# online journalism
# Elements of Digital Storytelling

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# new media studies

- What is different about the media environment that is new / needs to be studied?
- What is different about the media audience and their relation to media?

| LEGACY MEDIA | DIGITAL MEDIA |
|---|---|
| Centralized (monotheistic) | Decentralized (polytheistic) |
| Communication: One-to-many | Many-to-many, one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one |
| Format: Fixed | Flexible / Fluid |
| Media: single or multiple media | Multimedia potential |
| Complex and expensive production | Cheaper production methods / lower cost for entry |
| Limited access – you find them | Unlimited access – they find you |
| Authoritative | No central authority |
| Highly controlled | Impossible to control |

# changing audience

- Time starved
- Time shifters
- Multi-appliance users
- Participants / contributors
- Action takers
- Identify by interest – not just geography
- Niche not Mass
- Trust through triangulation
- Growing users of online news

# progress since 1995?

<u>What are newspapers NOT providing now?</u>

❑ Different attitudes / viewpoints / expressive forms

❑ Personalities / identities for reporters

❑ Background – "How I wrote the story"

❑ Links to past stories

❑ Follow-up on stories

❑ Interaction: reporter & community / between users

❑ Personalization of news

❑ Supporting documents
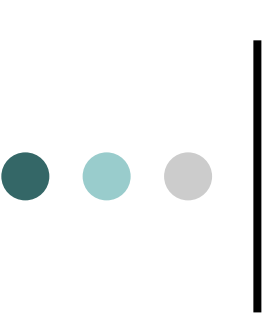
❑ Deep local news

# progress since 1995?

How will the way we tell stories change?

- ❏ Mixed and multimedia
- ❏ Chronological presentation through linking
- ❏ New relationship between words and graphics
- ❏ Stories will be annotated, footnoted
- ❏ New story-telling software
- ❏ Readers as contributors
- ❏ Linking will replace inverted pyramid

# progress since 1995?

- Have we made progress?
- What blocks us from the vision?

digital storytelling
so many terms,
so little clarity…

Interactive

Hypertext

Multimedia

Experiential

Multi-nodal

**Immersive**

Non-linear

# elements of digital storytelling

- Goals
  - Achieve greater clarity on terms
  - Assess current usage
  - Define components for effects testing
  - Examine the story level, not site level, use of digital potential

# elements of digital storytelling

www.inms.umn.edu/elements

- MEDIA
- ACTION
- RELATIONSHIP
- CONTEXT
- COMMUNICATION

# media

- Single Medium: [AZ Daily Sun](#)
- Multiple Media: [Betrayal in the Ranks](#)
- Multimedia: [Safari](#); [Unclogging a Drain](#)

- **Questions:**
  - How do people process multimedia versus single media packages?
  - Does multimedia impede or enhance understanding / retention?

# action

- Static / Passive: Strom Thurmond Dies
- Static / Active: Mill City Museum
- Dynamic / Passive: Thurmond Dies; Game Museum
- Dynamic / Active: Spammers; Reconstruction
- Dynamic / Passive – Active:  Too Solid Flesh

- **Questions:**
  - What's more engaging, letting people select or just delivering the content?
  - Is dynamic or static content more compelling?
  - What stories can be better explained through animation?

# relationship

- Linear: Turkey Fuel
- Non-linear: Language Lesson; Collision Course; U Street in Focus

- **Questions:**
  - What form results in more comprehensive reading / use?
  - Does the non-linear presentation's selection process increase engagement?

# relationship

- **Manipulation**
  - DIY Network – Room Planner
  - Waterfront Renaissance
  - September 12

- **Questions:**
  - Does manipulation improve engagement?
  - Does "experiencing" content help with understanding the issues?

# relationship

- **Calculation**
  - [Cheater's Way](#)
  - [Ax and Tax](#)
  - [Japan Today Poll](#)

- **Questions:**
  - Does this sort of input and calculation tracking engage users?
  - Does this sort of interaction help people better understand the issues?

# relationship

- **Customization**
  - [Crimetracker](#)
  - [My Turning Point](#)

- **Questions:**
  - Does customizing make people see only a small part of the whole story?
  - Does it help make the news more personal?

# context

- Embedded: Slate
- Sidebar: Sniper Trial; Court Ruling

- **Questions:**
  - Which method gets people's attention?
  - Which method results in greater linking to related materials?

# communication

- With reporters: Seattle Times
- Chat: MSNBC
- Between readers: St. Cloud Times
- SMS: Guardian

- **Questions:**
  - How do people want to be communicated with?
  - Who do people want to communicate with?
  - What is the main objective of the communication?

# research

- Current levels of use
  - Need baseline measures
- Audience effects research
  - Which combinations of elements work best
- Recommendations to practitioners
  - When to deploy effort with new story forms

# current practices – study 1

Homepage Finding Overview:

- **Relationship:** Less than 1/3 utilized open content.
- **Action:** 90% of homepage contents were static.
- **Media:** Over half of the stories were single medium (print only).

# current practices – study 2

Special Project Package Finding Overview:

- **Relationship:** Only 1/4 utilized open content.
- **Action:** Most static or dynamic / active.
- **Media:**  Virtually all were multiple media.

# effects testing – project 1

- Difference between multiple media and multimedia on memory and motivation
  - Voices for the Land research

# effects testing – project 1

- Generational differences:
  - HS and College:  Preferred multimedia
  - Senior citizens:    Would prefer print
- Clicked on more multimedia stories – but didn't finish them
- Multiple media easier to "comprehend"

# effects testing – project 2

○ Testing for "flow" between different styles of news infographics



"Zoom graphic"
Dynamic / active
Non-linear
Multiple media
<NYTimes.com>
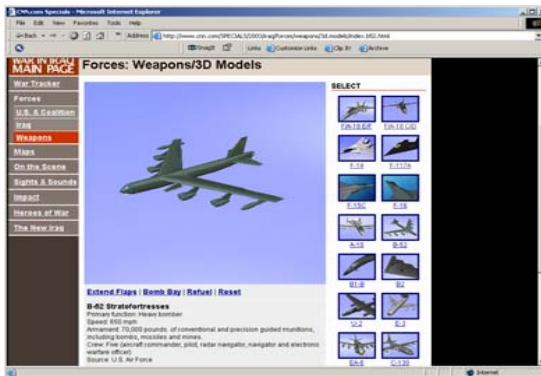


"3D graphic"
Dynamic / active
Manipulable
Multiple media
<CNN.com>



"Baseball card"
Static / passive
Multiple media
<CNN.com>



"Animated graphic"
Dynamic / passive to
Dynamic / active
Non-linear, Multimedia
<USAToday.com>

# results…?

| ADULTS (STUDENTS) | NYT | C-3D | C-BB | USAT |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| It was easy to find *information of interest* | **41** (68) | **80** (49) | **92** (41) | **77** (70) |
| I was totally *absorbed* by what I was doing. | **63** (55) | **78** (46) | **78** (47) | **75** (54) |
| Interacting with the graphics excited my *curiosity* | **51** (65) | **70** (59) | **84** (16) | **79** (63) |
| The *graphics were interesting* | **49** (52) | **62** (44) | **64** (25) | **70** (50) |
| I *wish all graphics* were designed like this | **36** (42) | **32** (34) | **60** (12) | **54** (47) |
| The graphics were *attractive* | **59** (76) | **88** (76) | **84** (40) | **90** (85) |
| It was *easy to view* info on the graphic | **65** (70) | **76** (61) | **96** (72) | **84** (65) |
| I'd *visit the graphic again* | **63** (49) | **84** (36) | **88** (21) | **72** (54) |
| The information on the graphic was *credible* | **65** (67) | **84** (65) | **100** (41) | **90** (67) |
| Overall, how *favorable* do you feel toward the graphic | **59** (71) | **76** (50) | **88** (32) | **86** (69) |

# final thoughts…

- New media "has its own expressive properties: encyclopedic, spatial, procedural, participatory. "
  *Janet Murray – Hamlet on the Holodeck*
- The "conventions" of new media are still being formed.
- There is still much to be learned.

# words of advice

New media is interactive. In contrast to old media where the order of presentation is fixed, the user can now interact with a media object. In the process of interaction the **user can choose which elements to display or which paths to follow, thus generating a unique work.** In this way the user becomes the co-author of the work.

*Lev Manovich: The Language of New Media*
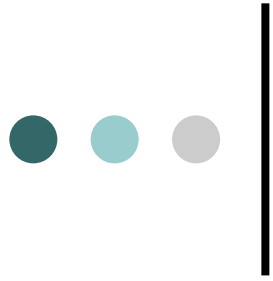
Without tradition, ~~art~~ news
is a flock of sheep without
a shepherd. Without innovation,
it is a corpse.

Winston Churchill

# Resources

- Cyberjournalists.net
  http://www.cyberjournalist.net/
- Elements of Digital Storytelling
  http://www.inms.umn.edu/elements
- Interactive Narratives
  http://www.interactivenarratives.org
- J-Lab
  http://www.j-lab.org/coolstuff.html