

THE GAZETTE:
AND IT RELEVANCE TO TODAY'S MEDIA

MALLORY LABIT

Espejo, C. (2016). The Invention of the Gazette. *Media History*, 22(3-4), 296-316.
doi:10.1080/13688804.2016.1149458

THE STANDARDIZATION OF THE GAZETTE

The Standardization of the Gazette in the 1600s.

Design standardization in the early sixteenth century laid the groundwork for the Spanish *Gazette* to set an international standard for newspaper formats. Spain's political situation was less noteworthy than other European countries; therefore allowed it journalism to steadily evolve in typographic construction. This paper discusses how the *Gazette* first got its design format from early Italian publications, and how it set the standard format for future publications.

Italian Influence

The *Gazette's* design can be contributed to Italian influences in the late sixteenth century (Espejo, 2016). At the start of the fifteenth century, Italy established itself as an epicenter for handwritten news. These handwritten newspapers that circled through Italy already featured the layout that later influenced the Spanish *Gazette*. News was arranged by geographic preference starting with Italy, followed by news from Central Europe, then the peripheral states (Espejo, 2016). They compiled short news items into one or two paragraphs (Espejo, 2011). Public opinion, political battles, propaganda, careers, and historical records were all aspects influenced by these Italian papers (DeVivo, 2005). However, the handwritten news was mundane compared to the Spanish news market (Espejo, 2016).

The Success of the Italian Design

The first periodical gazette in Spain appeared in the early 1660's and marked the beginning of an expressive step in journalism. Printed gazettes enhanced the journalistic style and sought to gain visibility in the marketplace with its distinctive design. These

THE STANDARDIZATION OF THE GAZETTE

experimental design show the exuberance of the Spanish printing press. However, gazette printers determined that a standard design should not be the same for type of newsprints (Espejo, 2016). Non-periodicals in various countries emphasized the uniqueness of its front page news to interest a particular audience. Periodical formats drew attention to fact that its news was true. (Espejo, 2016). According to Espejo, “standardization sought to increase the confidence of the consumer in the product, extending its circulation, which in turn resulted in the growing of standardization in the marketplace” (2011). Thus making sure that standardization, credibility, and circulation all go hand in hand (Espejo, 2016). The first clear trend in standardization was the elimination of textual elements such as prefaces, dedications, engravings; therefore, printers found a new front-page model to follow. The new standard front page included a standardized title, a recurrent engraving, and content below the header (Espejo, 2016).

The Spanish Gazete

The first standardization design that came from Italy became popular with printers in Madrid and Barcelona at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Thus, leading to widespread standardization throughout Spain. However, news from Italy that circulated from Italy did not have an effect on design in the printed product (Espejo, 2016). It wasn't until Rodrigo de Cabrera, a Seville printer, produced a semi-periodical covering current news, that print journalism took off in Spain. The standardization design then omitted common characters of print design and the central engraving. The Italian design started being applied to sermons, obituaries, and political speeches by Spanish printer. The new visual layout became associated with authority and credibility (Espejo, 2016). Seville

THE STANDARDIZATION OF THE GAZETTE

printers then applied the standardized design to newsbooks around 1610. This started the habitual design that continued in the 1620s and 30s and more decades to follow. All printers dedicated much of their publications to covering current news. The newsbooks were comprised of current news that made it clear what the reader should focus on, which was different than the attention-grabbing singular event the news pamphlets usually had. This process began what we refer to as a gazette. This design standard that spread throughout Southern Europe mirrored the design newspapers took during the English Civil War, which provided even more space for news.

During the late seventeenth century, newspapers in Spain were through a change to adopt the conventional design of French gazettes. The Italian design would not reappear, but it did play its part as an influence to the Spanish gazette. From the beginning of the sixteenth century, Spain continued in a stage of experimentation and creativity.

Personal Opinion

Today we see different design types based on the type of publication. Visibility and readability are still important characteristics in publication. Spanish printers discovered how different type sizes help readers see clearly the news being printed. Over the course of decades, newspaper design has changed, they've had to evolve as the world changes. The Thirty Years' War changed the way gazettes chose how to cover current news on the front pages. Still to this day we say specialized events are often covered in great detail first in newspaper. Specific events and different cultures have each molded design differently. For example, Asian newspapers keep a consistent design. They plan their news around issues that affect its readers. Even though you can't see the direct connection, the concept of

THE STANDARDIZATION OF THE GAZETTE

finding a standard design is still in effect today, which is why the Spanish Gazette is credited with starting that standardization process.

Newspapers today are starting to go through a redesign process, just as Spanish printers had to redesign their papers to include whatever news was relevant at the time. (Haught, 2010). The problem with redesigning a newspaper is that it can change the newspapers focus. In the case of the *El Paso Times*, a one-size-fits-all concept did not work for them but I redesign left the paper without a true focus. With Italian influence, the next step to evolve the Spanish *Gazette* was to experiment with size and headings. Today newspapers have a relatively effective design but because people are not reading newspapers, it lends itself to a redesign. (Haught, 2010). Color pages were introduced to engage the cultural background of readers. Prior to the set standardization design of the Spanish *Gazette*, printers didn't necessarily use color, but had to find a way to adapt their printing designs based on circulation and readership. (Haught, 2010).

In my opinion, the Spanish *Gazette* did more than just provide a standard design to follow. It gave printers the notion that design could evolve to fit the needs to news at the time. We still follow this notion today. Newspapers constantly have to evolve to remain relevant and keep their readership. This idea to keep evolving has benefited many newspapers throughout the centuries.

THE STANDARDIZATION OF THE GAZETTE

References

DeVivo, Filippo. "Paolo Sarpi and the Uses of Information in Seventeenth-Century Venice."

Media History, 11:1, 38. London: Routledge. 2005.

Espejo, C. (2011). European Communication Networks In The Early Modern Age. *Media*

History, 17(2), 189-202. doi:10.1080/13688804.2011.554730

Haight, Ma hew Joseph, "New Newspaper : Examining the Role of Design in the

Modern Print Edition" (2010). eses,