

MULTIMEDIA STORYTELLING

GATHERING CONTENT FOR NONLINEAR VERSUS LINEAR PRODUCTIONS

FIVE STEPS TO MULTIMEDIA STORYTELLING (SOURCE: NEWS UNIVERSITY - WWW.NEWSU.ORG AND CHAD A. STEVENS)

■ step one: choosing a story

The best multimedia stories are multi-dimensional. They include action for video, a process that can be illustrated with a graphic (e.g., “how tornadoes form” or “how this new surgery works”), strong quotes for video or audio, and/or powerful emotions for still photos and audio. They use the strengths of each medium to tell the story in a way that draws in readers.

□ multimedia stories are multidimensional:

1. video, stills, audio, infographics
2. avoid thinking “first part,” “second part,” instead, think “this part” and “that part”
3. collect preliminary info
 - a. research - and begin compiling content for infographics, etc. here
 - b. rough out interface/storyboard
 - c. preliminary interviews
 - d. collect content in research to get ideas of possible story components

■ step two: find a focus and project plan (story boarding):

□ the purpose of project plan

1. define the parameters of a story
2. organize and focus the story
3. decide which media to use
4. identify any holes in the story
5. list resources necessary to finish the story

■ step three: gathering content for nonlinear storytelling

Dave LaBelle, a well-known photographer, says that “being a photojournalist is one part journalist, one part psychologist and one part artist, that about covers it.” But as a multimedia storyteller, you must also be one part filmmaker, one part graphic designer and one part acrobat.

□ technology considerations/equipment you need

1. video camera - capture footage, motion
2. photography - capture stills, frozen impact
3. lens - for visual variety
4. microphones - handheld, lavalier, video camera mounted
5. marantz or other recording device
6. tripod - for use with video - (generally shaky video = amateur video...but not always)
7. batteries - always, always, always have extra batteries
8. cables - pack cables, even cables you think you may not need
9. laptop - if necessary to download content
10. headphones - for field monitoring of audio. don't trust your meters
11. dv tapes - for video recording

- 12. compact flash cards - for photography - be sure to have enough memory
- other basic necessities
 - 1. pens, notebook, water, gaffers tape, rubber bands, ziploc bags, sunscreen
- tips for the field
 - 1. remember: video, photographic and audio moments, all happen at the same time
 - 2. you must decide in those moments what medium may be most impactful
 - 3. time is an advantage, if you have it. an evil if you don't
 - 4. ergonomics are important. have a plan to have each medium accessible to you
 - 5. have a plan, but be ready to adapt in the field
 - 6. continually recall the focus of the project and don't get distracted!
 - 7. multimedia storytelling is problem solving. be prepared
- gathering content - the how to

Best for depicting action, taking a reader to a place central to the story, or for hearing and seeing a person central to the story.



VIDEO

- 1. avoid camera shake by using a tripod
- 2. avoid using on camera microphone
- 3. think about visual variety
 - a. get close, get far away
 - b. think about details
 - c. use motion to your advantage. how will transition from shot to shot?
- 4. charge batteries and have extras... along with extra DV tape

Good audio makes still photos and video seem more intense and real. Bad audio makes video seem worse than it is, and it detracts from the drama of still photos. Avoid using audio alone.



AUDIO

- 1. when recording audio, proximity counts
 - a. if you are far away, your audio will be weak, hard to hear, and horrible to edit
- 2. study the kinds of microphones and use appropriately:
 - a. shotgun mics are good to isolate sound... like a zoom lens isolates a scene
 - b. omni-directional mics are good for general audio collection and interviews
 - c. lavalier mics clip to a subject and are often used with video. great flexibility but expensive
- 3. visit <http://www.transom.org> for tips and tutorials on audio gathering and technical answers

Still photos are the best medium for emphasizing a strong emotion, for staying with an important point in a story, or to create a particular mood. They're often more dramatic and don't go by as quickly as video. Still photos used in combination with audio also highlight emotions. Panorama or 360-degree photos, especially combined with audio, also immerse a reader in the location of the story.



PHOTOGRAPHY

- I. three important concepts to consider while shooting stills
 - a. composition - the "strongest way of seeing."
 - change angles
 - use the Rule of Thirds
 - leading lines
 - bend your knees, climb things - change your perspective
 - framing
 - watch your backgrounds, if the background isn't relevant, recompose
 - use Depth of Field to your advantage
 - b. light - light creates mood in a photograph
 - seek interesting and dramatic light
 - wait for subjects to interact in that light
 - when shooting portraits, avoid "bad" light like florescent lights or noon sun
 - use window light when possible
 - c. moments - moments are the heart of storytelling photography
 - interaction moments can have emotion will bring viewers to connect to subjects
 - expression - watch faces, eyes and body language
 - peak action - capture the climax of any moment, be sports or a handshake

Maps can give a location or be layered with other information.



MAPS

- I. maps can add context, geographic relevance and unique interactivity

2. possible sources

- a. <http://maps.google.com>
- b. download google earth
- c. <http://maps.yahoo.com/>
- d. U.S. Geological Survey - <http://www.usgs.gov/>

Animated graphics show how things work. Graphics go where cameras can't go, into human cells or millions of miles into space. Sometimes graphics can be a story's primary medium, supported by other media.



ANIMATED GRAPHICS

1. effective for communicating information that is not documentary
2. can add depth through history, context, etc. limitless possibilities
3. for ideas view - <http://www.forests-forever.com/cgi-bin/index.cgi>

Text can be used to describe the history of a story, to describe a process or to provide accounts of an event. Often used when the information cannot be conveyed with other media.



TEXT

1. and of course text can be used in aesthetic or utilitarian ways
 - a. give information, history and context
 - b. with software like livetype and flash, text animations can make the display of text active

■ step four: editing all this dag gone content

Once you've completed the fieldwork, go back to your project plan. Evaluate your information, figure out what has changed from your original version of the story, and map out which media you have and what should appear in each interactive section.

1. don't collect too much content! edit in the field. be targeted and precise
2. after you've collected too much content on your first few projects, learn from that mistake :)
3. keep videos short, preferably 1 or 2 minutes, no more than 3 or 4 minutes
4. avoid talking heads if possible, but if you use them keep to a few seconds, then switch to "b-roll"

5. because the web uses a low frame rate, avoid action shots with a lot of movement
6. use only high-quality audio. may need to catalog audio for easier reference
 - a. ProTools is the software of choice for many
 - b. others are good too... like Soundtrack, Audacity and Garage Band
7. to use music or not to use music in your production
 - a. music speaks to viewers on levels beyond the literal. it can affect viewers on a subconscious and powerful level. use it with integrity.
8. photos can be used in many ways
 - a. individually, to set a mood or introduce a story or section of a story
 - b. sequentially, to tell a story with a slide show

■ step five: break all these rules

□ these are guidelines. learn them. use them. forget them. blaze new trails!

SOURCES FOR MULTIMEDIA STORYTELLING ←

Sound Portraits - Record Your Own Radio Documentary and Interview Guide

http://soundportraits.org/education/how_to_record/

BBC Training and Development

<http://www.bbctraining.com/onlineCourse.asp?tID=5914&cat=2781>

MediaStorm on Gathering Audio

http://mediastorm.org/submissions/gathering_audio_2.htm

MediaStorm HD video recommendations

http://mediastorm.org/submissions/hdv_kit.htm

How do do timelapses by Zach Wise

<http://digitalartwork.net/wp/2007/01/30/time-lapse-tutorial/>

Transom

ProTools: http://www.transom.org/tools/editing_mixing/200610_guide_to_pro_tools/

Marantz: http://www.transom.org/tools/recording_interviewing/200503.pmd660.html

handheld: http://www.transom.org/tools/recording_interviewing/200608_handheld_mic_shootout/

Soundslides software - "Ridiculously simple storytelling" \$39

<http://www.soundslides.com/>

Multimedia Shooter blog

soundslides tutorial: <http://www.multimediashooter.com/wp/?p=164>

Poynter Institute interview with Joe Weiss, creator of Soundslides

<http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=83&aid=116285>

Multimedia Project Examples

Forests Forever - <http://www.forests-forever.com/cgi-bin/index.cgi>

Ecotonoha - https://www.ecotonoha.com/index_en.html

MediaStorm - primarily linear storytelling - <http://mediastorm.org>

The Weight Introduction by Sacramento Bee - <http://www.sacbee.com/static/live/news/projects/theweight/>

Their Circular Life - <http://www.theircircularlife.it/frameset.htm>