UNIT 4 ELECTRONIC EDITING

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we shall touch upon the importance of the page make-up and the role of the electronic devices in designing the pages of a newspaper. After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- enlist the contribution of the electronic revolution to the newspaper industry;
- describe the role of the computers in providing the typographic options;
- explain the importance of the software programs in the page make-up; and
- explain the advantages of the desktop publishing.

Activity 1

Before you proceed with this unit, engage yourself in an exercise.

You are aware of the week-end supplement that almost each newspaper of reasonable standard provides for the readers. Usually, it is quality-wise better printed and definitely colourful and attractive.

Take the latest supplements of two newspapers published in your area, one of English and the other of your mother-tongue (not English).

Compare the two supplements on the following points:

- Get-up/layout;
- Use of photographs/illustrations /graphics;
- Combination of colours; and
- The content.

Write, at least, one reason for each difference.

Use the following chart to note your findings.
### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Having studied the principles that apply to the editing of the textual and visual material, besides the concept of the design and layout of the newspapers, and the role of the typography in it, we shall now briefly discuss the role of the electronics in enhancing the appearance of a newspaper.

### 4.2 ELECTRONIC REVOLUTION AND THE NEWSPAPER INDUSTRY

Speedy transmission of news is as important as the actual news gathering. It has been made possible by the advanced electronic equipment. Increasingly, apart from the speed of the delivery of the information, serious thought is being given to the aesthetic presentation of the textual and visual material on a printed page. This is being treated on par with the editing of information, for both content and language.

The computers and word processors are being used in page make-up. The painstaking manual typesetting and page layouts are a thing of the past. The expertise of the graphic designers and the options made available by the computers have together provided a variety of page designs to choose from.

The facsimile machines, popularly called the 'fax machines,' have proven themselves to be indispensable in reporting back to a newspaper office from the location of an event. These facilitate faster despatch of news from the newspaper office too. Let us now see what functions the electronic equipment must perform to meet the requirements of the newspaper office.

### 4.3 NEWSROOM REQUIREMENTS

The newsroom is a place in the newspaper office, where the news items arrive, and are sorted out. The faster the incoming flow of news, the greater the speed of production of the various pages of the newspaper. The photographs and illustrations need to be quickly located or prepared to supplement the information in the text.

News is a perishable commodity. The newspaper staff have to be on their toes to ensure
that important news items are processed quickly, to meet the deadlines of publication. Speed is a prerequisite of the newsroom, and its importance in the production of a daily newspaper could not be emphasized enough. Speed is essential in the following aspects of the newspaper production:

- in communicating information;
- in processing information;
- in page-designing and layout;
- in printing and production; and
- in packing and distribution.

Rapid transmission of news becomes meaningless, if information being imparted is inaccurate. This might even affect the paper’s credibility. In this context the accuracy of the data and apparently minor details of spellings and language, assume importance. Such correction work is done with the help of the computer and ‘fax’ machines.

Sometimes, to give in-depth treatment to an issue, complete information might have to be provided in the form of the historical data or facts about the events preceding the current ones. The computers are an ideal system for storing data in their memory and this data could be retrieved at a later stage. The computers act as the data banks, and are very useful sources of reference of the newspapers.

The computers permit data manoeuvrability to suit the needs of the page designers. This might become necessary in the presentation of the same news item in a different format. The computers could even be programmed for an unlimited supply of type faces. Software for a variety of page designs exist and continue to be invented. The typography, thus, is another requirement of the newsrooms.

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Check Your Progress 1

Note:  
1. Use the space given below for your answers.
2. Compare your answers with the ones given at the end of this unit.

1) What are the two advanced electronic equipments which have proved to be boons to the newsroom?

20 State, at least, one reason each as to why they are booms?

3) How do the computers help a newsroom staff to be accurate in making easy references?
Activity 2

From your personal experience as a news reporter, you might know that a lap-top computer is the latest gift from the field of electronics to the world of newspaper technology. Who knows, your typewriter might be lying there gathering fine layers of dust, while you prepare your report on a lap-top! Now, think of five ways in which a computer excels a typewriter. Would you consider a computer as a super-typewriter? You could use the space provided below for your activity.

4.4 COMPUTERS

In your activity just concluded, you might have listed the special functions of a computer. Let us now study some fundamentals, some computers and their functions.

A computer is an automatic electronic apparatus for making calculations, besides storing and processing information. For this data along with instructions on how to process the same have to be fed into the computer. That is called the input. The result obtained from the computer after processing of the data is called the output.

4.4.1 The Basic difference between Hardware and Software

The hardware components of the computers refer to all the physical parts, viz., electronic and mechanical parts, such as the keyboard, visual display unit, central processing unit and the printer. The hardware becomes operational when fed with standardised instructions.

The software components of a computer refer to the set of instructions given to it to perform a specified task. These are fed to the computer in a language understood by it called a program. Thus, a computer can be programmed to perform specific tasks.

4.4.2 Hardware Components of a Computer System

- **Input device** are those parts of a computer, which are used to feed information and instructions to it. There are the keyboard, key punch, cardreader, etc.

  The function of the standard typewriter-style keyboard is to convert information to the electronic signals that represent different letters of the alphabet, characters and numbers.

- **Central Processing Unit (CPU)** is the main part of the computer. Processing of information and calculation of data take place here. It is made up of the following components:
— Memory,
— The Control Unit, and
— The Arithmetic and Logic Unit.

The memory is a device that could receive and store data. Later, this data could be produced on demand, i.e., retrieved.

The control unit of the CPU coordinates the execution the programmed instructions by first selecting the order in which they are to be performed, and then directing them to the other components to execute the necessary action.

The A.L.U. is a sub-unit of CPU, which performs arithmetical calculations, and makes logical decisions.

- **Output devices** are those parts of a computer through which one could get the final output, and which enable us to observe the actual processing of information. These are the screen or the Visual Display Unit (VDU) and the printer. The VDU is a monitor which is used to display the input data and the CPU the output of the processed information.

The printer is used to print the result of the computation.

### Check Your Progress 2

**Note:**

i) Fill in the blanks with the appropriate words.

ii) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) The expanded form of the CPU is ________________.

2) The VDU is the short form of ________________.

3) The CPU consists of ________________ and ________________.

4) The component of the CPU which is responsible for performing calculations is called ________________.

5) The computer keyboard is an ________________ device.

### 4.4.3 Software Components of a Computer System

The term 'software' includes all the computer programs encoded in the computer language. These programs are commercially sold as packages, and contain very precise instructions to carry out specific tasks.

The trained software consultants prepare such programs according to the requirements of their clientele.

The terms 'information' or 'data' include all the facts and figures that record an event, situation or activity. The 'processing' is any activity done by a computer that might involve calculations, classifications, sorting out or manipulation operations on information and data.

The basic steps involved in a certain program are mentioned here, in brief.

**Algorithm:** After identifying a task, a finite sequence of procedures is formulated. It is made up of mathematical and/or logical operations designed to solve the problem or task. This sequence is called an Algorithm, and it is written in English.

**Flowchart:** The next step is to prepare a flowchart. It is a diagramatic representation of the steps previously written down in an algorithm to solve a problem. A standard set
of symbols are used to represent various operations. The order, in which these operations are to be executed, is indicated when writing the computer programs. The flowchart is then translated into a program written in computer language. A package like ‘NEWS’ is capable of providing various fonts and typefaces that could be used in a newspaper office.

A variety of software packages are available in the market place. The software consultants might have to be approached to help select the most appropriate choice.

4.5 THE WORD PROCESSING SYSTEM

The word-processing is a tool, which assists the user while compiling reports, especially in a newspaper office where enormous amounts of written material keep arriving at the desk. The text is first fed into the computer, and the word-processing software is then used to rearrange it in a required format. This could mean any combination of the following functions:

- to set the left and right margins of a column;
- to set the top and bottom margins of a column;
- to prepare the headlines and footnotes;
- to realign and even autoalign words, sentences for paragraphs;
- to underline certain words;
- to print certain words in bold characters;
- to correct or even delete portions of the text;
- to provide a variety of type faces; and
- to rearrange spacing between lines.

The word-processing software packages are indispensable on another count. These help in preparing pages for publication at a faster rate.

Check Your Progress 3

Note:  
1) State whether the following statements are true or false.
   ii) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) A computer could work without being provided instructions. ( )
2) A programme is a set of instructions. ( )
3) The computer programmes could be categorised as hardware. ( )
4) The word-processing software packages work only at a slow pace. ( )

4.6 PAGE DESIGNING

The arrangement of captions, photographs and graphic on a page would have to facilitate easy reading, besides being visually appealing. Certain parameters of format are fixed for any newspaper, such as those of the page size, print area, number of columns, positions of mast-head, allotment of articles according to their categories and page titles. The page make-up artist works both independently and with the software packages to give a variety of options for the design of pages or their layout.
**Activity 3**

As a lay-reader of the newspapers you might have come across eye-catching weekend supplements. These incorporate colour reprints or advertisements and photographs, and illustrations accompany the feature stories. State any three aspects of the final product, in print, which you appreciated or particularly disliked in terms of the print, type faces, placement of different articles and their juxtaposition, etc. Then read on to find out how much work goes into the preparation of a newspaper. Use the space given below for your activity.


**4.7 DESKTOP PUBLISHING**

The Desktop Publishing, the DPT for short refers to both hardware and software that are involved in preparing high quality prints of pages, once these are composed satisfactorily. The prints are used as artwork, and the actual duplication is done by offset printing, owing to the high costs involved in the DTP operations. The hardware of a DTP includes a large-sized colour monitor of the VDU and a laser printer apart from the CPU, which is programmed to suit the DTP software. The laser printer involves a high-speed, high-quality printer technology.

The DTP software consist of programmes to compose pages and their layout. These perform the function of the word-processing and automatic margin alignment, providing a variety of type-faces, page-numbering, etc.

**4.7.1 Advantages**

We have seen how the DTP is incomparable when it comes to composing a page according to specifications. It handles the entire process with ease, besides completing the task at a rapid pace. It permits quick experimentation with placements of pictures and graphics, testing the visual appeal of different type faces, incorporating even last-minute changes in page layout. All this editing could be done by simply referring to the required information after calling it on the screen (VDU).

**4.7.2 Limitations**

A few limitations persist in the new DTP packages too. These are listed here:

- It is not possible to obtain on the VDU an exact copy of the colours, as they would appear in the final print.
- The monitor is capable of showing the character in white against a background, whereas the actual product is black or white.
• The monitor shows only restricted areas of each page. Such fragmented views make it difficult for an entire page to be visualised.

• A change once made in the typography might not eventually be printed as the package would not be programmed for it.

### 4.8 USING ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT IN THE NEWSPAPER DESIGN

Having a variety of page designs to choose from is alright in as much as it is innovative and appealing to the readers. It is a known fact that the appearance of a newspaper contributes to its having greater or lesser readership. There are any number of readers who get addicted to their daily papers just because they take a liking to its layout and design. They identify themselves with it. Any abrupt changes in format could mean a downward trend in its circulation. Thus, one finds only gradual changes being brought about. In the magazine market, we have a unique example in the *Illustrated Weekly of India*, which lost its valuable readers to other magazines, once it changed its format from a magazine to a tabloid.

### 4.9 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have briefly mentioned the importance of different electronic apparatuses in the newsroom, and their basic functions.

The salient requirements of a newsroom are speed, accuracy of information, memory, ability to maneuver data and easy access to a variety of type faces.

All these requirements are fulfilled by the electronic devices like the computers, facsimile machines and desktop publishing systems.

The efficient working of the newspaper offices depends in large part on these electronic gadgets.

Many innovations in the page design have been made with the expertise of graphic and page designers. Their work has been made easy with the arrival of the computer and desktop publishing systems on the printing scene.

Notwithstanding the available variety of type faces and page designs, the page designers must keep the preferences and the reading habits of the audience in sight. Each publication has a tradition which is flexible enough to accommodate innovative changes in the design layout with the passage of time. However, the readers might welcome such change only to a certain point. Both content and style of presentation matter in attracting readership.

### 4.10 SUGGESTED READING

Gibson, Martin; *Editing in The Electronic Era*, Prentice — Hall of India Ltd., New Delhi.


### 4.11 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: MODEL ANSWERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Check Your Progress 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) The facsimile machine and the computer machine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) The facsimile machine helps in transmission of the data, dummy layout of newspapers, etc. from any point of the globe to another in a matter of seconds.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The computer machines help in writing and rewriting news stories in the same text without any scars.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3) The computer machines help in writing, rewriting and over-writing on the same page without the hassles of retyping afresh. These also store a lot of data in memory, which could easily be used to write a story accurately and correctly.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Check Your Progress 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Central Processing Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>2) Visual Display Unit</td>
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<td>3) Memory, Control Unit, Arithmetic and Logic Unit.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4) A.L.U.</td>
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<td>5) Input.</td>
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<td>2) True</td>
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<td>3) False</td>
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<td>4) False</td>
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<td>5) False</td>
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