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What's Up with the Cover?

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What's Up with the Cover?

M. Castillo, *Editor-in-Chief*

Covers of both commercial and scientific magazines have changed dramatically with time.¹ Commercial magazines in the United States started publishing in the 1700s, and the first medical journal, the *New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM)*, debuted in 1811. Early periodicals had no covers, and in most, the first page contained the title of the lead article or the table of contents (such as the *NEJM*). In the first half of the 19th century, the covers of magazines were modeled after those of books, providing only minimal information: the name of the periodical, which was generally “framed” to emphasize it, and the date of publication. At times, covers contained a small illustration that generally played only a decorative purpose. In other cases, this illustration was symbolic or allegoric, tending to portray the spirit of the magazine. In the late 1800s “cover lines” started. These were full or abbreviated titles of some of the topics found inside. Commonly, 1 or 2 cover lines were listed under the magazine’s title. While the *NEJM* is probably responsible for the table of contents being found on covers of medical journals in the United States, *Reader’s Digest* can claim similar status for lay publications. At the end of the 19th century, magazines started to display the different sections they contained on their covers.

As the 20th century began, there was a large and outstanding cadre of illustrators, and the “poster” cover was created. The intention was to make covers so beautiful that one could even conceive of framing and hanging them on a wall. These illustrations were so important that, again, periodicals decided to retain only their titles and date of publication on their covers and all other information regarding content was dropped. Poster illustrations many times had no relationship at all with contents. As contents shifted toward the pictorial, posters filled the covers of oversized magazines. Next step, in the 1920s and 1930s, photographs started overtaking illustrations on poster covers, and magazine titles lost their frames, while all other information was displaced to the bottom of the covers (this was typically seen on *Life* magazine, and the intention was to make the picture the unobstructed focus of the cover).

Covers such as the one on our new *American Journal of Neuroradiology (AJNR)* are called “integrated or synthetic covers,” meaning that you find the title of the magazine and publication date, illustrations, and some information regarding its contents.² Information on contents may be primary (large and bold) or secondary (smaller font) and is often printed in contrasting colors. Some cover lines identify authors; others do not. In the late 1960s, cover lines became bold and artistic elements in their own right. This quickly overwhelmed covers that contained a forest of information, partially obscuring the underlying photographs (as seen

predominantly on fashion and music magazines). In a sense, cover lines became advertisements for contents and soon overwhelmed all other cover elements, leading some medical journals to drop all illustrations (as with our previous cover). It seems that the most “sophisticated” publications had the most information on their covers, which also gave them an intimidating air. However, as photography (and in the case of *AJNR*, quality and variety of digital illustrations) improved, space was again made for images on covers.

The editorial office of *AJNR* hopes that you will enjoy our new cover and interior re-design. We believe that our new cover incorporates modern design trends such as large posterlike illustrations with nonobtrusive cover lines; highlights of the contents; publication date information; and a logo that is prominent, frameless, and modern, all displayed in bold colors that pertain to our history. Because our new cover is posterlike, we now offer the possibility of ordering these in a large format so that they can be easily framed and displayed in your offices, reading rooms, and departments. They say that you should not judge a book by its cover, but in the case of *AJNR*, we believe you can.

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PERSPECTIVES

The Benefits of Beauty

M. Castillo, *Editor-in-Chief*

Beauty is only skin deep, but the ugly goes clean to the bone.

Dorothy Parker

Although many say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, I do not agree. To me, beauty is clearly defined, objective, and even measurable. Someone considered beautiful will be seen that way by most observers, even those from different cultural and ethnic groups. The opposite is also true: An ugly person is considered as such by nearly everyone. When one looks at a female face, the following features are associated with beauty: narrower face and nose, less fat, full lips, minimal hypertelorism, longer eyelashes, and high cheek bones; for men, the same plus darker eyebrows, broader upper half of the face, prominent mandible and chin, and no wrinkles between the nose and corners of the

*Factoid: Before the 1920s, tan skin was considered “lower class” and borne mainly by agricultural workers. Soon after Coco Chanel started vacationing in the French Riviera, tanning became associated with the leisurely lifestyle of the rich and famous and seen as beautiful.