we probably have nothing to teach to professional graphics and production people, we hope that they

will be willing to teach us what they can so that the most ambitious and creative of our editors can benefit from their expertise in the next edition of this handbook.

There is also a special how-to section for the raw novice who is under pressure to get something in the mail and has no time for extras.

Later on, we get into some particulars of layout, graphics, and photography, and we have an assortment of hints gleaned from many editors.

To make the best use of this chapter, then,



Considerations

Regardless of the level of experience you bring to the task or the scale on which you plan to publish, there are certain fundamental decisions you must make. Until you make them, the paper is blank. Every published thing, no matter how careless or poorly conceived, is necessarily the product of those decisions. The chart of options (Fig. 4-1) lists the points on which you must decide. The column headings “Less” and “More” refer to degrees of complexity or, as some might say, sophistication in handling the material. They are relative: the true minimum is no newsletter at all, and the maximum is limited only by the ability and resources of the editor and the publisher. The column headed “Ref.” lists chapter/page numbers for your reference.

As your newsletter moves from the “less” to the “more” options—whether gradually or all in one dramatic stride—it will, generally speaking, be moving toward better quality.

A newsletter that conforms point for point to the minimal requirements identified in the “Less” column is your basic no-frills newsletter. Observe that the moment you select a piece of clip art and glue it down, you are doing a *paste-up*. The moment you think ahead to allocate space on the page for a particular item, you are making a *layout*. And you are then moving into the “More” column.

Getting More for Less

It is important to note that the “less” options are not necessarily easier or more efficient than the “more” options. And they certainly won’t save you money. But they require the least time, knowledge, and prior planning. They’ll get you by in a pinch and take the pressure off learning about paste-ups, reductions, mailing permits, and

	LESS	MORE	REF.
format	letter-style	booklet-style	<i>(To be supplied.)</i>
printing	single side	back-to-back	
reduction	no	yes	
no. of pages	unrestricted	4-page increments	
dummy/layout	no	yes	
paste-up	no	yes	
pagination	sequential on copy	calculated from dummy	
binding	corner staple	center fold staple	
mailing	first class	second or third class	
mailing label	back or envelope	cover, self-mailer	
margins	standard letter format	calculated for reduction	
body copy	typed/word-processed	word-processed/typeset	
graphics			
name plate	typed or hand-lettered	press-type or typeset	
heads	typed	press-type or typeset	
art	none	decorative or filler	
photography	no	yes	
fixed elements			
name plate	type, hand, press-type	standing art	
masthead	type in place	standing copy	
publications statement	type in place	standing copy	

Figure 4-1. Chart of Options

the other slicker and more cost-effective alternatives. You'll want to start looking into them soon, though, to see how much you can gain in quality and savings for how little extra effort.

Some improvements, of course, will cost you more: press-type, for example, goes for several dollars per sheet of rub-on letters, and its only virtue (but a big one) is enhancement of appearance and readability. But as you begin to enjoy certain economies of scale—reduced postal rates, for instance, when your mailings become large enough to qualify, or price breaks on quantity printing—you can channel your available funds toward some of these other expenses.

Put a saddle stapler high on your list of optional equipment. You'll need it for stapling the center fold in the booklet format. Price is in the \$50.00–60.00 range.*

The No-Frills Newsletter

If all you're concerned with right now is getting some sort of newsletter out the door, and never mind the fine points, concentrate on the column headed "Less" in the chart of options. You can go back later and look over your alternatives—and the rest of this chapter—when you're ready to think about something more.

* At 1982 prices.

To produce the no-frills newsletter, then, simply follow these steps.*

1. Assemble all the copy you have—calendar items, message from the locsec, notes and reminders of items you have to write. Arrange them in the sequence in which you want to use them.
2. Supply yourself with plain, cheap white typing paper or bond—not erasable: it smudges, it makes your copy grey, and it warps with handling—and correction tape or fluid.
3. Make a “second sheet” to put behind your copy page when you type. Rule the right, left, top, and bottom margins in black ink. They will show through the front sheet and serve as your guide for typing.
4. Put the newsletter title at the top of page 1 (you do not need to number the first page). Do this by applying press-type letters directly to the page along a pale blue pencil guide line, or hand-letter it, or type it. Put the issue date (month and year of issue) above, beneath, or beside it, as well as issue number or volume and number, if you are using them (it can’t hurt).
5. Make a heading for your first item. Set it off by line-spacing before and after, using caps, underscoring, centering (move carriage to center of line and back-space half the number of characters in the headline), or some combination of these options.
6. Type your copy. You may indent for paragraphs (five spaces are standard) or you may use block format (start paragraphs flush left and double-space between paragraphs). When you get to the end of an item, make a heading for the next and go on. When you get to the end of a page, begin the next page with a number at the top and go on.
7. Continue until you run out of copy.
8. Look over your finished copy and touch up smudges and stray marks with correction fluid.
9. Determine how many copies you need according to the number of mailing labels you have for your group, plus those for the Special Mailing List (the “headquarters” list) and exchange copies for other groups if you are participating in those programs. Allow a small margin for contingencies. Allocate one copy for the editor’s permanent file in addition to your personal copy.
10. Take your newsletter to the copy shop or printer and order the necessary quantity.
11. Purchase stamps. Purchase envelopes if desired. Provide for return address stamp or labels. Save the receipts. (If you are using envelopes, you can do steps 17 and 18 ahead of time.)
12. Pick up the finished copies and pay for them. Verify the count of at least one page against quantity ordered. Save the receipt for your records.
13. Collate (assemble individual pages into ordered sets, each one a complete copy of the newsletter).
14. Staple the upper left corner of each set (not necessary if you are mailing in envelopes) without stapling through the lines of print on the inside pages.
15. Fold each newsletter in thirds, business-letter style.
16. Tape or staple the open edge (just once), or insert in business-size (#10) envelope.

* Any form of desktop publishing is an advance over the limitations of this model; but these steps can still be followed in principle for a minimal product.

17. Attach mailing label and postage stamp to envelope or to the outside of the newsletter.
18. Stamp return address or attach return-address sticker.
19. Count the number of copies you are mailing and record the information for your records.
20. Mail.

Something More*

You can ease into a more complex, more polished format by stages. Here are some of the simplest improvements you can make on the no-frills approach.

Printing Back-to-Back

Having your copies come out printed on both sides of the page instead of just one side involves no more than giving your printer the proper instructions with your order. “Back-to-back” is the terminology to use. It could reduce your cost if part of the charge is based on the number of sheets of paper used. It will also allow you to send more pages for one first-class stamp.

The main effects it will have on production are that you will have to make sure there is space on the outermost (back) page for a mailing label and stamp, unless you are using envelopes, and that you will have to watch the pagination when you get set up for collating. The only other time you will have to be careful is when you have some sort of clip-out copy (a registration form, coupon, ballot, questionnaire response, etc.). You will want to consider what is going to be on the opposite side of the cutout. Readers may not want to clip through a puzzle they plan to do or slice out part of a calendar page. Better make sure that what’s on the back is dispensable (but don’t offend your most faithful columnist by putting his copy there). If possible, try to make the reverse side part of the *same* cutout so there will be no conflict of interest.

Graphics

Introducing display heads and small amounts of decorative border or filler art will make an immense difference in the look of your newsletter. This step will involve a small initial expense for sheets of press-type (choosing press-type is discussed later in this chapter) and perhaps a book of clip art. The main consideration for you is that you are going to have to do some layout (planning your pages in advance) and paste-up (gluing down pieces of paper) to use them.

Reduction

There are advantages to reducing your copy even if you are still using the letter-style format rather than the booklet. You can get more copy into the same amount of space—an important consideration if you want to save on printing costs and avoid excess postage. (A two-column format is recommended, however, if you are not using the booklet style, to avoid lines of text so long that they are tiring to read.) A bonus is that a moderate amount of reduction causes many tiny flaws to disappear. And your results tend to look more like a “real” magazine. What it means for you is that you must figure out the dimensions you need to make your copy before reduction in order to get the right proportions after reduction. This too is covered later in the chapter.

* Mixed in with the outdated technology in this section is some material that may help the beginner.

Special Problems

Some items require special handling at the paste-up stage: most particularly, sensitive items such as ballots and campaign material. You will have to watch your placement of candidates' statements, for instance, to make their positions as equitable as possible. Don't paste up what is supposed to be a secret ballot on the reverse side of the member's mailing label space. And don't place something you want cut out and mailed in on the back of something readers will want to keep.

Paste-Up Basics

by Richard Amyx

This omitted section describes production methods and techniques that predate the use of computers. Information on booklet-style production still to come.

Beyond the Basics

The fundamentals of layout—actually positioning copy on the page—were described under “Paste-Up Basics.” We cover some of the finer points here, even though logically the considerations of layout precede the process of paste-up, because incorporating the elements of good design into your newsletter goes beyond the basics. However essential the graphic and visual concerns may be to a *good* publication, the fact is that it is possible to issue a newsletter in disregard of them. If it weren't, we would have no dreadful-looking newsletters.

What this section is really all about is the appearance of the publication. When you begin to think about the overall aesthetic qualities of your newsletter and take into account such concerns as breaking up a page of text with art work, you are escalating the complexity of your task. Some of the factors in appearance are mechanical in nature, having to do with how diligently you align your copy and how carefully you clean up the smudges. But improving the visual effectiveness of your product is more than a matter of mechanics: it takes forethought.

Newsletter Layout

by Mikie Kane

Lya Korda, Design Consultant to AMC, lists margins, features in regular places, paragraphs, illustrations, and clear headlines as some of those things that make a publication more readable. Since most of the pubs that can take advantage of considerable art work use offset printing, I will confine these remarks to this type of publication.

Margins

Each page has to be framed, and the white space—the margins—makes up that frame. Many pubs are printed in booklet format on 8½" x 11" paper. For such pubs, 3/8" should be allowed left and right and definitely that much or more top and bottom. Those pubs printing in “letter” format should follow good letter format: this would be no less than ½" to ¾". Keep in mind too that the visual center of a page is not the same as its geometric center. On a page of solid type it would fall at roughly 40% down the page, and elsewhere depending on what type of graphics are being used. It doesn't hurt to stand back and look.

Features in Regular Places

This has a lot to do with courtesy. You don't want to alienate your audience with a little thing like moving a feature all over the place. This does not mean that you can't change or that you have to be inflexible. It does mean don't change the place too often. When you do move something, put a note where the feature ought to be to get the reader to the right place (it doesn't hurt to "apologize" even though it isn't necessary). Check out *The Isolated M*; Harper is a pretty regular guy.

Paragraphs

I suggest that you use the block format and that you skip a line between paragraphs. Skipping a line really helps when you have to stretch out copy, or even when you have to shrink it up. Skipping also comes in handy when a bad typo can best be corrected by retyping an entire paragraph. If you don't skip a line, the new typing is harder to insert. This is my opinion and others have theirs.

Illustrations and Clear Headlines

Here are a few rules I work by, and they may or may not apply to you: don't use more than three type styles on a page and try to stick with that for two facing pages. I try to use sans serif typing elements and headlines. Sans serifs (those without the little flags) are more conversational to me, less demanding. Sometimes I will use the same type style in my headlines in different sizes. This really doesn't count against my limitation. You can see what I'm driving at by looking at any newspaper on a page that has several ads and comparing that page to one with only one advertiser on it. Invariably in the former case you'll find too many type styles assaulting the eye.

Illustrations follow pretty much the same rule. The illustration(s) should be consistent with the text and headlines. Don't just plaster anything down in any old space. Optimally, I like to have at least one illustration on a two-page spread—but this is not always possible and/or desirable.

Headlines are particularly irksome because the majority of editors or art directors have a limited budget to purchase press-type. Since this is the case, the purchase should be of "clean" type styles. I've seen altogether too many pubs with headlines in scroll and Old English—they are hard to read! If you can't read it, don't use it.

I also have a rule about starting an article at the top of the page and trying to put a two-page article on facing pages. I dislike forcing a reader to turn a page in mid-thought; it's disruptive. I have been accused of being an extremist on this, which is why I do break this rule occasionally just to prove I'm human.

I originally chose the giraffe as the symbol of graphic art in *Mensa* for a very simple reason: the giraffe is highly visible but is nonetheless "quiet" and "restrained," which is what graphic art should be in any publication.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *This article is adapted from an article originally printed in the March 1979 issue of G'Raph, newsletter of the Graphics Bureau & Pogo Brigade.*

Press-Type Technique

by Jon and Joyce Lundeen, Darrell McClanahan, and Lynn Goodman

This omitted section describes production methods and techniques that predate the use of computers.

Reduction

This omitted section describes principles of reduction that are not applicable to users of desktop publishing tools.

Layout Boards

This omitted section describes use of materials that are relevant only to paste-up.

Photography

by Dave Felt

Introduction

Photos, graphics, and art in almost any form are popular methods of dressing up a publication. Photos in particular offer to members the opportunity to take part in activities they might well be unable to enjoy otherwise.

The ideal photo is one that contains the five W's—who, what, where, when, why—but it is indeed rare that all these elements can be brought together at once. A group picture showing people at a Mensa party may be an excellent photo, but it cannot usually encompass the five W's and thus tell a story by itself. It becomes mainly an aid or supplement to the text. A photo with several people lined up smiling at the camera may serve the function of identification, but it is better avoided if possible. Try for action and variety in your pictures: people in conversation, playing games, or interacting in other interesting ways. A photograph is very much like the opening of a novel—it must catch your attention and prompt you to investigate further.

The Camera

There are nearly as many kinds of cameras as there are cars, and most of them may be used to take pictures that are sharp enough for publication. The important factor in taking the photo is to hold the camera steady and gently squeeze the shutter release until the shutter trips. The second most important factor is the focus. Always double-check the focus (or the focus range setting) before taking the photo. The third most important factor is the exposure. Be sure that you know what film you're shooting, its speed (ASA rating), and, if you're shooting flash pictures, what is the proper distance between the camera and the subject. If you've just bought a new camera, shoot a couple of rolls of film to try it out, taking pictures under different circumstances, varying lighting, trying close-ups, etc. Have them processed, and examine them closely to see that you're not shaking the camera while taking the picture and that the focus and exposure were correct.

The Film*

Mensa publications can usually print only black-and-white (BW) photos due to budget considerations. Recommended film for use in taking pictures for publication is BW film with medium speed and fairly fine grain (for example, Plus X). Color print, or negative, film may be used, and BW conversion prints made at a later time and at greater expense. A medium-speed film will suffice in most applications, but

* Technical information in this section may not be current.

when shooting available-light photography without flash, or similar applications, you may need a higher-speed film (Tri-X).

Processing*

Many local groups have photographers who are available to shoot and process photos for local publication and who can advise the editor what their photo capabilities are. BW film may be processed easily in the home or any corner photo store. Color negatives or slides should be sent in normally for processing, and at a later time any shots the editor may want to have processed into BW photos can be taken care of. The color negative may be printed on regular BW enlarging paper, but the tonal values will not reproduce correctly. In many cases the variance will not matter, and the final result will be quite acceptable (facial tones lighter or darker, clothing lighter or darker than they appear in the color photo). There are BW printing papers that are color sensitive (Kodak Panalure RC) and that produce excellent results with color negatives.

A color slide will need to be reshot onto BW film, and then the resulting negative printed as with any other BW negative. There will be an increase in grain, and quite often in contrast, when this is done, but the result will be usable. As before, the tonal values may appear different from what would be expected from the color slide.

Printing and Screening

This and the remaining sections of this article have been omitted because they describe techniques and processes that do not apply to computerized publishing.

Making the Screened Print

Comments About Screening Photos

Supplies

PMT Halftones

This omitted section supplies information that is not applicable to desktop publishing.

Graphic Design

by Jon and Joyce Lundeen, Darrell McClanahan, and Lynn Goodman

Perhaps the clue to using graphics successfully is the word “design”: to arrange parts and create unity. What parts? Let’s take the broad approach and include in the domain of graphics all visual elements in the publication, from typeface to pictures. The task facing the newsletter designer, then, is to take all the verbal elements and other material and put them in order.

Although it is taken for granted that a chapter newsletter is an instrument serving the members, a decision should be made regarding the character of the publication and method of reproduction. This is essential to the creation of a publication that is graphically unified from cover to cover—and that is capable of being printed by the chosen method.

* Technical information in this section may not be current.

But before starting, remember that the graphics (particularly pictorial) must relate to the editorial; copy and art must be viewed as being One, and never divorced from each other. Your goal is to create a publication that is attractive, but also one that people can read. Keep it simple. Don't just stick in that interesting little line drawing or squiggle to fill up space.

Design is probably the most crucial, and perhaps the most subjective, concept in producing an attractive and readable publication: *the ordering of parts to create a unified whole*.

Balance

When designing your magazine, think about the balance of dominant and subordinate elements. Conceive of the publication as a work of art that exists on a continuum, page after page. For example, if the dominant direction across each spread and through the publication is horizontal, it would be a good idea to introduce several vertical pages for subordinate variation.

White Space

Another of your most powerful design tools is that of white space. This doesn't refer simply to big borders and margins, but to how the white space curves around the type or illustrative material. If you think of the white space as being a shape or area with equal validity to type and pictures, it might help you to get the idea.

That may have sounded patronizing, but it would appear that (unless editors are consciously ignoring the contribution of graphics in favor of the discursive) this is where most newsletters go wrong. If one were to line up a stack of various newsletters and observe a common characteristic, it would be that as much printed material as possible is crammed in—and the readers' eyeballs be damned. This is particularly true in the case of those publications that reduce their type.

Reduction

Reduction is a matter that must be hassled out between editor and art director. Per se, reducing is neither good nor bad. It simply imposes another problem, which can be solved through intelligent design. By using a two-column-per-page format, with paragraphs separated by spaces instead of indenting, and with adequate space around the copy blocks, you can achieve greater legibility than you will in a publication with less-reduced type that runs completely across the page.

Typography

Another example of dominance and unification is the use of a "theme" typeface for various standard headings. Sometimes a line under the heads will serve to increase contrast with body type, without having to resort to larger, horsey headline type.

When choosing such standard heading type (mail, membership, etc.), think simple and bold—yet with some character. Remember, headlines serve a function. As a design element they create a focal point on the page: a dominant shape that provides contrast and relief. They alert the reader to something to come and pop up periodically throughout the magazine like an old friend.

In contrast are the headings for articles. When choosing a typeface in this case, read the copy. Try to find a face that in some way expresses the spirit of the editorial matter. Perhaps the type can be arranged in a way other than straight lines to be more meaningful and beautiful. Or the title might symbolize something meaningful if it is integrated with the body copy, whether it sticks partially into the paragraph, is on the bottom of the page, or whatever.

And type need not be used by itself. You can put press-type over a cut-out line or dot screen. You can arrange it to form geometric shapes. The possibilities of designing with type are almost limitless, and it often can assume the role of an illustration.

Illustrations

Illustrations can become another problem area. Probably the most important thing to remember when using them is unity: unity among the content of the copy, size and style of the headline type, and *relevance* of the pictorial matter. Clip art in most cases is quite limiting, if not in direct contrast with the thrust of modern subject matter. If used to an extreme, the impression it creates transcends even the feeling of a 19th century British poetry quarterly and simply becomes high camp.

It is possible to purchase books that have page after page of fancy letters, woodcuts, engravings, borders, landscapes, etc., etc. Although the desired art can be clipped from the book, whatever is on the other side will be ruined. This is because in actual practice the art is generally not cut out but photostated. Generally, however, the use of clip art leads to an overwhelming rococo feeling and is probably not related to the content of the editorial. At first brush, all those intricate pictures of little antebellum ladies and Santa Clauses look really impressive—but wear out fast. If your writing style and subject matter are a resurrection of Edgar Allen Poe, fine. It seems, however, that most Mensa newsletters are a bit more up to date than that. Unless your literary content relates to a past era, it is quite likely that you are creating a completely incongruous visual feeling. There is also a tendency to splatter the little ladies and fat men smoking long-stem pipes all over the place, creating visual chaos. Clip art is something you can do without! Rather, as you are reading a contemporary publication and see an interesting graphic, cut it out and file it. [EDITOR'S NOTE: *Avoid anything that might be copyrighted, including original art work in magazines and books.*]

For variation, remember that illustrations don't have to be rectangular or square. You can run headlines and body copy around them.

A final note on the use of pictorial matter: don't plaster it all over. Integrate it as you are conceiving each page or spread as a whole. Doing the typing and pasting it down first, then sticking in all those great little drawings you've saved between columns and in every little blank space left, results in chaos.

Photo-Offset Printing*

by Richard Amyx

Few editors see what happens between the time they deliver their paste-ups to the printer and when they pick up the final product. Under most circumstances, it doesn't really matter—you can consider it a bit of magic—but it never hurts to know a little more. The more you know about what happens, the better you'll be able to talk with your printer and the greater will be your chances of getting the results you desire.

The *photo* part of photo-offset means that the image of your paste-ups is captured photographically. In a true photo-offset process, the paste-up boards are literally photographed so that an ordinary black-and-white negative image at the reduced size is the result. That negative is then laid over a metal plate having a special photosensitive surface and developed much as a black-and-white contact print would be. The developed plate has the characteristic that an ink and water emulsion adheres to the exposed areas but not to the nonexposed areas.

* Information in this section may not be current.

The *offset* part of photo-offset means that the actual printing is done not from the plate but from an inked image that is transferred—offset—from the plate onto a special roller on the press called a blanket. The paper is squeezed between the inked blanket and a pressure roller. That's all. (The term "offset" was probably created to distinguish this process from the lithographic process from which it was developed.)

Because metal plates are necessary only for long press runs (from thousands to hundreds of thousands of copies), most quick-print shops do not use a true photo-offset process. Instead, the original copy is passed through a machine much like an ordinary office Xerox® copier. The result is not just a copy but a paper plate containing the reduced image of the original that fits on a small offset press and is good for several hundred to a thousand copies.

The use of a process such as this could have several impacts on your paste-up. First, the plate-making machine may not be very forgiving of sloppy paste-up techniques. You should be sure that all copy edges are securely glued down and that any thick pieces are touched up with white goop. Second, the plate-making machine may have a tough time with very heavy paper, and it might be to your advantage to paste up on postcard-type stock rather than heavy art board. Third, the small offset presses need a minimum of 3/8" blank space (in the reduced size) on the 8½" edge of the paper to accommodate the grippers—the things that actually tug the paper through the press.

Shop Talk

Mensa editors are always ready to swap hints on paste-up and production. The assortment here is by no means a list of rules; the suggested techniques differ and may even contradict one another. Some we've worked out ourselves through trial and error, while others have come through experience in professional graphics environments. You are invited to learn from them, experiment, and submit your own favorite tips for the next edition of this handbook.

Except for the last paragraph in this section, just about everything pertains to hard-copy paste-up and has therefore been omitted.

The P.M.

Once an issue is off the press, and before you begin the next one, take time out for a post mortem. Sit down with your staff, if you have one, and review the latest issue page by page, criticizing it unsparingly. Study the awkward layouts you settled for in haste, under the pressure of time, and discuss alternative solutions. Note where headlines were over-large, badly placed, or just uneven. Point out bad breaks in copy and figure out how they might have been avoided. Make yourself and your helpers aware of trouble spots and better ways to deal with them, and keep them in mind for the future. Then put the issue behind you and get on with the next one.

—Meredy Amyx