

# Newsletters

**N**ewsletters are regular communications from an organization aimed at a specific audience using a mailing list. You probably receive traditional print newsletters in the mail as well as through email. What determines that you always read the newsletter from your local Humane Society when you don't read the monthly newsletter inserted in your water bill? The content must be timely, useful, and important to the specific users who subscribe to your newsletter. Some newsletters are unsolicited and offer little more than sales information. Unlike brochures, press releases, and other sales or marketing materials, newsletters for technical communication can offer specific information to a well-defined group of product users, company employees, or organization members. Technical communicators may be responsible for researching and writing the product updates, user profiles, expert tips, and other useful information that keeps readers interested and engaged. Along with good content, the layout and medium of the newsletter will also affect how likely users are to read it. Newsletters are still mailed on paper, but increasingly they appear on web sites or blogs, in email messages, or attached to an email as a fully formatted PDF document.

In this example of an electronic newsletter delivered by email, the software company TechSmith gives users updates about their main product, SnagIt (a popular screen capture program), as well as other software tools and helpful tips from users and experts.



■ Snagit user newsletter (electronic)

**Features of the Electronic Newsletter**

- 1 Banner across the top of the page (also called a *flag*) includes the title “News You Can Use” and the company logo and name.
- 2 The date and issue number appear at the far right of the flag.
- 3 Contents of this issue are listed as links to the current issue articles.
- 4 Standard links lead to archives and company information.
- 5 Photographs of the editor and of featured users add familiarity and personality to the document.
- 6 Links provide more information or user interaction—“watch the screencast.”

The next example illustrates a more traditional print-based newsletter about medical research from the National Center for Contemporary and Alternative Medicine (NAC), which is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Notice that this newsletter is available on the Internet in PDF format but could also be printed.



■ [NAC research newsletter \(PDF and print\)](#)

**Features of the Print Newsletter**

**1** Flag includes the newsletter name “CAM at the NIH” and an explanatory subtitle.

**2** The volume, date, and issue number appear on a separate line below the title in the style of a research-based publication.

**3** Feature articles about an international conference and new findings about “friendly bacteria” generate interest for an **audience** of researchers.

**4** Articles and photographs appear in boxed areas, but sidebars and photos also extend outside the box margins, adding interest to the document design.

**5** Contents of this issue and regular sections are listed in a box on the left titled “Inside.”

**6** The National Center for Contemporary and Alternative Medicine logo and the governmental organi-

zations that sponsor the center all appear in the lower left corner.

**7** High quality photographs of research findings like the bacteria lend credibility.

**8** Photos that feature researchers at the conference and other distinguished scientists add personality and interest throughout the newsletter.

**CAM at the NIH:**  
Focus on Complementary and Alternative Medicine is published by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, National Institutes of Health.

**Subscriptions:** For a free subscription (by postal mail or e-mail), contact:

**NCCAM Clearinghouse**  
Toll-free in the U.S.:  
1-888-644-6226  
TTY (for deaf and hard-of-hearing callers):  
1-866-464-3615

Web site: [nccam.nih.gov](http://nccam.nih.gov)  
E-mail: [info@nccam.nih.gov](mailto:info@nccam.nih.gov)

**Editorial Address:**

CAM at the NIH  
P.O. Box 7923  
Gaithersburg, MD  
20898-7923, or  
[info@nccam.nih.gov](mailto:info@nccam.nih.gov)

### International Research Conference Highlights Progress, New Directions (continued from pg. 1)

oral abstracts, workshops, discussions, symposia, and posters—in five major areas of science: basic science, clinical studies, methodology, health services, and education. NCCAM was one of the conference's funders and participated on the planning committee.



Margaret A. Chesney, Ph.D.

Margaret A. Chesney, Ph.D., Deputy Director of NCCAM and Director of its Division of Extramural Research and Training, delivered one of the keynote addresses. She opened by

discussing why there is intense public interest in CAM and in a new, more integrated medicine. For example:

- The population is aging.
- Information on health has become much more available (e.g., through the Internet).
- The consumer now has a more important role in health care.
- People have complaints about conventional care (e.g., when cures are elusive, side effects are problems, providers have very limited time, or care is fragmented among specialists).
- Many people find CAM and IM appealing (e.g., they feel these offer more “natural” treatment alternatives, emphasize patient-provider relationships, and allow individuals to take more responsibility for their health).

This interest in CAM and IM commands a “bold” research effort, Dr. Chesney said, but caution as well:

- There are many therapeutic claims that are attractive but unsupported by research. To illustrate, she presented an array of advertisements dating back to the 19th century and noted, “The plural of claims is not evidence.”
- Media reports may oversimplify study findings, resulting in headlines that fail to communicate the value of the research.
- Methodological challenges and pitfalls exist in the research endeavor.

“We have a long way to go,” she said, “but there is much to discover, and we have an agenda rich in research challenges.”

Dr. Chesney set forth her vision for continued progress. “Be bold in what you try,” she urged, “cautious in what you claim, and thoughtful about what you do. Express your purpose in a way that inspires commitment, innovation, and courage. We need you to contribute your part to the whole, as we work together to add to the fabric of knowledge about CAM and create a new, comprehensive health care.” Drawing upon the Institute of Medicine’s 2005 report on CAM, she described this care as being based on the best science available, recognizing the importance of compassion and caring, and encouraging people to actively participate in choices that enhance resilience, prevent illness, and improve quality of life.

In addition to Dr. Chesney, other keynote speakers were:

- **Brian M. Berman, M.D.**, professor of family medicine at the University of Maryland School of Medicine and director of its Center for Integrative Medicine. Dr. Berman described his journey from carrying out pilot research to a major clinical trial of acupuncture for osteoarthritis (most of this work was funded by NCCAM or its predecessor, the NIH Office of Alternative Medicine).
- **Richard Davidson, Ph.D.**, an NCCAM grantee who is professor of psychology and psychiatry at the University of

### ■ NAC research newsletter, page 2

#### Features of the Print Newsletter (continued)

9 Findings from the featured conference are bulleted and speakers are highlighted in blue text.

10 The *masthead*, which contains publishing and editorial information, is a standard element on the inner page of magazines and most newsletters.

CAM at the NID:  
Focus on Complementary and Alternative Medicine  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
NCCAM, NIH  
31 Center Drive MSC 2182  
Building 51, Room 2B-11  
Bethesda, MD 20892-2182

Official Business  
Penalty for Private Use \$300

FIRST-CLASS MAIL  
POSTAGE & FEES PAID  
DHHS/NIH  
PERMIT NO. G-826

12



11

### News for Researchers

NIH has begun requiring that grant applications be submitted via the Web portal Grants.gov ([www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)) using Form SF 424 (Research and Related, or R&R, application). At least 2 weeks before submitting an application, institutions must register with Grants.gov, and principal investigators with eRA Commons. These changes are being phased in by grant mechanism (type of grant). For more information, see [era.nih.gov/electronicreceipt](http://era.nih.gov/electronicreceipt).

#### Funding Opportunities

NCCAM has a new Web page for active funding announcements, including those below, at [nccam.nih.gov/cgi-bin/grants/funding.pl](http://nccam.nih.gov/cgi-bin/grants/funding.pl).

**PA-06-296 and PA-06-397: New Technologies for Liver Disease STR and SBR**  
Sponsors: NCCAM and seven other components of NIH. These opportunities—part of an NIH-wide

initiative on liver disease—will enlist members of the small business research community in developing new approaches (including from CAM) to diagnosing, treating, and preventing liver disease.

**PAR-06-312: Biology of Manual Therapies**  
Sponsors: NIH (including NCCAM) and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. These awards will support projects designed to gain insight on the mechanics of the body's response to manual therapies, such as chiropractic manipulation and massage therapy.

**FIRCA-BB and FIRCA-B55: International Research Collaborations—Basic Biomedical and Behavioral, Social Sciences**  
Sponsors: NCCAM and selected other components of NIH. This initiative seeks to establish collaborative research programs between NIH-funded investigators and others who are knowledgeable about indigenous medicine practices. ⇨

#### NCCAM Exhibits at Upcoming National Meetings

- Society for Neuroscience Annual Meeting, October 15-18, Atlanta
- AARP National Event and Expo, October 25-28, Anaheim
- American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases Annual Meeting, October 28-30, Boston
- Society for Public Health Educators Annual Meeting, November 2-4, Boston
- Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students, November 9-11, Anaheim

D325

#### ■ NAC research newsletter, page 12

11 The “News for Researchers” regular section appears on the back cover, along with funding opportunities and upcoming exhibits in the sidebar.

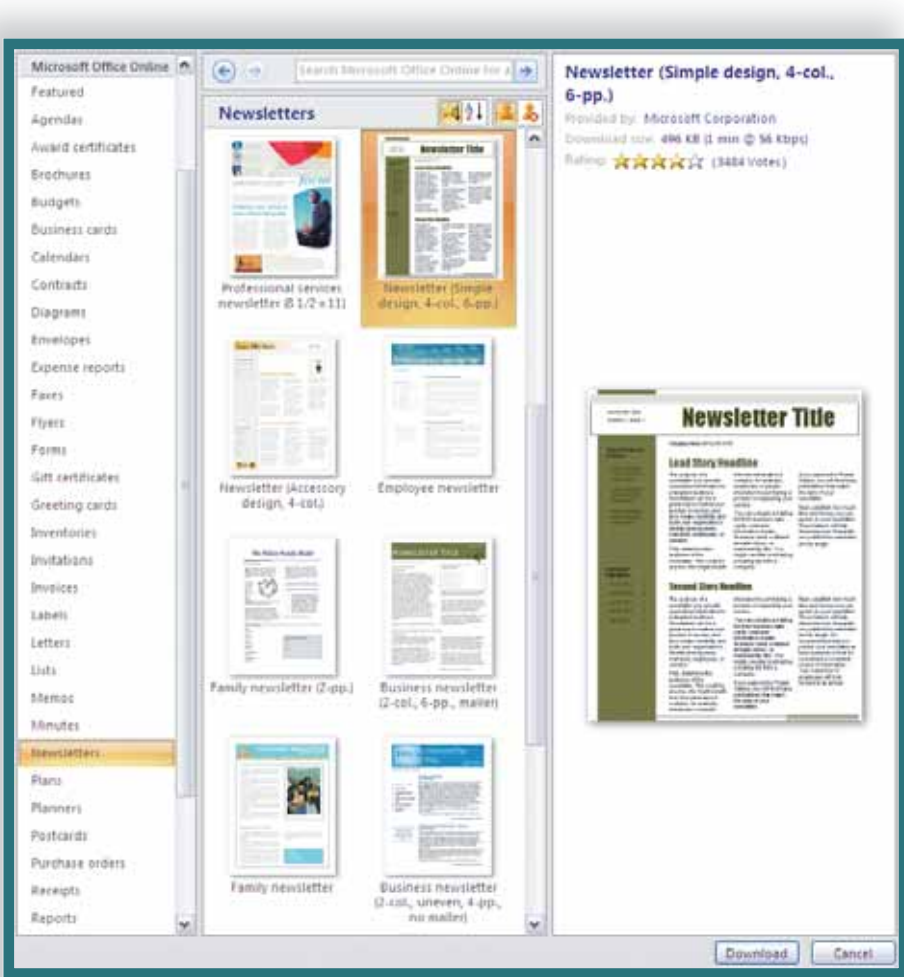
12 The top portion of the back panel can be used for mailing labels on the printed version.

## Using Newsletter Templates

Rather than begin a design from scratch, many people prefer to use a template that comes with their software program or from the Internet. Newsletter templates let

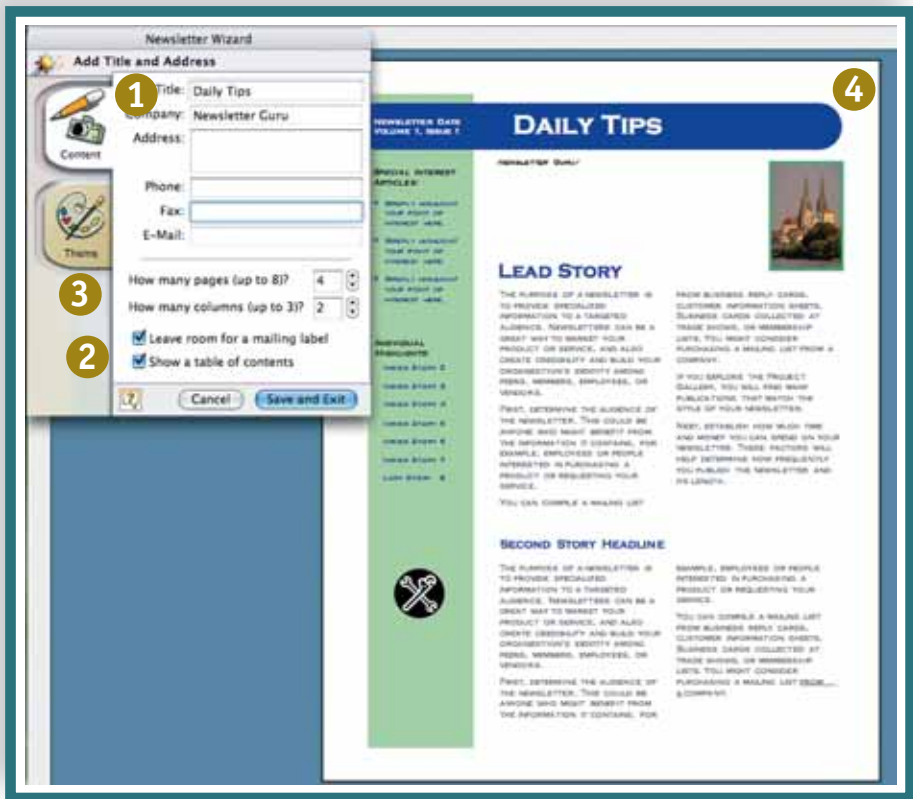
you quickly create newsletters for printing or saving as a PDF file. Basic document layout programs like Microsoft Word and word processing programs like Microsoft Word offer many templates for newsletters. The benefit of using a template is that colors, borders, and other page layout features are preset, and all basic information is included. You simply fill in the content and make minor adjustments to the page design when needed.

This selection screen in Apple Pages lets you choose from a range of styles, formats, and color schemes, depending on the purpose of your newsletter.



■ Microsoft Word newsletter templates

Once you select an appropriate template, you can use a wizard that prompts you to fill in the content. Here is a newsletter wizard in Microsoft Word:



■ Newsletter template in Microsoft Word

### Features of the Newsletter Template

- 1 The wizard on the left prompts you for information such as the newsletter name and automatically inserts the content into a flag for you.
- 2 It also can create an automatic table of contents and mailing label area, when selected.
- 3 The “theme” tab allows you to adjust the color scheme and graphical features of this page design.
- 4 The resulting document (on the right) automatically displays the title; you then click on text boxes to enter your own newsletter stories and pictures.

## Audience Considerations

Newsletters can be effective publications for almost any well-defined audience: product users, company employees, supporters of a non-profit, or members of a professional organization. Because newsletters are subscription based, you have somewhat of a captive audience who already know the purpose of your newsletter.

But busy readers are less likely to read generic or broad information that reads like sales literature. Readers will most likely pay attention if you offer a calendar of events, usable tips, in-depth features, reader profiles, interviews, and other timely and useful information for your target audience. You should aim for a personable, enthusiastic, yet concise writing style.

## Design Considerations

Newsletters follow the same principles of document design as other page-based documents for print or screen, such as the use of headings, visuals, and page layout elements. Screen-based newsletters such as TechSmith's, however, must also follow principles of good web page design. While software templates make it easy to produce a colorful and well-formatted newsletter, they also limit your choices of the color combinations, clip art, and other design elements. Be careful that the template you use does not look silly or unprofessional, but instead has features that are appropriate for the audience and your information.

### Guidelines

#### FOR CREATING NEWSLETTERS

- Target a specific group of users or members for your newsletter and create a mailing list.
- Decide whether your newsletter will be delivered via email, on paper, on screen, or a combination.
- Determine the purpose of your document and select information that is useful, timely, and of interest to your selected audience.
- Consider featuring user tips, reader profiles, or interviews that add a human touch.
- Emphasize specifics that readers can use, such as grant opportunities or technical tasks.
- Include photographs of the editor and the organization members or users to generate interest.
- Determine an effective document design and create your layout for the printed page or screen, or use a software template.
- Create or edit articles and other content using a personable and concise writing style.
- Test your newsletter on the target audience and gather feedback for improving the content and design features.



### See also

- Audience (Part 1)
- Purpose (Part 1)
- Document Design (Part 3)
- Email (Part 3)
- Templates and Style Sheets (Part 1)
- Web Sites (Part 2)
- Web Page Design (Part 3)

## Online Help

**W**hen users are trying to perform a task and have an immediate question, this question is best answered without making the person stray too far from what he or she was trying to do. For example, you are trying to create a brochure using Microsoft Word and you have a question about how to insert a photograph into one of the columns of text. If you had to get up, find the manual, and look up the answer, you would waste time and lose your sense of place in terms of what you were doing. If you had to close out the document and open a new screen of instructions or help information, the same problems would occur.

These situations are where online help can be effective: the information users need in order to answer a question or perform a task is actually part of the program and is available in the context of the task at hand. Most applications use context-sensitive help: users don't have to go searching on the "help" menu for what they need. Instead, the software recognizes that the user is trying to figure out something and offers tips or ideas.