**Online Storytelling**

Storytelling is a concept used for various methods of constructing and performing or distributing stories. The methods can be used in numerous ways and for numerous causes as entertainment, education, advertising, etc. Digital and interactive media have eased the production process for making multimedia stories and increased the opportunities for people telling their stories. The Internet has given possibilities for individuals as well as enterprises to distribute their stories to a global community. Also, individuals as well as organizations that did not reach an audience before because of for example a narrow or wide spread target group, may now be able to find them on the web. One of the greatest opportunities of multimedia journalism is the ability to make different design choices. Although most online organizations present digital derivatives of their "parent" products – newspaper sites present columns of text, radio sites feature audio files, and TV sites provide video – we are seeing an increase in the number of sites embracing all design options. Radio sites are complementing their audio with photos and/or text, newspaper sites are presenting video and audio slide shows along with their text, and TV stations are supplementing their video pieces with text stories. Increasingly, news organizations are challenging themselves and their staffs with stepping outside of their format expertise and trying to produce news packages that take full advantage of the array of media formats available. Online news sites are trying to integrate different media types into the story package – creating rich multimedia experiences for their audience. Exploration in the use of Flash helps designers create a common interface those transitions easily from graphics, to video to photos to audio without interrupting the user. Creating these rich media experiences is a commitment of time and specialized talent that news organizations cannot afford for every story. This is the biggest challenge for news designers.

**The workflow of online storytelling**

The models for distribution of stories look different for each user (messenger) or purpose. Here’s how the production process of a online story may look and also what kind of functions are involved in the production process.

**1- Objective**

The first stage is to define purpose and objectives of the story to be produced. Questions to answer here is: Who is the messenger? Who is the target group?

**2- Message**

The second stage is to define the message of the story, from out of that one also defines the plot of the story, the roles, context etc.

**3- Choice of media**

The third step is to define what Medias and techniques to use to produce and distribute the story (print, TV, Internet, but also pictures, movie etc.).

**4- Story structure**

In the fourth step the script is written and storyboards produced to define what visuals, sounds and graphics should be used in the story.

**5- Creative production**

Visual material, sound, graphics are produced.

**6- Editing**

The material is being edited until the story is well produced and ready to be published or distributed in selected media.

**7- Publishing/ distribution**

When published and distributed the story on the Internet or via e-mail it reaches its final receiver or user. Here's a look at how to tell stories online and the range of forms being used by major online news organizations. This list was the first comprehensive effort to document online storytelling forms (Has since been updated). It makes infinitely easier for media instructors to explain the convergence - and the divergence - among the various media platforms. Online web writing was more informative multimedia writing moves towards entertainment more like the difference between news writing and feature writing in print. Through multimedia you "add" the eye and the ear. Telling news stories online is exciting and challenging because of all the tools at our disposal. Online journalists must think on multiple levels at once: words, ideas, story structure, design, interactive, audio, video, photos, and news judgment.

TV is about showing the news. Print is more about telling and explaining. Online is about showing, telling, demonstrating and interacting. It’s easy for online journalists, most of who have been trained in traditional media, to stick to broadcast and print storytelling forms. But that would be a waste. In online journalism you have many more elements to choose from — so use them. Combine the best of each world:

* Use print to explain
* Use multimedia to show
* Use interactive to demonstrate and engage

**Layer information**.

Aim to present news in small, digestible bits of information, rather than everything at once. Then use some combination of text, art, audio, video, links and interactive to provide deeper layers of information the readers can dig into as they desire.

**Give choices, but limit them.**

Too few choices and you’re not taking advantage of the strengths of the Web. Too many choices and readers may not select any because they might get confused or not want to spend the time deciding. Plus, the more choices you give, the less control you have over how the news is conveyed. Remember, readers are coming to your site in part because they trust your news judgment, so don’t be afraid to use it.

**The Basic Forms**

Here’s an overview of some of the most common storytelling forms being used by major news Web sites.

**Print Plus**

This is the basic form of online journalism, used by every major news site. The form is built around a text article, often one that was not specifically written for the online medium, such as a wire or newspaper story. Other elements — such as photos, links and video — are then added to the page containing the story. The form is efficient for resource-strapped news organizations, making it easy to slap together an already-written article with a clip from TV. But the form doesn't take full advantage of the medium. It is primarily a way to repackage news produced by traditional media.

**Clickable Interactive**

In the most common forms, these are simply interactive versions of traditional newspaper and TV graphics, used to provide information to supplement a story. But the same tools and techniques also can be used to tell stories. Generally, they combine linear and non-linear storytelling, giving the user choices but guiding him or her along a path. Animation, audio and video can be incorporated. This form has produced some of the most innovative online journalism. It tends to be very popular among users, but is very time-consuming to produce.

**Slideshows**

Slideshows are more than just an easy way to present multiple images about an event. The form can be used to tell stories all by itself, by combining descriptive photos and using the caption field to convey additional information. Rather than just throwing together a bunch of interesting photos, select photos that

Will, when placed in a certain order, tell a cohesive story — creating a type of photo essay. When done right, this is one of the more effective ways of using the Web to tell stories.

**Audio Stories**

Audio can be an incredibly powerful way to tell a story. There’s a reason radio didn’t disappear after TV came along. Use audio when there are sounds that can’t be described in words; where the way a person says something adds meaning that the words alone can’t convey. Don't just hotlink text to a sound clip of a quote. Use photos of the speakers to draw users in. And use audio in creative ways.

**Narrated Slideshows**

This form combines slideshows, audio and the video format to create powerful stories. The producer selects a series of photos and audio sound bites that complement one another. As the photos advance automatically, the corresponding audio plays. The entire package is played as streaming video or a Flash movie. The result often resembles the documentary style of Ken Burns. This is a useful form for stories with strong images and sound.

**Live Chats**

Chats may not seem like storytelling, but they can be. When moderated properly, live chats are an interactive version of the Q&A story format, where the readers are asking the questions. This can be a very powerful way to convey information because the readers help create and shape the story. Of course, many online chats are either not moderated at all or are poorly moderated, and as a result are nearly worthless.

**Quizzes And Surveys**

These too may not seem like storytelling, but the forms can be used to do so. Rather than just make a quiz as a fun aside to a story, an entire story can be told through the quiz format by breaking the information into questions and answers. This can be very effective because it engages the reader.

**Animated Stories**

Stories can be told entirely through animation. This is a great way to tell stories visually when there are no photos or video. A lot of animation being used online doesn't tell a story. Heck, it doesn't tell the reader anything. And along with all the annoying ads, that's just helped train online readers to ignore animation. So don't overuse it. That said, it can be a great tool. It's OK to use it to grab the reader’s attention, but do so sparingly because it can distract the user from the real story. Use animation to bring newspaper info graphics to life, when you want to recreate an event that has motion or action, to show how something happened or works. Or use it for humorous stories, such as editorial cartoons.

**Interactive Webcasts**

The term "Webcasting" is used to describe the ability to use the Web to deliver live or delayed versions of sound or video broadcasts. It is a broadcast that is delivered over the Internet. Participants can view and hear streaming media, and they can participate in real-time online chats. Webcasting streaming video has been around for a while, but news sites are just beginning to combine various interactive tools with the Webcasts into packages. Adding links to related stories, chats, polls that are referred to in the Webcasts create a very different experience than just watching TV. More advanced versions use technologies such as Flash and SMIL to embed instructions within the video so that text, links, etc., can be called up at certain points in the video. During the 2000 presidential debates, for example, MSNBC.com users could watch the debate on their computer and on the same screen see a “Debate Monitor” panel that was continuously updated with facts related to the statements each candidate made, as they made them.

**Multimedia Interactive**

Many online journalism elements and stories combine multiple forms, creating, in effect, new, hybrid forms. The most complicated of these use Flash's animation technology to integrate text, clickable graphics, audio, photos, video -- and sometimes even polls or quizzes -- to create comprehensive interactive packages that tell stories in ways no other medium can.

**Other Forms**

Here are some other interesting examples of online storytelling:

* Stories without words:
* Surround photos and video:
* Weblogs:
* Databases:
* Using community:
* Interactive memorial:
* Text chunking (Semi-linear storytelling with words):
* Games: