

DESIGNING the REDESIGN

Approaching the Reinvention of **Chronogram** Magazine
by David Clark Perry and Brian K. Mahoney

Chronogram was launched in 1993 with a simple premise: Provide readers with a guide to cultural events in New York's Hudson Valley.

In the 24 years since, *Chronogram* has evolved from a flimsy zine launched by a couple of 20-somethings into Luminary Media, a multimedia company with four in-house titles and custom publishing, event, and marketing agency divisions. Our work now includes social media management, marketing communications, and business consulting — specialties we never could have foreseen ourselves offering a decade ago. But what's fueled this growth is the brand equity of *Chronogram*. The publication's authentic voice and role as trusted curator of the Hudson Valley lifestyle extends like a halo over all of our projects with readers and clients.

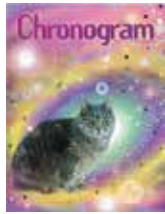
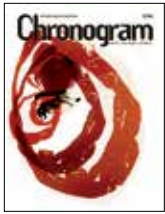


As we started considering redesigning our flagship publication, we were faced with a daunting question:

How do we freshen the design of *Chronogram* — creating a more readable, relevant, and useful reader experience in print — without losing our idiosyncratic voice and unorthodox design, the key attributes that have defined us?

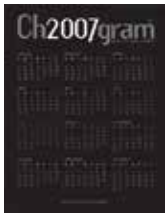
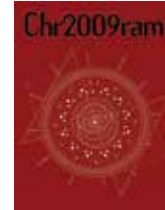
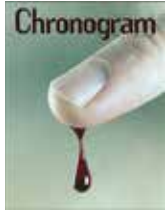
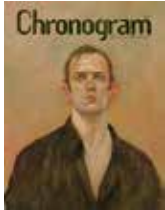
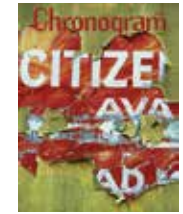
Above: A street performer at the *Chronogram* Block Party.
Left: The Rosendale Improvement Society Brass Band leading the parade at the *Chronogram* Block Party.
Opposite: *Chronogram* has featured the work of hundreds of local artists on its covers.

Photos by Tamme Stitt



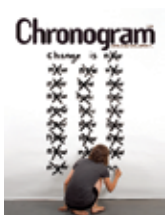
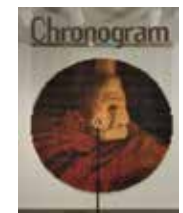
“Chronogram somehow hit the right note of aesthetic, cultural sophistication and practical usefulness.”

— Stephen Larsen,
Joseph Campbell biographer



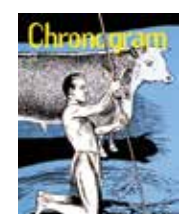
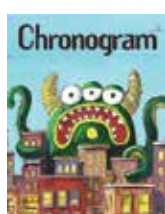
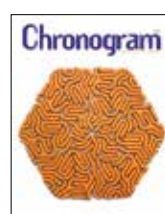
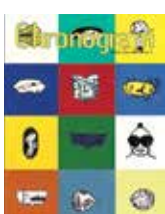
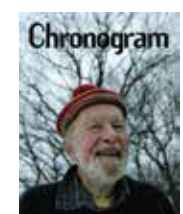
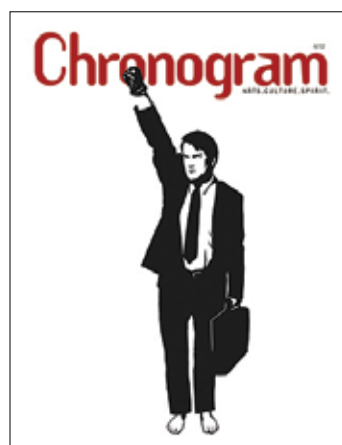
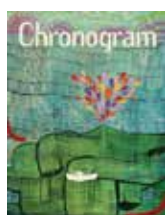
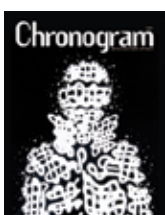
“Chronogram has helped us to forge a regional identity.”

— Natalie Merchant,
local resident and musician



“An extraordinary mix of what is new and upcoming in music, art, poetry, politics, and the environment.”

— Stuart Bigley, Unison Arts Center



The *Chronogram* Block Party is an annual event celebrating the art and culture of the Hudson Valley and the magazine's community of readers. The day features musical and spoken word performances, art installations, food trucks, DIY art tent, and street performers. Held in front of Luminary Media's offices in Kingston, New York, more than 5,000 people attend each year.





Chronogram has evolved through many small iterations. The first issue, in October/November 1993, was a Mad Libs-style flip book on newsprint. It was 72 pages, plus covers, and a compact 8 inches by 5 inches. (A size, one reader noted, that fits equally well in your back pocket or on the back of your toilet.) A year later, it morphed into a medium-sized book with a glossy cover, and then in 1999, into an oversized 10-inch by 13-inch full-color glossy. Since converting to this small tabloid format, we've made dozens of adjustments, changing a department layout here, a headline style there — constantly reevaluating and tinkering with the details.



Left to right: The first issue of *Chronogram*, from October/November '93, was printed in a flip-book format and contained mostly event listings. The second iteration of the magazine was still small enough to fit in the back pocket of readers — or on the back of their toilets! In 1999, our new oversized format allowed room for dynamic layouts and photo spreads.

So why mess with a good thing?

We love what *Chronogram* has become: a storyteller about a particularly robust and evolving region full of artists, entrepreneurs, thinkers, and doers. And our reader surveys consistently indicate that the magazine's design and editorial are well-aligned with our readers and a kind of calling card for the region. A typical reader comment we get: "I was hesitant about moving out of Manhattan, but when I saw a copy of *Chronogram*, I knew I could live here."

We might have sat back and just read and reread our fan mail, but we got the itch to mess with a good thing. For the last year, we've been talking in earnest about a redesign — and not just tinkering. We've been envisioning and incubating a wholesale, start-from-scratch, throw-the-baby-out-with-the-bathwater redesign. And this is the single question that has driven us: "How do we tell more stories, more engagingly?"

In the early stages of our process, all options were open. Would we create a new logo? Change the column grid? Throw out long-running departments? Eliminate the calendar listings, the foundation of the magazine for 24 years? Ideas we would never have considered even a few years ago now seemed plausible, even exciting. Here are several of the changes we landed on and implemented that have significantly impacted our magazine's look and feel.

Type

One of our long-standing desires was to use the classic font, Helvetica, as the defining font of the magazine. The subject of much design debate (there's even a documentary on the typeface that explores all sides of the issue), Helvetica has always resonated with us. It was a heavy influence on our previous sans serif font, Swiss 721 BT, so there has always been a taste of it on our pages. But we felt that going strong and central with it would provide an anchoring contrast to the more playful fonts we want to incorporate into features, callouts, and pull quotes.

A common piece of feedback we get from our reader surveys is that our body type is hard to read. We surveyed a wide range of magazines to see how they handle body type, and after experimenting with the impact on word count, we transitioned from Sabon to a heavier-bodied font, Caslon, and decreased the leading.

We also went from a two- to three-column text grid where possible. With a magazine of *Chronogram's* dimensions, a two-column format is a bit wide, but half-page vertical ads sometimes necessitate running content in the adjacent space. To avoid the wide standard text column, we designed sidebars to run in one of these columns and to be readily identified as editorial whether they appear within an article or alongside ads. Sidebar type is larger and utilizes lists, bullet points, and bolder type treatments.

When story length necessitates running text in ad-adjacent spaces, we use a range of pull quote and callout options that add dynamics to the column rather than running photos that will compete with the graphic, visual ads.

White Space

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. How much is white space worth? To us, it's worth *a lot* as a design element, and we looked for a variety of ways to make more of it possible. As underrated as the silence between musical notes, white space is the canvas upon which the page elements exist. Over the years, some of our layouts became crammed with type, images, rules, info boxes, and icons — too noisy. We sought to strip out the nonessentials and let the pages breathe.

We systematically reviewed our word counts for each section and made judicious cuts. Over the years, we had experienced “word count creep” with many writers pushing up against an already crowded space. Resetting the dials on word count was a useful exercise in seeing what was really necessary for each section. Cutting 100 words from one-page stories, for example, made a big difference in the perception of spaciousness on the page. The cuts enable more easily digestible content and the space for callout boxes that point readers toward our website for more information and multimedia content. (Keeping writers to the lower word counts will be an ongoing effort!)

We looked at white space in relation to our images as well. There's certainly a power in running full-bleed images, especially in a 10-inch by 13-inch format, but that treatment loses its effectiveness if it isn't contrasted with smaller, in-frame images. An image doesn't always need to be large to have an impact — just look at postage stamps or anything you see on your iPhone. It's simply a matter of choosing the right image and then using a layout that directs the reader's attention effectively.

WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING
The gist of what you may have missed.

- 1** The Environmental Protection Agency has dismissed members of a major scientific advisory panel that had been instrumental in setting the lead level in the drinking water that would include more copper and lead pipes in the U.S. This is a controversial move that has been criticized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. EPA has announced that it is dismissing the panel. The panel was led by James Hansen, a former member of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and included other scientists such as Robert Anderson, and Stephen Paciorek. The panel had been instrumental in setting the lead level in the drinking water that would include more copper and lead pipes in the U.S. This is a controversial move that has been criticized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
- 2X** Debra the amoralized Health officials in Florida have warned people to avoid contact with the common cold. The common cold is a viral infection that is caused by a variety of different viruses. It is the most common respiratory infection in the United States. It is caused by a variety of different viruses, including rhinoviruses, coronaviruses, and adenoviruses. It is usually spread through direct contact with an infected person, or through contact with their secretions. It is most common in children, and is also common in the elderly.
- 40** Hours Minneapolis dentist and real-life Francis Macomber White Palmer, who along with friend hunting guides, led the black-maned lion cub, a national park, where it would have been illegal to kill. The cub was shot down and shot the lion at point-blank range. Palmer has claimed that he didn't know the lion was a protected local favorite until after the hunt ended—a hunt that he said was set up to go on. “The saddest part of all,” says Johnny Robinson, head of the Zimbabwe Conservation Task Force, “is that now that Cecil is dead, the task force in the鬃 mane, will most likely kill all Cecil's cubs so that he can't insert his own cub into the lion's lineage.” White Palmer and the professional guides that he hired are facing poaching charges for the untimely death of Cecil the Lion. Source: Guardian (UK)
- 4:20** Five organizations have been awarded medical licenses in New York State. The organizations are the New York State Health Services, the New York State Association of Dispensaries, the New York State Association of Dispensaries, the New York State Association of Dispensaries, and the New York State Association of Dispensaries. The licenses will allow the organizations to open four dispensaries statewide, including in New York City, and are required to be doing business within six months. Details are planned to appear in the State, Cuomo, Health, and State Health Services, Albany County, and Long Island—just to name a few. The Comprehensive Care Act, signed by Governor Cuomo in 2014, authorizes the first medical dispensary in the state's medical marijuana program. Others, however, believe the plan is to let each dispensary have thousands of potential patients that will have to travel huge distances to reach the dispensaries. The plan is to let each dispensary have thousands of potential patients that will have to travel huge distances to reach the dispensaries. The plan is to let each dispensary have thousands of potential patients that will have to travel huge distances to reach the dispensaries.
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money shot CHEESE
Even though the U.S. produces the most cheese in the world, it falls outside the top 10 in per capita consumption at 24.3 pounds per year. That's less than Sweden, 30.8; Belgium, 29.1; Switzerland, 28.3; Denmark, 27.5; and the U.K., 25.2. (The U.S. is 28th overall.) Source: Statista

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while you were sleeping

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Before and after examples of our While You Were Sleeping department. With the redesign, we sought to eliminate walls of words and add in white space, additional entry points, and dynamic type elements.

Opposite: Before and after examples of event listings. We replaced multiple pages of text-heavy event listings with select event spotlights (like the one pictured here) and prompts to visit our website for a comprehensive database of events.

MUSIC
Beats (11/10) - The Beats Solo3 wireless headset is the most advanced yet, with a 40-hour battery life and a new design that's more comfortable than ever.
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FOOD & WINE
Beats (11/10) - The Beats Solo3 wireless headset is the most advanced yet, with a 40-hour battery life and a new design that's more comfortable than ever.

HEALTH & WELLNESS
Beats (11/10) - The Beats Solo3 wireless headset is the most advanced yet, with a 40-hour battery life and a new design that's more comfortable than ever.

WEEKENDS & CLASSES
Beats (11/10) - The Beats Solo3 wireless headset is the most advanced yet, with a 40-hour battery life and a new design that's more comfortable than ever.

ARTS & CULTURE
Beats (11/10) - The Beats Solo3 wireless headset is the most advanced yet, with a 40-hour battery life and a new design that's more comfortable than ever.

TRAVEL & OUTDOORS
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EVENTS
Beats (11/10) - The Beats Solo3 wireless headset is the most advanced yet, with a 40-hour battery life and a new design that's more comfortable than ever.

CALENDAR
Beats (11/10) - The Beats Solo3 wireless headset is the most advanced yet, with a 40-hour battery life and a new design that's more comfortable than ever.



A mashup of the cast of "Twelfth Night" with David Dixon Corliss as Duke Osorio, performing as part of the Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival.

the guide
 EVENT PREVIEWS FOR AUGUST 2017

August

30 31 01 02 03 04 05
 06 07 08 09 10 11 12
 13 14 15 16 17 18 19
 20 21 22 23 24 25 26
 27 28 29 30 31 01 02

FALL FOR ART! Twenty-six Hudson Valley artists will gather at Wiltwyck Golf Club to discuss their creative processes, drink cocktails, and bid their views on the 10th annual fundraiser. Proceeds from the Hudson Valley Master Health Services will assist \$1,000 worth of art from the show to display in their Kingston facility. The 100-artist Fall for Art will take place from 10 to 11 p.m. on Thursday, September 10, at Wiltwyck Golf Club in Kingston. General admission tickets are \$45 in advance and \$50 at the door. (845) 338-8131; Fallforart.org

Hudson River Craft Beer Festival. Showcasing over 200 brews from more than 85 craft breweries, the third annual Hudson River Craft Beer Festival beckons visitors to the Beacon waterfront for a celebration of local, handcrafted brews. \$45, including four hours of beachcomber sampling glass and live music entertainment. Breweries include Lagunita, Dogfish Head, Smuttynose, Sam Adams, Alagarth, and Naked Rock. Get your groove on at the Silent Disco tent, where visitors don headphones and dance like no one is watching. Experience it all at all on Sunday, September 10, at Trout Brook Park in Beacon. Americaonline.com

Sacred Earth Festival. Reawaken the sacred at Bowdoin Park in Wappingers Falls. Bonfires, drum circles, chanting, yoga, Reiki, and Native American traditions provide attendees with the means to reconnect with the earth. The festival focuses on eco-spirituality, which brings the Clatsop Project will be scattered throughout the festival's four hours. The Sacred Earth Festival starts at 10 p.m. on September 11. All funds raised will benefit the work of the Green River Institute in poverty alleviation, environmental conservation, and sustainability. (845) 849-2200; Pivacy.com

arm wrestling
 beer
 dance
 film
 golf
 music
 outdoors
 theater
 yoga

For comprehensive calendar listings visit Chronogram.com/events

Entry Points

For too long, our pages were text-heavy walls of words. With the redesign, we looked to not only cut words, increase font size, and expand white space, but also to add more entry points that lead a reader into a page. In our new format, we make sure that no page is a sea of type, and we utilize drop caps, pull quotes, and inventive type treatments to attract readers' attention and invite them into each page.

Structure

Chronogram's evolution from a utilitarian guide to a content-driven read was nontraditional in many ways, including the magazine's structure, which never had a standard feature well. We regularly ran feature-length pieces and special sections, but the bulk of the content was presented as departments of mostly medium-length pieces. We wanted to break that up and have space to stretch out, so in the redesign, we developed our own version of a feature well. First, a long-form piece with supporting art but weighted towards text. Second, a medium-length piece profiling a regional personality, with a lean toward art and more images. Third, a photo essay, on any subject, with robust captions. This restructuring meant shortening the length of several of our departments, which was difficult to do, but it was clear that the greater variety of article lengths makes moving through an issue more intuitive and enjoyable.

Utility

Following the guiding principle of telling more stories, better, we did what at one time seemed unthinkable: We took out the calendar listings. (The name of the magazine actually refers, with a little creative license, to a calendar; the literal meaning of chronogram is "time writing.") For many of our readers, Chronogram is the when and where for events they care about. However, because of our monthly publication schedule, the print calendar is not all-inclusive, and though edited, doesn't offer much more than the basic facts. In the

redesign, we have preserved eight to 10 curated previews about the most interesting events of the upcoming month. And we've shifted the calendar completely to our website, where it can be comprehensive, paired with audio/video, and user-generated. Ultimately, we more than tripled the events receiving feature treatment in the print version while also achieving a better-looking magazine.

Staying Relevant

When Chronogram started in 1993, there were no smartphones; computers were still relatively expensive for casual use; and most online experiences consisted of message boards and the iconic "You've got mail" ding. Print was where you got your information. These days, digital is print's parallel universe, and Chronogram lives in both.

Our readers want to engage with us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Our print version is digitally aware, and we extend the content we're presenting on the page to our stories online, adding more photos, audio, video, and resource links that don't fit in the magazine. For the redesign, we made sure that this complementary relationship between print and website persists.

One of the most satisfying things about the Chronogram redesign is that it wasn't a last-ditch effort to rescue a failing publication. It was a way to give an appreciative audience more of what they love in a smarter and more beautiful container. Highlighting what is good is one of Chronogram's strongest characteristics, and we brought that attitude to our work on its latest incarnation.

David Clark Perry is the creative director of Chronogram and provided art direction for this article. Brian K. Mahoney is the editorial director of Luminary Media. Connect at tinyurl.com/linkedin-perry and tinyurl.com/linkedin-mahoney.