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Franchi, Francesco - *Designing News: Changing the World of Editorial Design and Infographics*, Die Gestalten Verlag, Berlin 2013. ISBN: (Paperback) 978-3-89955-468-7

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Francesco Franchi, author of *Designing News*, is an infographics designer and the art director at IL, the monthly magazine of Il Sole 24 ORE, an Italian national daily business newspaper owned by Confindustria, the Italian employers' federation. In this book, Franchi examines the future of the news industry from a designer's perspective. He brings together a wide range of sources – such as journalism, communication design and the culture of design – to construct a new approach into editorial design.

He relies on cases from the US, Great Britain, Spain and northern European countries to explain the profound transition in the world of newspapers and the reading habits of modern audiences. The behaviours of consumers and readers is Franchi's central concern. Franchi has developed a detailed examination of the modern role of communication design and its engagement with the production of news. He poses a fundamental question to communication designers – he asks them to think themselves as much as news editors, publishers, brand managers or even journalists.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on the transformations in the world of information and explores how new technologies have transformed the reading habits of modern audiences. Franchi looks at challenges faced by newspapers in an environment where content can be accessed for free and the digital paradigm frames the modern communication delivery of information, entertainment and news. New publication technologies have brought about a phenomenal increase in content creation and also faster ways to access information. He suggests, 'good journalism can save the newspapers and design can provide the support needed to give form to content and underline quality' (12).

He contends that the relationship of daily newspapers and the internet is confusing. Newspapers took a step forward at the wrong time, he points out. When people started talking about the internet in the 90's, many professionals and experts in the news industry didn't have computer skills. Their approach – wrong, as he argues – was to reproduce their print editions into an online sphere without contemplating that Internet allows users to select content and choose what they want. According to Franchi, another mistake was to save their best journalists for print, making the news in online editions less important.

Franchi reminds us that quality journalism is essential as it also includes quality design – and they should not be separated. Content and design, he argues, have to be integrated into the editorial decision. What has happened, instead, is that newspapers that are published online are struggling. Digital newsstands, website publishing and apps, social magazines and aggregators, are some of new products that emerged with the transformation in information consumption. They are also new reading tools that have emerged in the news market and have made users able to customize reading experiences and habits.

With changes in consumer reading habits, newspapers had to create content according to their users' demands. Changes in readers' habits demonstrate that reading news online is mainly a work time activity, while reading

news offline is primarily a leisure time activity. News consumption in parts of Europe, such as Italy or Spain, are different to the US or Australian experience. Local newspapers, therefore, had to adapt and fashion updated content and delivery according to the new consumption paradigms. Content was adapted to the new platforms of delivery such as tablets, mobile phone et al and there has been a fundamental shift from product based thinking to service based thinking. Newspapers were viewed as a 'service' and as a 'commodity'.

Franchi is optimistic about the traditional news media. He points out that although several newspapers have closed, there is a thriving magazine landscape. He reminds us that magazines readers still prefer hard copy – paper based publications – because they cannot get the same reading experience in a digital publication. On the other hand, the reading experience of hard copy magazines tend to be associated with leisure time activity, away from electronic devices regarded as part of the day-to-day working tools. He also points out that in an era of fast consumption of information, hard copy magazines are regarded as objects to collect and exhibit. They are tangible cultural products.

Franchi writes about *Granta*, the magazine founded in Cambridge in 1889 and still published today. He describes it as an exponent of the 'mook' – a publication that is tangibly comparable to a magazine combined with a book, and intended to remain on bookstore shelves for longer periods than traditional magazines. He argues that the format of magazines such as *Granta* seem to be an example to follow. They are collectable and the channel for new trends in journalism, such as slow journalism and long-form journalism.

The second part of Franchi's book focuses on newspapers' 'redesigning and restyling'. Franchi cites Mario Garcia, a design consultant of newspapers and magazine, to emphasise a key point – a gradual approach only addressing one section at a time rather than the whole newspaper seems to be the best design strategy.

The definition of newspaper design and the role of news media design, particularly the role of typography, are discussed in this part of the book. Franchi's focus on the process of newspaper restyling – which so many publications have undertaken in recent years in an attempt to revitalise themselves, is a fascinating part of this book. Essentially it looks at how newspapers can be 'visually captured' by readers. Franchi suggests a transition from restyling to actually rethinking the newspaper design contiguous with a newsroom re-structure.

Digital technologies offer news opportunities for knowledge, and something that newspapers could make greater use of. They can help people to find their way around increasingly abundant information, which is also inarticulate and dispersed. Communication design is important to assist readers understand the implications of the information and guide them to access it.

One of the points that might be of interest to journalists and journalism educators is that of 'visual journalism'. This concept refers to the use of photography, infographics and intelligent layouts to convey information. It is therefore – he argues – necessary to rediscover graphics and typography as key to journalistic expression (79). If the design of *Granta* was the model for cutting-edge magazines, he singles out *The Guardian* as the model for newspapers. He celebrates *The Guardian's* economy and efficiency in terms of space and story allocation.

The final part of the book focuses on the role of the designer and the production of news. Franchi points out that communication designer needs to be equipped with sound cultural baggage, communication abilities and professional integrity. He regards the designer as a re-thinker with abilities to produce new knowledge and to mediate and interact creatively with the content creators. Designers are – as Franchi suggests – multidisciplinary professionals able to promote innovation in the world of communication. Franchi concludes that the role of design must respond to an aesthetic of logic, viewed as a harmony resulting from a given combination of functioning and utility, and then respond to a formal aesthetic (227). Franchi's book is an important contribution to the study of newspapers and magazines design. It is also an essential work to understand the role of a designer working in the newspaper market.

About the Reviewer

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