

Turn Your Print Story Into a Multimedia Story

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Technology plays a big role in multimedia journalism, but there's a risk of getting caught up in the technology and not tapping into the potential inherent in technology for critical thinking and creativity. This assignment helps you think like an online journalist by using RSS and news alerts as you report and by collecting assets for a multimedia piece. You'll need to plan what you need ahead of time so you can collect assets as you research and report your story. You could turn in a map for one writing assignment, photos for another and audio for yet another.

REPORTING: RSS

One way to track new information about your topic is to set up an RSS feed. RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication. And it's really simple! You subscribe to an information feed that's delivered right to your RSS reader or Web browser.

Buy *Journalism 2.0: How to Survive and Thrive* by Mark Briggs or download it from http://www.j-lab.org/Journalism_20.pdf. Pages 16-21 describe how to select a reader and find an RSS feed. Pick a section on several news websites targeted to your topic. In addition, find at least one blog that discusses your subject. If one feed doesn't pan out after a week, switch to something else.

REPORTING: GOOGLE NEWS ALERTS

After you sign up at <http://www.google.com/alerts>, Google will e-mail you updates about the latest Google results (Web, news, etc.) on the topic you specify. This is a handy way to monitor a developing news story or keep up with an industry, person, event or sports team.

MULTIMEDIA: GOOGLE MAPS MANIA

Turn in a map, description AND well-written caption (complete sentences, please!) to illustrate your story. You do NOT need to create the map. Find one online and print it out. Describe how you'd make the map interactive. See some cool examples of Google map mashups at <http://googlemapsmania.blogspot.com/>. A mashup is a website or web application that combines content from more than one source, such as photos from Flickr and a Google map.

MULTIMEDIA: PHOTOS

For inspiration, look at the photo galleries at The New York Times (<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/multimedia/index.html>) and The Washington Post (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/photo/?hpid=mmindex>).

Turn in 6 to 12 strong photos. For shooting tips, read pages 80-84 in *Journalism 2.0*.

MULTIMEDIA: AUDIO

For inspiration, listen to BBC Radio (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio/>) or NPR (<http://www.npr.org/>). Please do NOT turn in the entire audio file from a two-hour interview. Instead, hand in something short that augments rather than repeats your text story. To avoid having to retrieve the best stuff from several hours of interviews, you can gather your quotable quotes at the end of the interview. Ask four or five questions that will add to rather than repeat your story. Try to include natural sounds, such as birds chirping.

You may edit your audio with Audacity or JetAudio, which are free downloads for the Mac and PC. Or try Garage Band if you have a Mac.

For more on audio basics, go to *Journalism 2.0* (pages 69-77) and *Gathering Audio: A Practical Guide* by Brian Storm and Jim Seida (<http://mediastorm.org/submissions/howto2.htm>).

The YouTube Election?

To engage students in the 2008 presidential election, ask them to look at the CNN/YouTube Debate (<http://www.youtube.com/debates>) and note the three videos they thought were the most original, probing, illuminating or whatever you decide. Discuss them in class. Did YouTube take U.S. politics to a new level? Was the debate refreshing, or was it a silly stunt?

Ask the students to think of questions that weren't asked in July, then have them work alone or in teams (depending on skill level and equipment availability) to film a video and post it to YouTube for the Republican debate, which is scheduled for September 17.

Photo Fakery

This exercise combines intermediate Photoshop skills with ethical concerns about the digital manipulation of photos. After doing this exercise, students will be better able to detect digital fakes and understand the parameters. Start off by thoroughly discussing digital manipulation so students understand what is OK to change in a photo and what is not OK to change. You can show them contemporary and historical examples from Pictures That Lie (<http://news.com.com/2300-1026-6033210.html>). Discuss what different codes of ethics say about digital manipulation. Look for codes of ethics on the websites of two organizations that compile codes: the American Society of Newspaper Editors (www.asne.org/index.cfm?id=387) and the MediaWise Trust (www.mediawise.org.uk/display_page.php?id=40), a British organization that collects codes from around the world, including the United States.

INSTRUCTIONS: This Photoshop exercise will help you recognize photos that have been doctored so you can ferret out fakes. As a journalist, however, you must NEVER deceive the viewer. Most photojournalists agree that these techniques are OK: dodging and burning, sizing, cropping and correcting the color balance. You may adjust skin tones to avoid green faces so long as the manipulation does not deceive the viewer.

1. Find and download a large news photo (not a thumbnail) suitable for digital manipulation.

2. Pretend you're unscrupulous by doing at least three of the following:

- Add a person or an element, such as the cloned smoke in Lebanon.
- Remove a person or an element, such as a Coke can or a telephone pole.
- Darken or lighten a person's face (remember O.J. Simpson on the cover of *Time*?).
- Change the color of an element.

Make the changes as realistic as possible. If you replace one face with a different one, that counts ONLY as removing a person or an element. You must also add something elsewhere.

3. Save your image as a Photoshop file (.psd), NOT as a .jpg. Turn in the .psd file.

4. Also print out one color copy BEFORE class WITHOUT YOUR NAME ON IT.

5. We'll shuffle the color copies and give each of you one photo to critique (but not your own!). You'll comment in writing on the back of the altered photo.

- What do you think was done to the photo?
- How do you think it was done in Photoshop?
- Was it easy to spot the fakery? How could it be improved?
- Should this be done to a photo? If so, why is it OK? If not, why not? Back up your reasoning by citing from codes of ethics.

6. Hand in the written comments with your name on them.