Appearances of the Paper Paper and the Web Paper
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Abstract
In this paper we compare the first issue (1830) of the Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet with a current issue on the web, 173 years later. There are many similarities between the first “paper newspaper” and the current “paper on the web”. Main differences are the different materials available nowadays, and the animation, the search facility and the activity afforded by the Internet. However, to some respect this “web paper” is more confusing than the old newspaper. This “web paper” does not utilize all opportunities available for a fruitful interactivity.

Introduction
In modern society we are used to get frequent updates of news. In comparison with broadcasting and Internet traditional print media are “slow”. We get the latest news on television, on the radio, and on the Internet. After the first plane crashed into WTC in New York people in many different countries followed the second terrorist attack as it happened. Millions of “eye witnesses” may see the images of accidents, fires, wars, and other disasters to humans and to our societies. In 2002 about ten percent of students in our distance courses had their browser start settings pointing at a newspaper. It seems that these students find newspapers the most important starting point in their Internet activities.

In the 1960s the famous media expert Marshall McLuhan coined the expression “The Medium is the Message” (McLuhan, 1964). This expression has given rise to considerable confusion. In the 1990s it was often said “The Message is the Medium”, and Pettersson (1993, p. 6) claimed that “Technology is the servant, and the message, the idea, is the master.” However, despite the discussion about the nature of media it is enlightening to analyse the activities afforded by various appearances of the newspaper.

Background to the Analysis
There are of course many different ways of analysing the appearance of a newspaper. We may study various aspects of journalism, text as well as images. We may study the role of the newspaper in society. We may study the economics of newspaper publishing, etc. For our particular purpose of comparing the appearance of a new medium (the “web paper”) with the appearance of a very old traditional paper, we selected a qualitative approach rather than a quantitative. Within the qualitative approach we selected to analyse the graphical form rather than the content. Since we are analysing papers over a long period in time, a rhetorical approach would be interesting. Finally, since we analyse a web based newspaper, it follows that the interactions enabled by the web provide an interesting point of departure. We thus selected the following three approaches: (1) a graphical approach, (2) a rhetorical approach and (3) an interactive approach.

The Graphical Approach
In the graphical approach, the appearances are studied from a visual point of view, “what we see”. The layout of text and pictures is important for presenting a message on a printed page as well as on a (computer) screen (Pettersson, 2002). The division of the content into columns common in newspapers are related to a corresponding division of type of information. In a traditional paper, the limits for the material are clearly visible, whereas the limits are fluid on the web paper. The reasons for indefinite limits are firstly that readers may have different sizes of screens, secondly that the designers may not want to decide on a definite limit, in order to benefit from the indefiniteness.

The Rhetorical Approach
In the rhetorical approach, the visual appearances are analysed from a rhetorical point of view. The aim of rhetoric is to explain, argue and persuade. Classical rhetoric may be applied to the visual appearance of a paper. Let us therefore go back to Aristoteles (384–322 BC) to see how his ideas about rhetoric may be used also today. Aristoteles argued that it is possible to make a systematics for rhetoric, in a similar way as he made a systematics for logics (see Aristoteles, 1991).

In rhetoric the rules were based on the experience of persons, in logic on formal reasoning. Whereas the basis of logics is the syllogism, the basis for rhetoric is the enthymeme. A syllogism is a form of logic conclusion that is based on the following three steps: a general rule, an example, and a conclusion that combines the example with the general rule. In the enthymeme, similarities and comparisons substitute logical conclusions.

Aristoteles suggested that there are three main types of rhetorical appeal: (1) ethos, (2) pathos and (3) logos. Ethos is how the sender presents him/herself through the
message. Pathos is the emotional content of the message. Logos is the rational content of the message.

The Interactive Approach

In the interactive approach, knowledge from Human Computer Interaction, HCI, is applied to the design of both the paper paper and the web paper. In this study the concept of interaction may be described as the opportunity for the reader to find and select information to be read.

In a traditional paper, this opportunity is mainly offered by turning the pages. Usually a reader is familiar with his or her own newspaper, and its specific structure (Pasternack and Utt, 1983; Jarlbro, 1989). It is rather easy to find various sections and different kinds of information. It may however, be complicated to find specific information.

On the web, the interactivity mainly consists in pressing (usually by the mouse) various “buttons”, placed at different positions on the image on the screen. How will the appearance of the information on the screen “afford” the reader to select the information wanted? “Affordance” has been an important, although somewhat vague, concept within Human Computer Interaction (e.g. Norman, 1988). The idea is that the appearance of an artefact, in this case a computer screen, “invites” people to perform certain actions rather than others. If these actions are compatible with what people want to accomplish, the affordance is helpful. Otherwise, the affordance may be deficient or misleading.

A more practical point of departure for HCI consists in lists of proposals for designers of computer artefacts. Concerning web pages, Jacob Nielsen has presented several lists of suggestions (http://www.useit.com/). These lists may of course be criticised for being too rigid and not allowing creativity. However, some aspects of the list may be used in analysing our chosen web page.

The Material Analysed

For this analysis we have chosen two newspaper front pages. Both are taken from Aftonbladet, the oldest newspaper still available in Sweden.

The first issue of Aftonbladet was printed on December 6, 1830. At the start the title was Aftonbladet. The first newspaper was four pages, printed in quarto (Figure 1). The first section is horizontal and contains four lines. The first line has the number of the issue (N:1.) and the year of publication (1830.). The second line has the main part of the name of the newspaper, AFTONBLADET. This part of the name is large and bold. The third line only has got one letter, capital I, (in). The fourth line starts with the day, Måndag (Monday), and ends with the date of publication, den 6 December. (the 6th December.). Centred on this line is the remaining part of the title, STOCKHOLM, set in outlined capitals.

The web edition

The web edition is in colour (Figures 2 and 3). Colour is not an economic matter on the web. Colour can be used without traditional restrictions, and it is used for information as well as for decoration.

The first horizontal section captures the attention of the reader to the name of the paper, to the place and date of publication, as well as to the issue number.

The second horizontal section is set in italics, maybe seven points type. It does not at all capture our attention in the same way. This section includes information concerning the availability and the cost of the newspaper, and to the opportunities of sending advertisement materials to the newspaper.

There are three columns below the two horizontal sections. Each column is divided into smaller sections by horizontal lines. There are 18 headings on a total of 21 sections. All headings are centre justified. The first heading is set in italics. Most sections have a heading set in capitals. One of these is set in italics. Two headings are set with bold black letter type in a larger type. These headings are not in capitals. Three sections have no headings. In all sections the running text is set in small type, maybe seven points. Thirteen sections only have one paragraph.

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Figure 2.
Aftonbladet, 2003, April 28, upper part of front web page.
The size of a web paper cannot be calculated in mm or inches, since the screens on which the paper is presented differ. However, on a common computer, the first page covers “three screens”. Thus the reader has to scroll the text in order to see the whole page. The view of a page will change continuously, and therefore readers will get different visual impressions during reading.

The page is divided horizontally as well as vertically. The first horizontal section contains the name AFTONBLADET in capitals as well as some other information. However, this horizontal section does not cover the whole width of the page. At the very right there is a column consisting of advertisements.

The vertical division produces four columns, a narrow one to the left, a wider in the middle, another narrow one in the middle, and a wider one to the right. These columns are further marked by colours, the narrow ones by yellow, and the wider ones by white. Thus, the columns are easily distinguished from one another. Vertical rulers are not needed. Within the columns, different information is distinguished by headings as well as by lines.

The left hand narrow column is an index, and will be further discussed below. The wider white column contains the main content of the newspaper, and includes some pictures. This column is further divided into two columns at irregular intervals. The next narrow column consists of introductions to articles in the paper. The wider white column to the right consists of advertisements.

The general layout clearly distinguishes different sections from one another in the horizontal direction. However, since it is possible to scroll the page, the vertical distinctions are not as clear. They may be distinguished by the end of the screen as well as by the marks on the web-page itself. This is of course similar to any computer application that uses the scrolling device for moving around in the material (see also the interaction section).

Comparison

There are many similarities in the visual appearances of the two media. Both have a horizontal division at the head of the page. Both have vertical divisions of columns separated by lines and headings. It is interesting to note that the traditional separation into columns is still upheld in the web. This may have some advantages for the readers, particularly when scrolling is considered.

As to differences between the issues we first see that the visibility of the name of the journal on the web page is somewhat blurred by the amount of other information surrounding the name.

Another difference is the separation of advertisements from the edited material in vertical columns on the web
page rather than the continuing text in the first issue, separated from the advertisements by a line and a heading.

The columns on the web page can easily have varying widths. This is far more complicated in print media. Thus, a web page has other means of proposing the relative importance of the columns than the paper issue. Also, the colours of the column facilitate separating different materials from one another. However, at the same time, the varying column widths within a main column may confuse a reader who would like to have an overview over the page as a whole while scrolling.

The inclusion of pictures in colour on the web page may be the most apparent difference. However, it should be noted that printed newspapers today have an increasing number of pictures in colour. The pictures may make the page less monotone, but may also detract attention from the textual content. Further analysis of the pictures and the text will be made below. Parts of a text and pictures may also be animated. Animation is of course not possible in print media.

To conclude, the graphical analysis shows that the main differences between the issues consist in new features offered by new technical means. Some of these make the outlook more pleasant (pictures) and easy to survey (colours), others make the outlook more confusing (blurring information and varying column widths within a column). The main drawback of the web page lies in the non-existent divisions into “pages”, and the reader does not know its vertical size. In our view the first page should serve as an introduction to the rest, and the reader may want to know where this introduction ends.

Visual rhetoric

An analysis according to the rhetorical appeals of ethos, pathos and logos is not possible without also considering some of the content of the newspapers. As will be apparent below these differ a lot.

1830 issue

The content of the first page of the 1830 issue is dominated by advertisements of various kinds. They may concern free positions, auctions or summons. Legal notices are also posted. The second part of the first page, here read as “Diverse Kungörelser” is marked by a different typography, and include beyond summons notices regarding theatres and concerts. Finally, under the heading of “Utländska Nyheter” comes the news, where the international news are first presented.

Let us now consider the self-presentation of this issue, the “ethos” aspect. As already mentioned, the main part of the name of the newspaper occupies the full width of the paper, and dominates the page. Moreover, the No 1 and the year, 1830, also take prominent positions. The ethos of this presentation is thus stressing the primacy of the paper, and bringing out the name.

Both in content and form the logos aspect dominates the newspaper. The form is text-only (due to technical limitations of the printing press). The only variation in form is the typography. The black letter type used for “Diverse Kungörelser”, i.e. public notices is the same as for the “Utländska Nyheter” (international news). This indicates that there is no intention of distinguishing between public information and edited material.

The web edition

The web edition includes advertisements and news as well as indexes to news found at other parts. There are no public notices on the first page, probably due to the fact that there nowadays is a particular journal in Sweden that presents all public notices. However, there are some job offers already at the first page, in contrast to a current paper newspaper, where such ads are usually referred to the last few pages.

The self-presentation is mainly marked by the name that, as mentioned above, is surrounded by irrelevant information, mainly consisting of commercial material. We may interpret this as a somewhat subdued self-image, where advertisements are as important as the journal itself. Thus the ethos aspect is rather weak.

The presentation of the index and the short news parts mainly cover the logos aspect. The job offers are presented in text only format, and are mainly straight-forward presentations of jobs.

The ethos aspect may be found in the selection of the news to be presented at the first page. The first two headings are the following:

“Old man hit by baseball-bat” (no picture).
“Water bottles leak poisons” (picturing two bottles).

These two news stories have the largest headings. The order of them indicates something of the ethos of the newspaper: personal interest ranges higher than general interest. This interpretation is further supported by the use of pictures: Out of 21 picture positions, six are concerned with objects and 15 with people. Most personal pictures are placed in the yellow column.

Comparison

The ethos of the early newspaper seems to be more prominent, whereas the pathos of the web-page is more apparent, both by the priority of personal interest and by
the inclusion of mainly pictures with portraits. The personal interest of the web page is totally lacking in the early newspaper.

The interaction aspect
The interaction aspect is here regarded as the opportunity of the reader to select material to read. In the paper paper, this opportunity is restricted to reading selectively, and turning the pages.

In the web paper, however, there are more opportunities for interaction. The reader may of course read selectively, but there is also the opportunity of scrolling the page, and jumping to new information by the use of the index or other linking devices.

These two opportunities present both advantages and disadvantages. The advantage is that the reader does not have to read the material sequentially, as in the early paper. The disadvantage is that the hypertext nature of the material may leave the reader "lost in hyperspace" (Edwards & Hardman, 1989). We thus have to consider the navigation opportunities of the readers.

Parts of the first page of the web-paper serve as an anchoring point for the navigation. When readers open a link to another page, the index is still available for navigating to other places. However, when scrolling to the bottom of the front page, the index is no longer available.

The opportunity to open new pages conflict to some extent with the scrolling opportunity. Since readers only see a screen-full at a time, it is easy for them to forget scrolling and only use the linking facility. They may thereby (unintentionally) lose the part of the material that is below their screen depth. One of the early suggestions by Jacob Nielsen (1995) dealt with minimizing the need for scrolling. This may not be so important for habitual users of the web. However many new users approach this medium and may be vulnerable to this kind of difficulty.

It should also be noted that much effort is invested in getting people to read newspapers and other information on the web "on the go", that is on mobile devices as telephones, that have much smaller screens. In 2002, Jacob Nielsen points out, in his usability column, the need for adapting information to this new development.

Another aspect of the web-reading is that habitual users of the web quickly learn to neglect the ads and to browse the page for information that is interesting to them. This tendency will from the reader side make the ads less distracting, but on the advertisers' side lead to less effects of the ads. In particular, it is less likely that habitual users go into the ads in order to get more information.

Discussion
We have approached two different media from three different perspectives. This method is different from the typical media analysis, where mainly one perspective is used. From a methodical point of view, we find that the perspectives complement each other.

Concerning the results of the analyses, it is apparent that the two papers analysed have something in common but obviously are very different too. The resemblances are found in the graphical appearance, where the division of the material into columns as well as rows is similar. The differences appear in different rhetorical aspects: the web page has more pathos, in particular concerning persons. Also, the interactivity on the web enables the reader to perform actions that are not possible in the paper issue.

These differences should not only be referred to the different technical aspects. It is true that a web page offers quite other action opportunities than a paper page. Further, including pictures in a newspaper is also dependent upon new technical means. However, the change from logos to pathos is not instigated by technology. This is rather a change that relates to the changing role of media in society. Instead of giving information only, media nowadays also has the role of fostering or changing attitudes. Some researchers hold, however, that web presentations may be less persuasive than printed paper presentation, mainly due to the experienced difficulties of comprehending online presentations (Murphy, Long, Holleran & Esterly, 2003). Thus, an attentive web page producer would opt for a simpler presentation manner than currently is the case.

It should also be noted that the papers have different economic conditions. Usually a web paper is not sold, it is offered free of charge to readers. The economical means for producing a web journal are provided by advertisements. Thus, the role of advertisements is more important than the ethos aspect, and possibly also the logos aspect.

Despite all honours given to the web-page of Aftonbladet (see http://koncernen.aftonbladet.se/nya_medier/historik.lasso [in Swedish]), there is still some deficient interactivity of the web page. This deficiency is probably neither due to technical limitations, nor to economical considerations. It is rather to be suspected that designers of the web page, as so many other designers, are not aware of the knowledge that is available concerning human computer interaction.

References


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