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Jul17

[Vienna](#)

[Extra, extra! Read all about it: What makes an effective front page](#)

How does the *N&E* editorial team decide what will appear on the front page of *News & Events* each issue? Some *N&E* critics may choose to believe that our stories are tossed onto a flight of stairs, and the ones that land on the first four steps will make the front page. Well, our lead stories aren't actually selected that way, but truth be told, there are several occasions in which our issues could have a number of potential lead stories. We either have to decide which will appear "above the fold" and make the most impact, or split the page into two halves and run side-by-side lead stories that are equally important. No matter what eventually appears on the front page, the bottom line is to produce a publication—and a catchy front page—that is relevant and appealing to our readers.

In each issue we attempt to run a mix of hard and soft news on the front page. Hard news, such as a multi-million dollar donation or President Simone's retirement announcement, certainly warrants a prominent place on the front page. In fact, these will probably be our lead, or top, stories because of their importance to the RIT community and their overall appeal to campus and community readers. However, the appearance of soft news stories on the front page, such as an interesting student profile, create a sense of balance and variety. There should be something for everyone on our front pages.

The next issue of *News & Events*, which hits stands July 20, will reflect exactly this. We'll be able to show a solid representation of hard and soft news, not only on our front page, but throughout the issue. Take a look—and we ask for your feedback.

I've found a pretty good Web page that simply explains a bit about news judgment and what constitutes news. It's from the [Media Awareness Network](#).

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1. [Pete](#)
Jul17

With all of the preparation that goes into layout out a magazine/newspaper/newsletter, how does the occasional 'uninteresting' story make it to the front. What kinds of forces exist that work against freshness, novelty, and prominence in the publication business? If not at RIT, then your past experience?

2. [Mike Saffran](#)
Jul17

Pete, I feel the need to challenge the premise of your question that certain stories are "uninteresting." (To whom?) So, rather than address your question directly, I'll answer with an apt, if somewhat timeworn, cliché: Different strokes for different folks. A story that's "uninteresting" to you might be the first story read by someone else. If we were to knowingly print a front-page story that was of no interest to all of our readers, we would be performing a disservice to them and the institute, and we would be derelict in our responsibilities. I'm confident that we neither perform such a disservice nor are derelict in our duties. In the words of the English writer G.K. Chesterton (as cited in *Newswriting: From Lead to "30,"* by William Metz): "There is no such thing as an uninteresting subject; there are only uninterested people."

3. [Pete](#)
Jul18

Mike, though I appreciate the angle, I was suggesting that stories that have no subjective value to anyone sometimes make the front page. I was looking for musings on a more political plane.

4. [Mike Saffran](#)
Jul18

Pete, it strikes me as though you're asking the same question, but substituting "no subjective value" for "uninteresting." Again, I challenge the premise of your question—no subjective value to whom? The link Vienna provided to the Media Awareness Network provides a good overview on the "qualities of news" (which come straight out of a journalism class). In Public Relations Writing, I taught them as: [Timeliness](#) [Proximity](#) [Prominence](#) [Consequence](#) [Human interest](#) I challenge you to identify a front-page *News & Events* story that hasn't lived up to at least one of these news qualities.

5. [Pete](#)
Jul18

It's true. *N&E* front-page stories manage to touch upon one or more of these qualities, and overall, they're excellent. I guess it's just the abuse that can sometimes occur when you mix PR with authority. I think though, that I'm treading on ice, and that I'll refrain from further commentary on the subject.

6. [Mike Saffran](#)

Jul18

Aw, just when it was getting fun, Pete :-)) I know where you were headed with your point, but I stick by my original response. Having said that . . . are we ever influenced by, for example, members of the RIT administration regarding story selection? Of course, because we work in public relations (see my earlier post, [More on who we are and what we do](#)). But we also regularly defend our decisions based on sound news judgment from, collectively, many, many years of experience. To suggest otherwise tends to impugn our professionalism.

7. [John Follaco](#)

Jul18

Newspaper front pages are frequently debated by editors, reporters and media savvy readers everywhere. It's prime real estate—and what one might consider the best news doesn't ALWAYS land there. That doesn't necessarily mean someone made a poor decision, either. Take a look at USA Today, for example. USA Today has an abundance of critics, who often bill the newspaper as McPaper, but I'm not one of them. It is what it is—and it's NOT the New York Times. But it doesn't claim to be, either. It's a traveler's/newsstand newspaper. It frequently devotes a large chunk of above the fold newshole to tease sports/entertainment stories that are inside the paper. This comes at the expense of what some may call more "important" national or international news. But it does this to sell newspapers—and it's effective. Those stories are popular. Fortunately, in News & Events, we don't have to sell advertising to pay the bills (or my salary, thankfully). But we do want readers, so front page story selection is critical. Like she described in her blog, Vienna and Co. have a wide-range of factors to consider when selecting front page stories and news worthiness is chief among them. That doesn't mean others won't disagree. I'm sure someone always will. It's the nature of the industry. I like to take a look at the Newseum's Web site where it publishes the front pages of newspapers across the country. As a media nerd, I find it fun to see how different papers played the news differently each day. Like Mike said, "Different strokes for different folks."

8. [Pete](#)

Jul18

So part of being professional is not being defensive about what goes above the fold, but rather, being smart about it? Choosing your battles (if battling is even an option), and listening to folks who are familiar with both the message and the medium?

9. [Pete](#)

Jul19

This is mildly relevant: <http://www.newsdesigner.com/archives/002574.php>

10. [John Follaco](#)

Jul19

Pete, I still think you're missing the point a little bit. It's not about "battling". It's about discussion, weighing various factors and ultimately coming to a decision that's hopefully in the best interest of the publication and the community it serves. Sometimes these discussions get heated, because the people involved are so passionate about their work. That's fine, too, as long as it stays professional. It's impossible to please everybody, because these decisions are so subjective, but you do the best you can. And you use sound news judgement, and experienced decision makers, to back it up.

11. [Pete](#)

Jul19

Yea, I tried to qualify the 'battling' with my parenthetical bit about battling not necessarily being an option. I guess it was a poor choice of words. Overall, I agree. That's how business goes.

12. [A clinic in heaven](#)

Jul21

[...] At News & Events, most headlines are written by Vienna (as managing editor and copy editor). But during final proofing, other editors and I occasionally suggest revisions. So, as another way of taking you "inside the pages" (as Vienna did in her recent post on front-page design) and to share more about the craft of writing (one of my favorite topics), here's advice from Garst and Bernstein (along with some examples from News & Events): [...]

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The Tiger Beat takes you behind the scenes with the members of [RIT University News](#)—the news and public relations division of [Rochester Institute of Technology](#). Get the "story behind the story" and an insider's look at who we are and what we do to publicize RIT news.

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