

Dimensions on the layout: measurements and explanations

In 2006, I bought Robert Bringhurst's book «The Elements of Typographic Style», and it became my desktop book for a long time. It's right here right now, the book's been reread more than once, and there are a lot of pages with pencil marks. I read, realizing that not everything in this book is clear to me. He consoled himself with a quote from Kozma Prutkov: «Many things are incomprehensible to us, not because our concepts are weak, but because these things are not in the circle of our concepts».

And here is one reasoning from Bringhurst's book, I not only emphasized, but marked pages (143 and 144) with colored sticker so that I could immediately find:

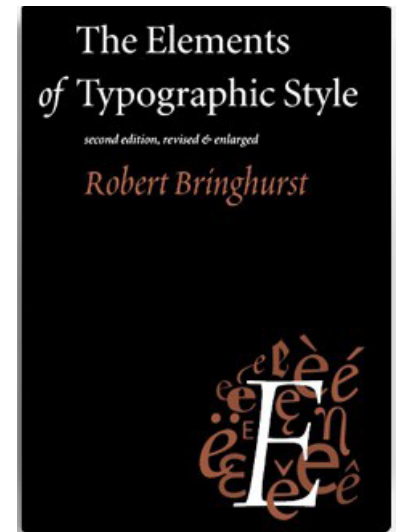
«A page, like a building or a room, can be of any size and proportion, but some are distinctly more pleasing than others, and some have quite specific connotations.

...

Much typography is based, for the sake of convenience, on standard industrial paper sizes, from 35x45 inch press sheets to 3 ½x2 inch conventional business cards. ...But many typographic projects begin with the opportunity and necessity of selecting the dimensions of the page.

There is rarely a free choice. A page size of 12x19 inches, for example, is likely to be both inconvenient and expensive because it is just in excess of 11x17, which is a standard industrial unit. And a brochure that is 5x9 inches, no matter how handsome, might be unacceptable because it is too wide to fit into a standard business envelope (4x9 ½). But when the realm of practicality has been established, and it is known that the page must fall within certain limits, how is one to choose? By taking whatever is easiest, or biggest, or whatever is the most convenient standard size? By trusting to blind instinct?

Instinct, in matters such as these, is largely memory in disguise. It works quite well when it is trained, and poorly otherwise. But in a craft like typography, no matter how perfectly honed one's instincts are, it is



useful to be able to calculate answers exactly. History, natural science, geometry and mathematics are all relevant to typography in this regard — and can all be counted on for aid.»

This is especially important here: «it is useful to be able to calculate answers exactly».

On the one hand, it is easy to agree with this. But on the other hand, all the live practical experience that has got into different books uses picas and points in explanations. Well, if the majority of layout designers know what points are, then picas and ciceros are dark forest.

And this is a real problem — the vast majority of those engaged in layout, including me, do not have a special polygraphic education. As it happened, nothing can be changed quickly. But you can prepare special auxiliary programs that will translate incomprehensible picas or ciceros into understandable millimeters or inches. Which was done.

So, here is a set of explanations of different size options, and scripts for each explanation:

1. Measure - pint size - leading
2. Proportions of a text line
3. Proportions of page margins
4. Text of different sizes

It is advisable to get acquainted with the materials in this order, because it is assumed that the person understands the issues of the previous lesson.

All materials are free, because the layout should be a joy, not a burden. But in order for this to be the case, it is necessary to understand the size ratios. And here is not only an explanation for you, but also programs to apply in your work. Even if you are well versed in all layout issues, the presence of these scripts will help you do the work faster.

I wish you to have fun with what you are doing! If you have any questions, write to me. Please share with others information about this knowledge.

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