

# How to say what the camera can't

Every photo has a story inside, but it needs your help to get it out.

**You had to be there**  
A recorder of the physical scene and nothing more, a camera can't see what we see. As with most meetings, the real action here was mainly cerebral. To bring the stories home, designer and editor have three good tools: cropping, page layout and English—all will be needed.

Background color: 43 Y12

## Make the most of each photo:



### DELETE NONCONTRIBUTING OBJECTS

At a busy meeting, photos are taken catch-as-catch-can; in this case, the lectern and wall paneling just happened to be there; they really have nothing to do with the honor being bestowed and so should be deleted.

## How to lay out the annual meeting:

We tend to think of a big meeting as a single event, but it is more accurately many mini-events, each with activity of its own. Deal with each one individually. Because you have stories

to tell, it is critical that you take the text seriously; if you don't you will fail. The reason why is best illustrated by television news: While you watch the picture, note that the actual story is

conveyed in the voice-over. In most cases the voice-over would succeed without the film, but rarely would it work the other way around! Here are three approaches to design:

## ANNUAL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

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**Willard Smith Keynote Speaker**  
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**Sallybury Schalar**  
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**This was the first Annual Meeting that I've been able to attend. I plan to come back every year!**  
—Beag Ooth

**Friday's presentation on scholarships and grants helped me to be a better counselor for my students.**  
—Hope Estes

Background color: C5 M6 Y5



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The annual meeting was coming and anticipation was high. There were ideas to introduce, goals to reach, friends to be made. Your photographer was ready and you were expecting great things, but what came back was a disappointment; on the film was a jumble of hairdos, draperies, uncleared tables, the

backs of heads—not exactly the stuff of *Life* magazine. The photos didn't do justice to the event!

Now what?

A camera is a funny thing. While we people experience life on many levels at once, a camera does not; it is a recorder of the physical scene, and nothing more.

To expect beauty from photos like these is to miss the story; there's *no way* you're going to make these photos pretty.

As a visual communicator, your job is to convey the substance of the event, as well as its texture and tone. To do that, you (and the editor) must fill in what the camera couldn't see:



**EXAGGERATE THE ACTION**

Crop out empty chairs to convert light attendance into a packed house. What you're doing is shifting the focus, which is different from just deleting things; photos cropped for this purpose can take many shapes.



**FIND TWO (OR MORE) PHOTOS IN ONE**

The speakers were interesting but the room was a snooze. Before discarding the photo, lift out the good parts to use elsewhere. You can sometimes find a half-dozen images this way! Look carefully.



**CROP WITH HEADLINES ALREADY IN MIND**

Wide-format cropping sets the eye resolutely on the speaker and makes a useful backdrop for type. You can get away with this when the wall is blank. As a rule, keep the type size smaller than the person.

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**MAKE A MOVIE**

Here's what to do if no editor's available. Anytime you can get photos lined up in a neat, linear sequence you'll create a strong, visual line and the sense of an unfolding story. This is true with or without the film strip (try placing the photos along the extreme top or bottom of a page, or down a side). The film strip is a bonus; it underscores the feeling of action. To heighten its effect, zoom in and out from one photo to the next. If you can, shift backgrounds from light to dark and back—remember, the eye likes variety. Note that each frame has been keyed by letter to a caption.



**WRITE A BOOK**

Season a windy topic with thumbnail-size cameos. This technique is useful:

- if you have a lot to say,
  - if the speakers were most important,
  - if your on-the-set photos were *terrible*.
- Note bold, descriptive text surrounds each inset photo; it looks great but takes *timing* to get words and pictures in balance.

