

SOCIETAL IMAGING - LEAFLETS, POSTCARDS AND GUIDEBOOKS

Presenter: Bill Scott

Session Chair: Chris Andrews

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The first contact many future visitors have with us is by the published word, as leaflets, postcards or guidebooks. These then, are noteworthy means by which we can generate increased interest in our societies.

Accordingly, how we show ourselves in these areas can make a difference to our viability. The successful formula seems to be, ancient equipment in superb condition combined with modern advertising. Any form of the printed word, whether it be a free leaflet, a paid for postcard or guidebook, is a form of advertising.

The public is constantly bombarded with advertising material, such as magazines and books, for which the publishers have often gone to great lengths to give them maximum appeal. None of us has a budget to match many of these offerings, yet our efforts have to be noticed amongst the plethora of paper.

This is the challenge we at Ballarat are aiming to meet as opportunity and funding permits. The more of the imaging we can carry out ourselves, the less the financial cost to our societies, or the more attractive we can make our presentation. This is especially so of guidebooks where there are many pages to design and layout, combined with relatively low or short print runs. The usually high costs of pre-press work is thus spread over fewer copies.

There may be an avenue for sponsorship to aid with financing. However, it appears that securing finance in this manner is more likely if a presentable and previously published work is shown at the time of the request to assist with an updated version. A Catch 22 situation!

Leaflets

The first of the three images to consider is the advertising leaflet, given out in large numbers and without charge to the recipients. We made ours clearly readable with a positive message. One two sided sheet of 4" x 8 1/4" (10cm x 21cm) was fine. Anything larger would only increase costs unnecessarily.

The weight and stiffness of the paper was made sufficient so that the leaflets would remain upright in display stands and not droop like weeping willow trees, which would be a most distressing sight and not a good image for the Society. Do not use brown ink for printing on leaflets as it is a dead colour.

An illustration on the front gives a welcoming impression, particularly if it is a tramway scene with human interest rather than a close-up view of a tramcar, as if on static display. We remembered that the leaflet is for the general visitor and not tramcar buffs.

Postcards

Postcards are also a form of advertising, either to purchasers at any location where they are on display, or when visitors send or show them to others around Australia and overseas. The main difference as compared to leaflets is that, ultimately, the visitors pay for them plus any postage involved rather than our societies.

Therefore, and especially as postcards are more likely to be held onto than leaflets, taking good care in their preparation is highly desirable. The composite postcard with several illustrations is preferred by some purchasers who regard it as better value for money. One illustration with several focal points, such as three different type of tramcars, is a variation on this theme. This latter variation will cost less to produce as only one scanning charge is payable as against one for each individual view on multiple scene cards. We found that a border around a postcard gives a finishing touch.

The name of the society's line, or its location, should be displayed somewhere on the front of the card and not confined to the back only. Some outlets will not handle a postcard on which the subject or its location is not named on the front.

As postcards are small items, very clear photographs are preferred and ought to be made from colour slides. Companies producing postcards will print a number of different designs at once on a large sheet. This spreads the printing charges considerably, thus reducing individual costs.

The last card we published was a standard range one at 142mm x 97mm. Postcard sizes vary slightly between manufacturers, probably according to the dimensions of their printing equipment. Cards being small items, slight differences in sizes can be noticeable, so that a supplier who prints nearer to the actual standard size of 143mm x 100mm would be preferred.

Another popular postcard is the Continental with an actual size of 177mm x 118mm, though again, there can be slight variations between manufacturers. The public has accepted their higher retail price of 60 cents, as opposed to 40 cents for a standard card. However, in our specialist arena, market research may be advisable before introducing the larger and higher priced postcard.

Guidebooks

Guidebooks complete the trio of basic promotional material for organisations such as ours. The comments about postcards being, ultimately, self financing advertising, apply equally to guidebooks.

For our, "Ballarat's Heritage Tramway", the first consideration was how much we could charge our visitors for it. From this aspect all other decisions flowed. We then looked closely at page size and considered that B5 trimmed would give a pleasant shape and about the largest size which visitors could handle on our tramcars without inconvenience, which would otherwise cause them to become more or less creased or crumpled. Visitors do not usually board the cars with large bags or document cases!

To gain maximum impact for illustrations we bled off the photographs on all the outer edges of the pages. This procedure increases the area of the views to a surprising extent, as this increase occurs around their borders. The improved impact is considerable.

At the point of sale, first impressions are vital, so a glossy rather than dull finished cover and paper stock was chosen to enhance the illustrations. A half rather than full gloss finish was selected to give life to the illustrations, yet without being too reflective for reading the text. Additionally, the cover was laminated to give it increased durability.

A paper weight of about 130gsm would ensure images on the other side of a page do not show through. For the relatively short run we made, of 3000 copies, the difference in cost between cheap and good quality was a small sum measured as a percentage of total printing expenses. The same comment applies to the card cover, which on our book weighs 250gsm.

The most fruitful areas we found for reducing costs were in pasting up the booklet from the galley proofs supplied by our typesetters, proof reading and how we prepared our colour illustrations for the colour separations.

The cutting, pasting and page design were handled by ourselves, though it was sufficient for the positioning to be made by sight only. The typesetters then easily produced the typesetting accurately by computer for final proof reading by us, before transfer to the film makers.

If the page laying out is to be left to the typesetters, one has to more or less accept their interpretation of your instructions or meet, perhaps, substantially increased costs.

Colour, at least on the front cover, is essential these days for booklets to be noticed at a point of sale amid the many other publications on offer, including on a society's own sales counter. We preferred to have a significant number of colour views in the text as well.

Colour views as slides are scanned individually, though colour views as prints can be colour separated collectively, if all are the final size and colour density for publication. The colour prints can be prepared at a competent one hour Kodak Express service, or similar. The savings we made were substantial for our 15 colour views, equivalent to about 30% of total outlay for the film making process.

Typestyle can be a matter of choice though we avoided the rather plain sans serifs. We found that a mere one point increase in the line spacing of the text made the pages look much more readable, rather than a sheer mass of type, which is disconcerting in a guidebook.

Finally, a quick note on the guidebook contents. We seem to have found a suitable formula, at least in the opinion of the National Trust in Victoria. Of our book they said, "not a big tome, lots of illustrations and does not overwhelm with technicalities".

We hope that our associates in the tramcar preservation field will find some benefits for themselves among our discoveries.

Editors Note:- At the end of the Speaker's address, the time available for the session had expired. Therefore it was not possible for any discussions or question/answer on the subject.