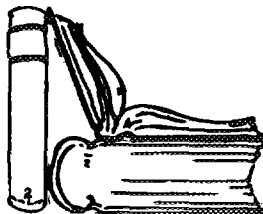


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AESTHETICS IN SCIENTIFIC COMMUNICATION

Why do some publishers persist in publishing journals with old-fashioned typographical styles? The contents pages of some of these journals are truly dull—if anything, they discourage rather than stimulate reading. Type styles change and so do the needs of readers. Revolutionary changes have taken place in the graphic arts industries. One would not suspect this by examining many of the otherwise excellent scientific journals we cover. Surely editors must realize that most readers must be selective in their reading—that they read contents pages first, before scanning the journal. Whether they read the contents page in the journal itself, or in *Current Contents*, makes little difference. In either case the contents page should stimulate the reader to make reading pleasure — not drudgery.



By following a few simple design principles, drastic improvements can be made in a contents page. For example, bold-face in article titles facilitates rapid scanning. Contrasting styles and sizes of type in authors' names and addresses definitely makes the contents page more attractive and easier to scan. Attractive "logos" for the journal title help the reader to identify his favorite journals. An infinite variety of typographical combinations is possible. Surprisingly, some of the modern typographical styles in small bold-face type are more legible than the larger old-fashioned italics or gothic.

Last September, we illustrated how the contents page of one journal could be improved. The outcome of this experiment was the immediate adoption of that experimental format by the journal tested. We are planning similar experiments but we are reluctant to offend our colleagues. In addition, we believe it is desirable to reproduce each contents page exactly as it appears in the original journal.

Naturally, artistic improvement is no substitute for information content. Many of the so-called trade journals use the best talent for typographical design since they depend on advertising for support. However, a little more thought could be given to the informativeness of some article titles. In addition, we have been trying to get more journals to include authors' addresses on their contents pages, not merely to facilitate requesting reprints, but also as a means of informing the reader where the work was performed. If each reader would write to one or two journal editors I am sure that improvements of this type would take place. For those journals which do not have modern graphic arts facilities we would be glad to be of assistance in making specific recommendations.