

Create a storytelling theme

Janet McKinney for 2018 HSJI--Yearbook Editors and Section Editors

Yearbook journalists share the opportunity and responsibility to show and tell about all aspects of the school year through verbal and visual storytelling techniques. Writers, photographers and designers create verbal/visual packages for the yearbook to capture what is unique that particular year. To unify the story and set a tone, yearbook staff members brainstorm ideas for a theme concept beyond a mere catch phrase. The full concept springboards relevant, original, imaginative coverage of the school year enhanced through creative cool tools.

To define the full concept of the theme, yearbook journalists develop the theme through unifying graphic elements, words, photographs, color or a combination of elements. Layering of the verbal/visual concept unifies the yearbook. The well-conceived and easily identifiable theme concept should be developed in the following places:

Cover--The cover is designed to enhance the overall theme presentation. Theme, name of yearbook and year are on the front cover. Theme, name of yearbook, name of school, city and state, year and volume number are on the spine. It is optional to continue cover design on the back cover.

Title Page/Opening/Closing--Design of title page, opening and closing spreads is distinctively different from the remainder of the yearbook. Essential information on the title page includes title of yearbook, volume number, year, school name, street address, city/state/zip, phone number, fax number, website, student enrollment and number on faculty and staff. Point size for required information and size of verbal/visual graphic theme design repeated from the cover of the yearbook are designed in appropriate sizes to complement an action photograph that supports the theme. To develop the theme and unify the story of the year, opening and closing may be one or two spreads. Opening copy introduces the theme and creatively shows the reader how the theme is relevant to this school and year by incorporating specific details about this particular year. Closing copy effectively brings the book to a close without summarizing the year, but with specific details and descriptions of events unique to the year. All copy, captions and creative headlines reinforce the theme both verbally and visually. Opening and closing copy is usually a larger point size (14-18 points) than traditional body copy. To appeal to all student readers, photographs relate to the theme and capture a variety of students involved in a multitude of activities.

Dividers--One or two pages introduce each section of the yearbook to continue theme development on dividers; however, the design is distinctive from verbal/visual packages in the rest of the yearbook. Divider copy communicates with the readers how the theme is relevant to this section of the yearbook with specific details describing this school year. Photographs relate to the theme as well as to the overall coverage in each section.

Endsheets--Design on front and back endsheets are graphically coordinated with the cover design; however, the front and back endsheets may be different, as long as each is coordinated with the

cover design. Table of contents for each section of the yearbook complete with spin-offs may be incorporated into the front endsheet design. Photographs and complete captions are optional.

Folios--Every page has a complete folio package that includes page number and relevant page or spread content information. Folio package design is graphically coordinated to support the theme.

Index--The index includes a complete alphabetical listing of students, faculty, organizations, sports and advertisers. The design is enhanced by including copy and/or photos of reader interest that are related to the theme. Team and group photographs with appropriate and consistent head sizes may be included in the index. Scoreboards for teams may be on coverage sports spreads or adjacent to team photograph in the index or in an athletic/sports directory at the end of the sports section.

Colophon and Acknowledgments--A complete and accurate colophon is on the last page of the index, on the last page of the yearbook or may be on the back endsheet. The colophon includes publishing specifics: place of publication, paper, colors, type styles, yearbook publishing company representative, staff list including adviser and awards. It is optional to include positions with staff names. Acknowledgments should include more than merely the name of the person(s). Give reader specific details of how that person was part of the overall story. Continue layers of the concept ideas through typography or unifying graphic elements.

Theme Concept Questions

Once the yearbook staff agrees on a theme, take time to discuss how all yearbook journalists will work together to produce a unified story of the school year. For everyone to share the passion with a purpose to produce a yearbook students will want to read from cover to cover, empower all yearbook staff members to contribute ideas in brainstorming sessions. Answer questions together.

How does the theme naturally tell the story of your school?

How does the theme relate to stories about this particular school year?

How does the theme concept convey the idea of relevant content inside the yearbook?

How does the theme concept provide a logical sequence for reporting the year?

What about the theme concept will appeal to students at your school?

How is the theme concept simple, understandable and practical?

What verbal/visual concepts will be repeated to layer concept ideas and unify the yearbook?

How will you develop spin-offs (related phrases and concepts) to use throughout the yearbook to develop a unified theme through insightful storytelling?

What photographs may be taken to capture the story of the year with thematic purpose?