



By Constance J. Sidles

## Paper fits (and what to do about them)

**Debbie was the meanest** art director I ever knew. She was a tough-talking blonde with two tattoos who played rugby for a local Chicago team. When she lost her temper, she would narrow her eyes to slits and begin waving her X-acto knife suggestively. Everybody cleared out on those occasions, even the publisher.

The thing that made Debbie maddest was people making changes to her designs. She couldn't abide it.

As the company's production assistant, I was given the job of informing Debbie when the editors wanted to make changes. Many were the explosions I set off as I told Debbie to move a headline (boom), realign the type (*boom*), or use a different illustration (*BOOM*).

But all these paled beside the atom bomb I had to set off when the owners decided to reduce the trim size of the magazine. We were cost-cutting. One of the many things Debbie said that day has always stuck in my mind. "Don't you realize, you &@\*& %%%," Debbie snarled, "the magazine *has* to be a certain size. The design *demand*s it."

Since then, I have often heard designers say something along those lines. More rarely, I have even seen cases in which a particular design did demand a certain size. But usually when designers make that argument, I suspect it has more to do with ego than ergo. And ego is a dangerous self-indulgence today.

That's because paper costs are becoming ever-larger factors in the total expense of running a publishing business, or of producing any printed matter at all. A recent survey of publishers nationwide, conducted by *Publishing & Production Executive Magazine*, showed that two-thirds of the companies surveyed spent more than 30 percent of their total annual budgets on paper. Fewer than half had spent that much the year before. With paper costs projected to continue rising, designers

would be wise to plan their designs with paper savings in mind.

One of the best ways to control paper costs is to make sure that your designs fit available, standard-sized paper sheets. Any time you require custom-sized or oversized sheets, you're going to increase your costs. Similarly, whenever you design a piece that fits a standard sheet but leaves a lot of paper unused, you are throwing money into the dumpster.

Over the years, paper manufacturers have standardized the sizes of many of the paper sheets they make. Basically, these standard sizes revolve around the dimensions 8½ by 11 inches. Most paper sheets are much bigger than this, of course, so you can print multiples of 8½-by-11-inch designs on them. Paper sizes also vary to accommodate bleeds, which require extra paper for trimming. In addition, different kinds of printing papers have historically been manufactured in different sizes (see the table below).

The variations are many, but the design principles are the same:

- Save money by matching your design to a standard paper size; and
- Make sure you've chosen the smallest size you can get away with.

How big are the savings? Here is one example. A roofing manufacturer recently rolled out a direct-mail piece on a fine coated book sheet. The final brochure

measured 17 inches wide by 8¼ inches tall, with full bleeds all around. Such bleeds require approximately ¼ inch of trim on all sides, and multiple copies of a brochure should usually be separated on the sheet by ½ inch. You can make these measurements tighter, but if you do, you run the risk of trimming live copy from the final pieces.

Checking the chart, you can see that if this brochure ran on a standard sheet of 19 by 25 inches, only two would fit on each sheet, leaving 8 inches of empty paper for the dumpster. If you tried to fit this brochure onto another standard-sized sheet, 23 by 29 inches, the dumpster would receive only 2½ inches from the bottom of the sheet. It would get 5¾ inches from the side of the sheet, however.

If the designer had reduced the final height by ½ inch, the job could have printed three-up on a 19-by-25-inch sheet. This would have produced paper savings of 33 percent.

Was the client well served by this design? You tell me. All I know is that this is the question you should ask yourself on every design job—and the one you must always answer honestly. ■

*Constance J. Sidles is a production consultant and writer who lives in Seattle. Her column "On Paper" appears in every issue of Adobe Magazine.*

### Common sizes of available paper sheets

| Paper type           | Common sizes (in inches)   |
|----------------------|--|
| Bond .....           | 8½ x 11, 8½ x 14, 11 x 17, 17 x 22, 17 x 28, 19 x 24, 19 x 28, 22 x 34 |
| Uncoated Book .....  | 17½ x 22½, 19 x 25, 23 x 29, 23 x 35, 25 x 38, 35 x 45, 38 x 50        |
| Text .....           | 17½ x 22½, 23 x 35, 25 x 38, 26 x 40                                   |
| Coated Book .....    | 19 x 25, 23 x 29, 23 x 35, 25 x 38, 35 x 45, 38 x 50                   |
| Cover .....          | 20 x 26, 23 x 35, 25 x 38, 26 x 40                                     |
| Index or Board ..... | 22 x 28, 22½ x 28½, 23 x 29, 23 x 35, 24 x 36, 25½ x 30½, 28 x 44      |

(Note: Not all printers carry all these sizes. Special ordering may cost you more in terms of both money and time. Nor can all presses accommodate all these sizes. Before you finalize your designs, it's a good idea to ask your printer for the common sizes he or she carries and uses, and then plan from there.)



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