

How to create an effective Web-like newsletter

BY GRAEME EGGINS

U3A NETWORK-NSW NEWSLETTER EDITOR

MORE and more non-profit organisations like U3A are turning to on-line newsletters to beat the rising costs of printing and posting paper-based publications.

The switch can mean big savings in distribution and production costs as well as offering benefits such as greater immediacy, photos in colour and a reduced contribution to global warming.

But not everyone likes screen-formatted publications. Readers complain that simply shifting a multi-column print publication to the Web is annoying because the format can force readers to constantly scroll up and down the screen as they read from one column to another.

Ideally they want to be able to read a whole story in one or two “screenfuls.”

The solution, as far as U3A Network NSW’s newsletter team is concerned, is to produce an on-line scroll-like newsletter in Adobe Acrobat.

Acrobat, a commercial product (only Acrobat Reader is free), allows an editor to insert active links from, say, the contents page to individual stories. This is easy to do - see explanation following – and does not require any Web authoring skills.

Think in ‘screenfuls’

Formatting an on-line newsletter forces the editor/Webmaster to think in terms of “screenfuls” – in other words, the amount of text and illustration a reader will see on their monitor in 100% view.

A screenful is roughly one half of a vertical A4 page. This wider-than-it-is-deep format can be described as “letterbox” or “digital TV” format.

So forget thinking in terms of double-page spreads and multi-column print formats. Instead think in terms of one or two short column layouts.

Points to consider

- Make sure that your contents page intrigues visitors so that they feel compelled to read the full story. This means a headline and perhaps 10 to 20 words of “blurb” followed by something like “Click to read more.”
- Be brief. Keep reports as succinct as possible. If brevity is not possible, let a longer story run seamlessly on to the next “page” **without** instructions such as “continued on next page.” Think of how medieval people read a scroll.
- Resize illustrations/photos to improve download speeds. Limit the resolution to 72 DPI (dots per inch). Also remember the more graphics you have, the longer your publication will take to download.
- Use screen-friendly fonts. Microsoft developed a stable of typefaces specially for screen use such as Calibri, Candara and Constantia for the Vista operating system.
- Make sure all the text is large enough to read easily. For older readers this means at least 11pt body copy.
- Avoid white body text on black or dark grey backgrounds except for large headings. Similarly do not overprint body text, especially anything in italics, on photographs. Otherwise some readers will be visually confused.
- Use colour carefully. Research shows that older eyes, for example, don’t see some colours as well as younger people so select according to your readership. Use solid colours like navy

blue for headings, logos and other design features. Then they will print as dark grey if readers decide to print the newsletter on their home printer using just black ink.

- Check and recheck your spelling, especially of people's names.
- Keep your style consistent throughout. Don't have a different background colour on every page, or a wide variety of typefaces.
- Try to have at least one small identifying heading or icon on every page, somewhere at the top preferably, so that people will remember your newsletter.
- Ensure you publish contact information so that readers can e-mail you with complaints, suggestions and compliments.
- Email all your readers to announce each new issue. One drawback of an online newsletter is that readers forget to check the home website for new issues as they come out.
- Archive your back issues on the Web site so that even tardy readers don't miss out.

For a current example of an Adobe PDF newsletter with active links, go to www.nsw.u3anet.org.au/wp-content/uploads/0910_newslink.pdf

For an example of a PDF newsletter without active links but following a tailored letterbox style format go to <http://slowfoodastralia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2008/12/cod-vol1-091001-oct-2009.pdf>

How to Create a Link in an Adobe Publication

BY ERN HOLLEBONE
U3A NETWORK-NSW WEBMASTER

The image shows a screenshot of a newsletter page titled "U3A Newslink" for "October 2009". The page content includes a header with the title and date, a navigation bar with the website URL, and several article teasers. The first article is "Can you get more tutors ?" with the text "What can be done to get more tutors in U3A. Find out what other U3As are trying to do". The second article is "A challenging few months" with the text "Network NSW President Pat MacLaren-Smith talks frankly of some what trying times".

Three red boxes with arrows point to specific actions on the page:

- 1. Select the text for the link.** Points to the text "Can you get more tutors ?".
- 2. Right Click on it** Points to the text "What can be done to get more tutors in U3A. Find out what other U3As are trying to do".
- 3. Click on Create link** Points to the "Create Link" option in the context menu.

The context menu is open, showing options such as Copy, Copy As Table, Save As Table..., Open Table in Spreadsheet, Select All, Deselect All, Replace Text (Comment), Highlight Text (Comment), Add Note to Text (Comment), Underline Text (Comment), Cross Out Text (Comment), Add Bookmark, Create Link, and Look Up "MORE".

A challenging few months 6

Network NSW President Pat MacLaren-Smith talks frankly of some what trying times

> MORE

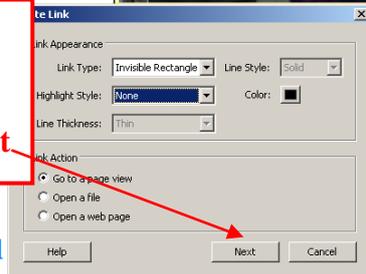


4. When this little box appears, format the appearance of your link. Bit of trial and error here.

5. Click Next

For help with publicity, ask Col

The Network's recently appointed public relations

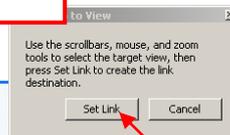


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6. This little box appears and follows you down to your target page

U3A Newslink



How to attract new tutors

ATTRACTING new tutors is one of the constant challenges facing U3A committee around the nation and the world.

7. Select your target heading

Good presenters are an essential part of success.

8. Click Set Link

A survey of Presidents of U3As in Victoria by **Dr Lydia Hebestreit** (see April *NewsLink*) showed that 55% of presidents said obtaining tutors was their most significant problem.

That's it! [or, as they say in the classics "Viola"]

I suggest you write at the end of each article "Return To The Top Of The Front Page" and link that to your banner – or something at the beginning of page 1