

## **Ethics and pictures**

Now that picture desks have become fully electronic there is little that you can't do to edit a picture. Take off a person's hat? Easy. Bring two people closer together? The stroke of a cursor key. This raises considerable ethical questions.

Occasionally a picture will require re-touching by artists to remove blemishes or to cover up identification marks on vehicles or so on. There can sometimes be a temptation to use such re-touching to change the picture. This should be avoided.

It's very important to take care with library pictures. If you are using a picture of a person or landmark, check that the picture is still up to date. Using a picture of someone as they looked ten or even 20 years before will not be too helpful. If that is the only picture, then you might decide to still use it but you should always make it clear that the picture is out of date. Pictures have often been used in newspapers when the police are searching for a missing person that looks very little like the person being sought. Extra information could make all the difference: "The missing person pictured happily at home a few years ago when her hair was still brown and not blonde." makes it clear that the picture is out of date and that the missing woman's hair colour has changed.

The same is true of landmarks. If it is essential to use a landmark picture that is out of date (a nearby building has been demolished, for instance) and a new picture can't be taken or the existing picture cropped to fit the new circumstances, then the only sensible approach is to make it clear the picture is a library picture and so is out of date.

This excerpt is from [Designing for Newspapers and Magazines](#) by Chris Frost (Routledge, 2003).