2005 – International Symposium on Online Journalism

Day 1, Panel 3: Multimedia Journalism: How Video, Audio, Animation and Other Features Are Creating a New Journalistic Storytelling Style

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Panelists:
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NORA PAUL: Ok, the title of this panel is "Multimedia Journalism: How Video, Audio, Animation and Other Features Are Creating a New Journalistic Storytelling Style" , I think it gets the prize for the longest session title I've ever seen. We have three great panelists to talk about the different aspects of how they believe this is happening. Jane Ellen Stevens is going to be speaking right after me; she's a lecturer at UC Berkeley Journalism program and a long time evangelist for the creation of backpack journalist and the idea of the story shell. So she will be talking about why backpack think is so important for the creation of a new storytelling style. We also have Alberto Cairo, he's multimedia director of the multi-award winning infographics work done at El Mundo, in Spain. And he's going to be starting as a professor at the University of Carolina Journalism School. Alberto is going to talk about the potential and some of the pitfalls of creating dynamic, animated infographics. Then we also have Jonathan Dube, Managing Producer for MSNBC, he's going to talk about some of the ways that they're conceiving of new ways to present new stories. Ideas that have become in some ways the new bar that other media producers, multimedia producers, are trying to reach. I'm Nora Paul, I'm the director of the Institute of New Media Studies at the University of Minnesota.

And I usually do a lot of sessions like digital storytelling and I usually do them as kind of show and tell. I cruise through some of the things that I think are the best and most innovative new storytelling forms that I've been seeing and why I think they are particularly cool. But today some of the places where there are really terrific sites you can go through yourself and flip through some really good digital stories can be done by going to some of these sites. We have great hunter-gathers that are out there scalping the web and then linking to the greatest and latest examples of digital story telling. This is Jonathan Dube's cyberjournalist.net, Andrew David (inaudible) does a really great interactive narrative blog, very good about updating things and also has a nice set here where you can go if you are looking for

examples of particular kinds of things, infographics, or long and short narrative, he's organized it all for you. Another great one is the SNDs award site. Here you can go in and, under the winners, look by category and then by month and see the monthly winners for the SND's entries. It's a wonderful, inspiring source. So, we will make sure that you all, I'm sure these slides are going to be in some kind of site, and be sure and look at these when you're looking for inspiration. Instead of doing the kind of show and tell I want to lead off our panel instead with a question: Are video, audio, animation, and other features really creating new storytelling styles?

I think media is a tricky word. It can mean both the method of delivery, news, print, broadcast, radio, are all media, and it can also mean the variety of forms in which a message of story is crafted. So it's audio, video, text and animation. Now, none of these, on their own, are new. The question here is how multiple type of media are being crafted in the digital medium, to create a style for story telling, unique to this new media distribution channel. Len Apcar's boss Arthur Salzberger once said something that I very much disagree with, he said he was absolutely agnostic regarding media platform. Even his new executive editor Bill Keller disagrees with that term, is one that implies sort of a neutral view. Bill Keller said in an interview that he prefers the idea of media savvy. And our ever-erudite friend Rusty Coats said that in Tampa, where media convergence is sort of at the top of the game, he said that they refer to this goal as platform excellence and I think that that's a good way to think about this. So I think that in this environment where there is an array of media possible to use in crafting stories, and an array of media channels possible for the delivery of stories, that Mr. Keller's and Mr. Coats' notion of savvyness and excellence regarding the use of different platforms is what's called for. How do we really leverage the strengths and the unique attributes of different media platforms for the delivery of digital stories?

Where we are right now in the development of new and unique forms, I believe, is well represented with this quote. The need for new and a unique fourth medium for news is still in the imitation form I think, for the most part.   Hopefully we will be ending in innovation. Right now though, we're still mostly in the imitation stage. Pretty much websites all look the same, doesn't matter what language they're in. And news stories, for the most part, still replicate column kind of format. But there is a movement towards experimentation, with the combination of attributes that make a digital story, to create something that simply can't be done at any of the other three legacy media.   A couple of years ago, I started getting really frustrated with the squishiness of the terms that were used for digital storytelling. Particularly, one that make my skin crawl, interactive multimedia. When you heard that term you had one picture in your head perhaps and somebody else would have a completely different other picture. I remember talking about interactive multimedia with somebody, and their conception of it was of a news story that had a link from the byline to the reporter's email and had a nice little video file sitting next to the file of text. That to me was not interactive multimedia. But it illustrated the problem with the range of what this could mean. With a very nice grant from the media center at API, a graduate student and I got to work on the elements of digital storytelling site. The intention was to help break-down the component pieces of the

storytelling packages, and hopefully use this as a way to start exploring what the possible combinations of the story package can be. In the site, we talked about five different parts that make up the online story. First of all, digital story contain different media types, in different combination. You can have still photos, an audio, an animation, then a text and a video, and, I think the most important distinction is what is the relationship between those media parts. So, is it just a single medium that's used to craft the story, are there multiple media pieces used, but they sit next to each other, as component pieces, versus multimedia where those media types are actually woven together to create a brand new kind of form.

Online stories can also have an element of action in it, two-parts action. There is action in terms of the content that is created, is it just sit there, that's static, is there dynamic movement to the content set, or is there some sort of combination of that? And action also built-in on the part of the reader. What does the user of the content need to do in order to make sure they experience the content in its fullness? Then, there are a number of relationships that multimedia producer can build in the creation of the story package. One thing, for example, is linearity. By designing a story package in such a way that one person could experience it in a different way than somebody else, you have a non-linear experience. Content that can be, actually allow people to take out a part perhaps of the full story and get just the slice that they're interested in, allows this kind of customization of content, and we're starting to see more of that with the database backgrounds or back files, when they craft the story then you can start just pulling out parts of the story. Calculation presumes that there is some way for you to put in a response. That response is remembered and then an individual resolves from your input will be part of the story packet. Manipulation is about the ability to move and sort and change the look perhaps of the content set, a good example of that is the Waterfront Renaissance, that I'm sure a lot of you have seen, that lets you move little pieces to a proposed waterfront development area. And then, finally, appendage is if the story is designed in such a ways was that you could actually add to the content, so that your contribution ends up being an additional part of the story package.

The final two elements are context, how was that story put into a context with other stories, the technique being used, imbedded or side bar, and more importantly the purpose. Are stories put into context because of here are some stories that are directly related and will give you a fuller picture. Is it just stories that you seem to like this kind of stories so here are some other ones on that topic? You know, economics in South America. And then recommended is not really happening very much, although in some ways I see the top-ten headlines as a kind of the recommended thing. But nothing along the lines of yahoo's, I mean Amazons' customer's thing, you liked this story before and next time you sign on, here's some more of those stories. So that's not really much happening.

Communication is the final element where you can talk about sort of the configuration of it, one-to-one, one-to-many, the type that you use, and clearly I have to add blog, and wiki, and other kinds of things. So we got a little picky, as academics like to do, but I think that this kind of compartmentalizing, or

componentizing of what the package can consist of, will help us not only do some content analysis, where are we in the new combinations of elements, but also to start doing some testing to see which ones in combination might work more effectively than others.

These are the five aspects of story construction and the possible combination of on-off conditions for these elements can be used to create new forms of story telling, and these on-off combinations can be almost infinite, I think. But many of the stories that are trying to break from the column form are new-innovative form of story telling, are simply not taking it far enough, I think. Clearly the combination of media use in slide shows with audio overlays is becoming the popular new story form. But I think that only there was an element of control by the user, is this really a new story telling form? Otherwise it's really the kind of presentation that can be done on television, with a series of images and somebody narrating it. So I think it's this aspect of control that is a key to the understanding what new story forms can be online and how they can be completely different. Television, radio and news print users usually have no control of the way a story is presented to them. Except to the on-off switch, they can't interact with the content as presented. They just receive it as, I think we can have another discussion about the philosopher probably saying that real interaction is all cognitive, so they are interacting, that's another reason why that's such a squishy term. Now, while online users do have control of when they want to see the information, or the story, as opposed to the appointment they had to make with television or radio programming, I think there needs to be a greater level of choice and control in the content itself. I think this notion of perceived interaction needs more study, we need to know how much people really want to engage with changing, manipulating, adding to a story package.

Another aspect, beyond the control of the story, that's unique to online, is the combination of media that can be used in the telling of a story.   Newsprint can only use text and static photos and graphics. Television has sounds and pictures, but text doesn't really work as a storytelling device on television. Radio has sound only. And all of those media have learned how best to take advantage of media available to them when crafting a story. This is something that the online storytellers still need to discover. When is a story best told using the chunks of the narrative text along with some video? When is an audio narrative over a series of still images best told a story? How does the flash narrative, which can combine animation, sound and text, offer the best approach? I think these are questions that are still opened. And finally, storytelling online requires a new way of thinking about the relationship between the reporter, producer and the news audience. Somebody was telling me the other day that one of the biggest hurdles of the mainstream journalists to get over in thinking about crafting stories for the online forms is the mentality that was expressed by a print newsroom journalist that he knew. He said the journalist told him: "my job is to report it, theirs is to read it, the end." So I think journalists need to think about the way that crafting a new kind of story can change the users' relationship with the story and content itself.

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One of the real potentials of online is that there can be a variety of engagements with the story. New story forms can provide readers with an experience such as the baggage screener that Jonathan Dube is going to be talking about, you get to be the baggage screener. It can also allow for exploration of virtual spaces that you can do on your own time frame. This is the Mill City museum opened and they created virtual tours that you can go and check out different parts of the building, and do three-sixty, panorama photos and things like that. And it can also represent reconstruction of an event and allow people to go through in sequence to better understand how things evolved, what happened? Some of the work that was done around 9-11 was fantastic, and Alberto will be talking about some of the things that El Mundo has done in this area.

Now my favorite example of part of the challenge that we're at is these two pieces from the BBC. One is a very informative text site, has a still picture, this is static, you know, text only really, that explains all of the aspects of ecstasy as a drug. What it is, what the effects are, what are the risks. This actually goes into law, because this is in a crime area of the BBC. But then there is this piece, too. (audio from presentation playing) That will wake you up after lunch! Ok, so we can give this poor little disco-guy some ecstasy, and it tells us what happens when you take ecstasy. And it also tells the effects in terms of what is going on with your heart, with your stomach. You can give him a little bit more. Ok, he gets a little bit crazier, he's feeling good, and now he's not feeling so good. More than one, start loosing it, throwing a spiked drink, and he's on the floor. This is to me the perfect example of doing content that simply is not possible to do in any other medium. And, my big question is, depending on the purpose that you are creating this content set, which one is the more effective form? If your idea is, I want to inform kids about party drugs, so that their worries about the danger of doing it really gets driven home, is the text presentation or this fun interactive ultimately more effective? That's again, a big open question.

In a project that we're going to be launching in the next week or so, we asked a variety of people who are working on, or thinking about the crafting of digital stories, to share their thought of what they think that digital storytelling is and what it is not yet, but hopefully be some day. The site, which is again sponsored by the Media Center, is called Digital Think and it lets you inside the heads of some really interesting people who are leading the thinking about producing digital stories. We've organized so that the kind of are that they are interested in, we have activists, artists, poets, lots of journalists, game makers, and all ones for news are here, if you're looking more for art, they are here. It tells you the name of the person and the title of their essay, and when you click to it, you'll get to read the piece, there is a PDF download of it if you want to print it out, and then we're going to have a little presentation of their work on the upper corner. So, we're hoping that this will be an opportunity for people not just see people's work, which again, there are lots of good sites for linking to great work, but to really get at to what there people are thinking when they construct these things. Some of the hopes that they have for the future.

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I will leave now with this quote, it's old and I use it all the time, but I think it's so fitting for online news people. We're at this position where we need to keep honoring the traditions of news, but we need innovation. So, without tradition news is a flock of sheep without a Sheppard. Without innovation it is a corps. So, here are some people who help make sure we don't die, if their ideas take hold, I hope. We'll get Jane Ellen Stevens up next.

JANE ELLEN STEVENS: Being a storyteller I'm going to start with a story. I give a short talk to some of the graduate students at UC Berkeley and it's called The End of Journalism as We Know it, and they don't like the subject at all. I went through everything and in one particular class there was this outburst. Half of the class said I get it, and half of the class said, no we have to stick to print. It was an amazing bru-ha-ha, and I just kind of stepped out of the way and let them go at it. But at the very end, one of the kids in there said, well, I think there are enough smart minds in this school that we should be able to get together and figure out a way to save print. My point of view is that there are enough smart minds around now that we can figure out a way to save journalism. Because I see that can head to a huge crash and I don't want to see that because I think it is really, really important to democracy and the way we live. I'm going to focus today on what journalists are going to be doing or have to think about in this new world. What are we going to become, what is our new role, how is it different than before, all in ten minutes.

A funny way to do that is to look at this new medium in terms of its characteristics. And there is a reason I'm going to do it this way. That is because if you look at the change from radio to television, if you saw the very, very first TV show, do you know what it looked like? It was a guy standing in front of a radio mike and they put a camera in the back, and they looked at that and went: "this isn't TV. What is TV?" And they had to start figuring out what are the characteristics of TV that makes it different from the characteristics of radio. Well, we're all in that generation where we grew up with TV, know the characteristics. Some of us have seen it as it has progressed from the 1950s onward and remember the old Douglas Edwards With the News when he sat there with his typewriter and a radio mike and using the best possible film, because there wasn't any video, that happened to come across the (inaudible) and interestingly enough at that time, the commercials were much more interesting visually than what was on the news. And we say that a lot of that about the web stuff too. What's happened with the internet, with the web, is that newspapers and TVs, the two traditional big media, have been trying to say, the web is a newspaper or the web is just another substitute for TV. And it is not either of those. It is its own medium. So what are those unique characteristics?

First, I want to start, before the web there was the internet, and you can look at the characteristics of the internet that were laid out that give you a very simple basics about what this is all about. First, it began as a solution oriented medium, if you all remember using the first golfer, you had a question, you went and found the answer. You went and found the answer, it was interactive. So, that's the basis for it, no questions about it. If you don't have those two things you don't have anything. It was interactive, participatory and solution-oriented. And then the web came along

that lets us do many more things. So the characteristics of where we are now, is that it allows for multimedia storytelling and Nora has explained what it is other people have today, in some combination of photos, videos, audio, graphics, interactivity, in an non-linear format, in which the information each of that media is complementary and not redundant. You see a lot of sites today, like CNN, which are multiple media, they'll have the video story, they will have the text story, but it's redundant and not complementary. That's not multimedia. Solution-oriented stories, I that in the past, that newspapers and TV have been traditionally problem-oriented. "Here is the problem, community." And then we might have a few graphs with solution, but we back off and revisit five years later and say, where are we now, five years later. Well, because this medium us solution oriented at its parts, people want solution-oriented stories. If you tell me the problem, tell me how I can fix it. Or, if there is a problem happening at this community that we don't have the answer for yet, tell me what's happening at a community nearby that is doing well. And then go back to our community and say, how come we're not doing that. Give me resources.

The other thing a journalist has to think about, and not just in his or hers storytelling, is the context that the story is going to fit into. There is no more been there done that journalism in this medium. Everything has a context, because you have this incredible depth that you don't have, you can't have in newspapers and TV, and that requires that context, and what that means is the shell. I just made up that word the shell. Because I like simple words. Other people say evergreen packages, or the put another name to it, I just call it a shell. And also, I started out as a marine biologist so for the oceanographic words. So, Touching Hearts (inaudible), is the classic example, very classic example, it's now what, four years old? It's a classic example of a really good multimedia story and this is its shell, this is how it is organized. It is a combination of text and graphics, as you can see, I'm not going to play it all because I don't have time, it takes a minute. This is on the interactive mural that is .org, if you haven't seen it. This whole thing was built in flash, so all the stories in here are still photos with text and audio. And very compelling. Some of the most compelling storytelling I've seen. So that's a story sell.

Before I go to these next two, because they're really comparisons, I should tell you what's important about a shell. It's this context that the story fits into. Because the web is the first medium we've ever had that reflects real life. Everybody is talking about continuous news desk, and 24-7, yara-yara, what that really means is that stories don't ever die. Well, the people whom we used to report on, who are now part of the story in a more intimate way, always knew that. It's just us journalists who didn't know that. We did a story, it was on the paper, we're done with it. We're not going to revisit it for a long time. Been there, done that. You known, how many times have we heard that, no we did that two months ago, we can't do it again. Well, you can do it again, and you can follow it daily and the people who are affected by the story and that are interested in the story will demand that. Demand that you follow it and demand that they participate in it. As we heard a whole panel today about blogs and wikies, I won't even go into that, but that has got to be part of the equation too for journalists to think about.

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Personalization is the other important part why you should really, really always have a shell with your story. And shells by the way, there is a story shell, that fits into an issue shell, that fits into a beat shell, that fits into your frame of your world, of what you're going to cover. And I'll show you some of those in a second, and tell you what I mean. Personalization is so important because every story that comes up now, because of the web, people can make their own story out of it. Say you start out with a baseball story. Somebody has been traded. Well, there is that story today but you're going to say, what's his history? I'm going to go to yet another link on the site in this list of datum resources of theirs and find that out. And I'm going to go to another place because there is another part of the story that I want. So, there are all these pieces but you personalize that story. The news organization essentially is this sort of start of not just of what we've heard on this participatory sense of exchanging information, but a person being able to personalize that story. If they can't personalize this story, what good is it? And the web will let you do that, when you haven't been able to do that before.

I'm going to show you two shells that were done on the, put together on the tsunami. So, the way this is organized is that it's news, news and more news essentially. It's opinions and editorials, features, analysis, blogs, resources, Asian resources and websites. It gives you a whole bunch of stuff but it doesn't tell you anything about those interrelated parts. Look past the design on all this stuff, because we have a long way to go on shell design. All right, this was if you, did anyone see this blog once it's started? It was fascinating to watch it grow. It started out just as a blog saying, hey have you seen, here is a picture, I've lost my son, daughter, relative. And then it started growing as time went on. So that now it became a, there is the wiki and there is the blog. You can look at a glance here and see how everything is organized. So, what you get a sense of is the players in this. Aid organizations, governments, contributors, fundraising events, ground zero information will take you to a wiki that you can go into each country and go into an actual town and see what's going on there. And this is this incredible exchange of information. This, even though is not very pretty graphically, gave me a better sense of how things were shaking out and where to get information about what's happening, to personalize the story about the tsunami for me than anything that was in that yahoo site. Yahoo was just sort of (inaudible), I mean there were good stories there, but if I wanted to find out what the aid organizations did I would have to go through this very long list of stories to find out some reports about that. Those are two examples.

A beat shell, this one that Rob Curley put together for the Kansas legislature. This has everything you'd ever want to know about the Kansas State legislature. It has the story of the day, that you can personalize it to find out what your representative is doing, you can link to the page to see what recent contributions, financial contribution he's gotten, from where, does it have anything to do with the legislation he's considering, everything you'd want to know. Even how to lobby. A little short primmer on how to lobby. How good is that? And it's organized in pretty logical way so that you can get everything you want here, including the news of the day. Let's go through this quickly. Why I'd like to show you the Seattle Post and (inaudible)

Transportation site is a perfect example of this mix of information and news, I actually had a managing editor telling me once well, we don't need to put much of our emphasis on our website because people only go to our website say, in the entertainment section, they only want to see movie times, they don't really want to see movie reviews that much. Oh, she didn't get it! You want to give people everything in a particular area, if that's the area you're covering. And you want to give them what probably they're going there for most. And why do you go for a transportation site for most? Traffic jams.   How can I get around? How can I get from here to there? And you get more information on trouble spots than you'd ever want to know. Very useful. If you get really tired of having all this backup you can go see what the latest is on developing light rail, except for the PDF. The stories of the day are actually down here. Because they're really secondary to what someone would want. The organization of this shell is pretty interesting.

My last point about thinking this way is about the characteristics of this. If organizations are doing things like continuous news desk, that is a wedge into a web centric newsroom. Because you have to have a web centric newsroom if you're going to survive financially.   The economics of having a whole bunch of hands in a story in print, then a whole bunch of other hands on the stories that go on the web, are crazy.   The orange county register is now making a switch to a content management system where everything starts in one pile and then will be spun off. So that everybody is on that same content. They're really going to stream on themselves and they might have a chance of survival. Now, what does that mean to the journalist? The journalist also has to be multidexterous if you will. The journalist has to be trained to be that multimedia reporter no longer, I have my handy dandy reporter's notebook, no longer is this a reporters' notebook. A reporter's notebook is a video camera, from which you can get still photos and video clips and texts background, if you need it. But the reporter sort of works on all that as you're gathering the story and putting it together in your mind just like you would in print. When you're out there doing a story, you go oh that's my lead, that's how I'm going to end it. Now, I need these pieces, and I'm going to put them here, you're always putting it all together.

The light for me went on, interestingly enough, I have a print background but I went to work for The New York Times TV, in 1996, and I had the opportunity to go out on a research vessel that was visiting every deep-sea volcanic event site along the mid Atlantic ridge. For thirty days. Well, we were right next to the web people and I said, how about I send out some stories? I couldn't send back videos because in (inaudible) couldn't send back videos. Well, it could but it took 10 hours to send one minute. So, we just sent back still photos. We also let people email us, and ask us questions. It was incredibly popular. Not that it was such a different story, it just had all the characteristics of multimedia. We had texts, and photos, and interactivity to a certain point, and it was the most popular story on the site. A little light went on for me then and I thought, here I am, doing a story for TV, but I'm doing a print story, and when we found a new volcano event site that that time it was not, of course, the web that broke the news, it was the paper, it was a print story in the science Times. I'm giving away a lot when I say this, but I was 48 when I started

that. I'm an old (inaudible) I can do this, I think other experienced journalists can do this, and I think we need that level and certainly I think that our journalism schools should be teaching this to the graduate students and undergraduate.

One last part here, journalists have to be smarter if they're going to survive in this. If we are going to work with all these citizen journalists we have to figure out in the stories that we do, where they're going to be providing the input, and, dollars to dollars, there is going to be a lot of breaking news. So, we're going to manage that and we're going to have to be smarter than digging under that.   For example, the Michael Jackson case. Right now, that is being covered as entertainment by a lot of news organizations, but it's really a very serious issue. Child-sex abuse is a very serious issue, and some newspapers have said, well, we've done a story and we have a map that has all of the Megan's Law, sex-offenders, where you go and locate them, well, dig a little deeper. It turns out that it's only 10% of the child sex abuse in this country is done by strangers, where the victims are strangers to the perpetrators. The rest is done by family and friends, and mostly family. I don't see many news organizations digging into that, but the data is starting to be there. And that's a really important story for a community.

I think that news organizations can start looking at their stories with these kinds of characteristics in mind. They can figure out the difference between real breaking news, which I say is unanticipated events, versus anticipated events, like news conferences, or press releases, or even the death of the Pope, you could plan ahead for that. And we have to do a different job of managing this anticipated now, if you will. The anticipated now stories. And that's it.

ALBERTO CAIRO: Online Infographics, Fast, Accurate, Interactive Multimedia.   I work in El Mundo. In El Mundo actually my title is Multimedia Director but I'm not Multimedia Director at all, I'm mostly Infographics Director because we are mostly focused in infographics. Infographics is a very strange word. I think most of you have the USA Today, right? I have seen some of them. In the cover today you can see how Pope will be chosen. And you have a little drawing in the front cover. They say "Illustration shows election process step-by-step." Well, this freaks me out. Because we don't make illustration, we do infographics, and that's very different. We don't make illustrations and we don't make design. We use illustration and we use design to convey information, to tell journalistic stories. And that's very important. When I have to explain to my grandfather what I do in the newsroom, what I did some years ago when I worked as a print journalist, as a print infographics director, he didn't understand what I did. He usually asked me: Well, what did you do there?   Do you do something like comic books stuff or something? No, no, not that at all. Try to think about how you would explain to my grandfather what we do today, that's very difficult. Ok, online Infographics. What we have done mostly, in this last five years in El Mundo. El Mundo Infographics department was created five years ago. Well, we do a lot of statistical charts, and we do a lot of locator maps, but we are mostly focused on visual reconstructions and visual explanations about procedures and processes.

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Like this one. This is the kind of infographics that we usually make. This is about the (inaudible) mission to Saturn, and we explain how the spaceship is and how it works. Well, whatever information you will need, it is visually explained in this infographic. It's not a very bad infographic, it explains the information. I'm going quickly, you can see it at El Mundo's website. It explains the information, it tells the story. It's a nice infographic. One of the interesting things of working in an online environment is that you get bored quite easily, and we are very, very bored about this kind of infographics. We are trying to move on to a new model, to a new way of telling visual stories in animated stories. We are trying to develop a new way of telling these stories, because we are getting bored with the old models. The first step you should make for a move-on, from your current model, is to think about, to ask yourself some questions. The first question I ask myself is, I actually asked this myself some years ago, is how my job has changed since I've moved to the online, and why I still love my job. Why did I say why I still love my job? Well, both questions are related, because think about it: the schedule, the schedule of your day.

You're at home on Saturday or Sunday night, at 12:30 o'clock at night, watching your favorite TV show in DVD, well, my favorite TV show is actually not the West Wing, it's the Sopranos, but I like the West Wing very much. And you are at home, and you get a phone call, right, so you're very happy about it. You see it's from the newsroom, so you take the phone and they say: "Well, the Windsor Building, at the center of Madrid," which is a very important building at the center of Madrid, "is burning, you have to come here, you have to explain this visually."   So, well, you are very happy about it, but you decide that, as you are the infographics director of your newspaper, you cannot say no, you have to go there. So you go to the newsroom and, as you walk to the newsroom, you are thinking. I usually go walking to my newsroom, it takes me about 40 minutes to go and 40 minutes to go back home, so it's almost one hour and a half. And it is a very good time to think about what you are doing and what you want to do in the future. So, the question I asked myself that night when I was walking to the newsroom is what are the challenges we face today as online infographics journalists?

The first one, of course, is the speed of production, because as online journalists we have to tell the stories as quick as we can. The stories, of course, have to be accurate and they have to be very high quality. But also, they have to be interactive and they have to put some multimedia stuff in them. I show it this way because the relationship between speed of production and accuracy is a very difficult one. The quicker you produce the stuff, well, you can make a lot of mistakes. And we face this in our work. Because we try to produce very, very quickly and sometimes we make a lot of mistakes and this is one thing you must avoid. And also, if you produce very quickly, the less opportunity you have to put interactivity and multimedia in your visual presentation. As there are two main models of infographics, breaking news infographics and special projects infographics, in breaking news you usually don't have the opportunity to experiment with interactivity and multimedia but in special projects you do.

Well, you reach the newsroom and you start working. You're still very happy about it. The first challenge we faced some years ago, and we still face, is the speed of production. You have to be the first in telling the story, but you have to be the best in telling the story, too. How do we fulfill this challenge? Well, when you're working down in the print newspaper, when you have to make an infographic, you just took one step. We must make an infographic and eight or nine hours latter the job was done before the deadline. All the print newspapers had deadlines, 9 o'clock, 10 o'clock, whatever. In the online environment, the deadline is always now, as soon as you can. We tried to develop a method, a way of working, with several steps. We don't just take one step, which takes us about eight or nine hours to reach.   But we work step-by step. The first thing we do is make a locator map, a little locator map. The second one is to update this locator map and make it bigger. Then we make a first version of a flash infographic, and then we keep updating it over and over again, until we reach the thing we had in mind in the very first moment. So, the day the Windsor Building burned down we worked this way: at 1:40 am, we have this infographic, it's a locator map, a very traditional one, very similar to the ones we used to do at the print newspaper.

At 2:30 am we had this different infographic, they are not animated, they are not interactive, they are not multimedia, they are just print infographics, but they are produced very quickly and they tell the reader a lot of very useful information about what has happened. This was at 2:30 am. At 2:50 am, actually I was working alone that day, I started doing a draft of what I thought the final infographic should look like, and this is the draft I've made. This is the third version of the infographics at 4:00 am, as you see, it's much bigger than the previous one, and it tells lots and lots more information about the building. Previously I went to the place to see what had happened, to take some notes etc. After that, the next morning, our readers get up, they found this final interactive infographic, that tells the story visually. As you see, we used the same elements we already produced previously. And you keep updating this infographics over and over again. And afterwards, you've produced several background infographics that tells you more and more information about it. This is how the building was demolished, well it tells you the story. Of course, this was produced two days or three days latter it happened.   So, as you see, all our infographics resemble the same, looks the same. They are step-by-step guides. And we want to move on from this model, we are very bored with it. As you see, we have several advantages if you compare us to the print newspaper. Because the print newspaper, this is a double page, a splash page that was published by the print newspaper. It is a very good infographic, but it was published two days later. It tells a lot of information, it is very useful, but we had the advantage of the medium.

In March the 11th, of course, we also worked this way. The attacks began at 7:40 in the morning and I was in the newsroom that day, because on Thursdays I have to teach my class in Carlos III University in Madrid, and I usually get in the newsroom at 7 o'clock in the morning. So I was there when it happened. The first thing that we produced in March 11th was this little locator map where the explosions took place. The second one was this big static infographic, that tells most things about the story. The fourth one was the first version of the flash infographic, if you

remember the step-by-step thing that I've showed you previously, this is the first version of the flash infographic we produced that day. It's a very simple one, but it tells the story quite well, for being produced so quickly. And the last version of the infographic is this one. The one you probably have seen. The step-by-step guide about how it happened, and where it happened. Those are the trains, identified by colors. Colors are very important to infographics. This is the (inaudible) station, where I take a train every week to go to my classes. With photographs, taken by one of my colleagues, another place of the explosions, another station, well, it tells you lots and lots of information about the explosions. So we worked also step-by-step. We are the fastest. We work quickly and well, anyone I can think even El Pais, our competitor, they are very good, but they are not as fast as us. Is that enough?

No, that is not enough, because you also have to be accurate; you have to put lots of quality in your work. And you have to keep thinking about professional honesty, for keeping a role as middlemen, of gatekeepers by being the best. I'm not really afraid about competition about citizen media, or whatever way you want to call it. I'm not really afraid. Because it is real that, as Dan Gillmor said this morning, my readers know more that me but no one but me can tell the story visually better. This is what we should do. We should improve our skills; we should develop our visual skills, to tell the stories better than anyone else. That's the key to our survival as journalists and in my case, as visual journalists. It doesn't matter if you work for a newspaper or an agency or whatever, what is really important is to tell a story better than anyone.

But why did I say this? This is about 11th of March attacks, too. This is our little pieces of several infographics published by print Spanish newspaper that day. One of the stories they tell, that were published the next day of the attacks, was that the terrorists put the bombs inside the trains into backpacks. The bombs were in backpacks. Almost all of the print newspapers dared to draw the backpacks. Some people drew just silhouttes, and other people drew it very detailed backpacks. So what happened, that the backpacks were not backpacks when some photographs of the "backpacks" appeared, they were not backpacks. They were bags. This is very important because, if you draw something, you are telling the readers that this is what happened. This is what it looks like. It's very important to be accurate. This is the infographic elmundo.es published two days latter. We didn't show the bags the same day. We waited. That's very important. If you don't have something to be based on, when you draw something, you will probably commit a mistake. You have to avoid this. When we moved to the online world, we were trapped, we were captured by technology. We could animate things, and that's very cool. We produced lots and lots of 3D stuff, which is very cool too, I love 3D. But if you let the technology rule you, it can happen that you make infographics like this one.

This is a reconstruction of an ETA attack in northern Spain. Well, you have the locator map here. This is an infographic of 2000. You have a map; you have where it happened, etc. But then you have a visual reconstruction of the thing, a very detailed visual reconstruction here. I drew all the people here in 3D, I drew a very detailed cab, and, very important for this graphic, I showed where did they come

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from. Why do I show this infographic? Because I didn't know where they came from and I showed it. And I animated it, and that's mistake. Because I'm telling the readers something that is not true. Or, maybe it is true, maybe they came this way, but I don't really know. In infographic, the key is, in attacks, if you write, they went to their car, the reader can imagine every car. They can imagine a car that is this way, or maybe a smaller one, or whatever, it is a car. But if you draw a car, you are telling the reader, this is the car. So it is very important to keep in mind that you need visual references before you do an infographics like this.

Ok, honesty and ethics, that's very important for us. And also you have to provide the readers with context. Because we are living at a time where context is very important. We are moving to a world where science is growing increasingly complex, complicated. So you must tell the readers stories related to the main one, which give them more information. For example, the Royal wedding some months ago. We could just tell the reader where it happened, how it happened. But we tell more and more stories about it. We provide context. We show the cathedral where it took place. The internet is perfect for this because you have almost unlimited space to tell the story. You just have to organize them, that's very important.   And we tell the reader the meal, whatever. Where everybody was sitting that day, etc. This is not really interesting. You provide the context. Then we have: be quick, be accurate. But also, you have to put some interactivity in your work. And this is what we are trying to do. Put more interactivity into our work and make our work even more multimedia. Use more audio and use more video. John will talk more about this after my presentation, so I will move very quickly about this. Let the reader play.

Interactivity in an infographics means that you provide the information but sometimes you have to let the reader transform, change that information to fit their needs or their desires. You have to make the reader involved in your infographics. In which way? For example, if you're explaining how many calories you will burn in some physical activity, you can tell the reader in a text, I don't know, you will burn 300 calories if you run for an hour. But you can program a calculator of it. For example, this one. How much kilos do you weight?   I'm going to lie, 75. I will go cycling for an hour, and I will go running for another hour. That's a lot. And skiing after that, and walking and then swimming. Uh, that's a lot. OK, this is the kind of things we want to do. We want to go more deeply in this kind of infographics. Also, you can let the reader play. You can program with action script in flash, little videogames inside your infographics. You can tell a story, this is about disc throwing. You can tell a story about how the disc is thrown, how it works the sport, whatever. But also you can add this kind of little pieces of information that are very fun to read, and to see. Well, lets play. Go! Well, that's not very good. So you involve the reader in the infographic. John will talk about this later.

This is the best example of interactivity in an infographic I can think about. This is the subway of Madrid's website. They have this amazing tool, let me see, where is it. This tool allows you to decide in which station you are going to take the subway. Let me see, where is it? I'm going to go from Alfonso XIII to (inaudible), which is

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my stop. Regular day, at this time, normal trip, OK, lets go. Now, it calculates which is the best combination of rides. This one of the best examples I know, this is an infographic, it tells the story visually, but it is also a tool. A useful tool. Being useful is another key for our success, for our survival as journalists. I am not saying we should do this in a newspaper. But we can think about it, about doing things like this in the newspaper related to stories.

OK, and the fourth one, the fourth challenge we must fulfill is multimedia. We must fulfill. Photos, video, audio, scripts, infographics, too many things to learn and to think about. We are trying to move, as I've said before, to a more multimedia way of telling visual stories. One of the last projects we've made is this one, the Einstein Year. In the Einstein Year we've used a lot of photograph, audio, video, and 3D video.   We are trying to put our current infographics inside multimedia packages. We are not giving up our infographics to resemble MSNBC or resemble the New York Times, we are trying to keep our personality, but moving on. I'm going to show just one minute of this coverage. It's already online. The audio is in Spanish but, well, I think you can understand it, as a second language (audio from presentation playing). Well, I'm not going to show everything. As you see, it's an infographics, it's an animated infographic but it is also multimedia. (audio from presentation playing). This is a (inaudible) paradox, I'm not going to explain to you. This is the kind of things we are trying to do currently, nowadays. But what is the problem with this kind of thing? That it is too linear. So the next project, well this is actually the storyboard we've made, I'm not going to explain it, the storyboard we've made in this project, more storyboard; I don't really have time to explain it.   What we are trying to do is the same thing we did in the Einstein coverage, the Einstein project, but adding interactivity to it.

The next project we're working on is the Trafalgar Battle one. It will look like the Einstein one, we don't have audio here, but you will see it, how it looks like. It will tell the story of this very important naval battle between the British and the Spanish-French navies in the 19th century. It has lots of 3Ds, has lots of animation, it will have audio that explains everything, etc. It looks like Masters and Commander, I love that movie. The thing we are going to do now in this project is this. The action will stop sometimes, and you will be able to check everything in the screen to get more information. So you will get (inaudible) movies, that will load in the main page, as the action goes backwards, you will be able to click on the ships, for example, and get information about them. So we will try to combine multimedia, with more and more interactivity.

And I don't want to bore you more, so it is possible to succeed in online infographics and survive, but as I've said before, when I explained the Windsor coverage to you, you won't get much sleep. So, this is elmundo.es website, this is the link to multimedia infographics at El Mundo, this is my website and, if you need something from me, this is my email. OK, thank you very much.

JONATHAN DUBE: For those who don't know Alberto, he's won dozen of awards from the society news design for all his infographics but I don't think he's won one

yet for his power points. He deserves quite a few awards as well. Let me get that set up here. We're running a little bit late so I'll try to do things as fast of way as possible. I'm going to talk a little about what he was talking about at the end and basically the idea of combining the idea of interactivity with multimedia.   To some degree it goes toward the idea that Dan and some of the others were talking about earlier today about the idea of moving away from news as a lecture and moving more towards a model where we're involving our audience. Aside of the citizen journalism type of way of involving our audience, there are ways where we can involve them directly into the stories that we're telling, so that they're part of it. I'm going to talk about some examples and briefly about what we've learned from them. And, if we have time, I'm going to try to engage you a little bit in this discussion, so I'm not just lecturing you.

The first one I'm going to show is an interactive that we've created to go with the package of airport security. Basically what we did here is we got some actual X-rays from the company that gets, that takes the X-rays at the airport and put them into a game, where readers must determine whether the X-rays contain explosives, knives or guns.   Then their performance is graded. I'll show you a brief example here. Pay attention to the instructions (audio from presentation playing) "Baggage screening. It's the air travelers' last (inaudible) defense against terrorists. The machines that screen our carryon bags are only as reliable as the people that control it. Before September 11th many of them trained just 40 hours. And often went months without seeing something suspicious. Now the government is taking over but the job remains the same. Making out a few suspicious objects in a sea of every day items. Is it enough? See for yourself. You're about to take a two-minutes shift screening carry-on baggage.   The scans you'll see are real, most will be innocent enough, but a few, like this one, has deadly potential. Your job is to flag suspicious items for your colleagues to investigate. Use these controls to zoom in for a closer look. Or, show a color scan that displays organic materials like that shown in explosive in orange. You can (inaudible) at any time, but if you get two wrongs you'll hear about it from angry travelers. When the time is up, we'll grade your performance. Ready? Good luck." Ready? Yell out explosive, gun or knife if you see one. (audio from presentation playing) Anybody? Gun. Turning into color. That's explosive. Explosive. They're all explosive. Stop and zoom. Ok, that's what will happen.

My favorite part about this is the complaining that you have there because when they came up with the idea of having the complaining that adds that degree of realism that you have there. Adds the pressure that you have there. And basically we're in the newsroom and thinking, how can we find some audio from people complaining, then stuck the microphone out and got minutes of audio. What I like about this is readers actually experience what it is like to be a baggage screener. I think it really helps readers to walk away from this with a full, a really new understanding of how difficult the baggage screening process really is. What's interesting about this approach is that the audience is really becoming part of the presentation. We're basically asking the audience to perform actions that help them better understand the news. Because, as studies have shown, in teaching active

involve people are much more likely to retain information than passive people. In other words, rather than lecturing the audience, like I'm doing now, for example, we're teaching them. The other thing that's interesting about this is that everybody laughed here at the end. It is kind of fun. People came back to this again and again, and kept playing this over and over again. Which was an indication that there was something to this, that we're actually grabbing their attention more than we might with just a standard text news story. Just imagine people coming back to your site to read the same story over and over again. We definitely have some indications that this type of storytelling does help hold people's attention. And we've gotten some more evidence of this over time, because we've been producing a number of other interactive packages, which we call The Big Picture, over a couple of years now. And by tracking how people use them and making adjustments, we've learned quite a bit about how people are using these and how to make them a little bit more effective.

I'll just show you this example really quickly, and then talk briefly about it. Basically this is an interactive TV type of package, here's a little intro and I'll show you a clip from that. There is the add that's paying for us.   (audio from presentation playing). So that's an overview of the types of stories in here. This is one of them.   I'm going to pause this for a second here. Basically, what we've done here is we created a very TV like package, and built it around video. But unlike TV, we've integrated interactivity throughout the package. We've done it in a couple of different ways. One, what we do is put users in complete control similar to the baggage screener interactive I've showed you, we also make them be active participants. You'll notice the navigation on the left column, users can basically skip around start, play any segment that they want to play, and even within these segments, see these little lines here, people can skip around to the parts that interest them. It doesn't show up here. But basically it lets you jump from every scene and you can go straight to the best supporting actor, for example, if you really don't care about the best supporting actress. And the other thing we do is we involve the readers in the story. In this box here, related info, it's going to pop-up throughout as the entire segment plays and there will be action things there, where people can click on links and get more information. At any point, you can see there is an enter reader comments box here, people can enter their comments while the interactive is playing, as they're watching it and interacting with it. And the comments themselves are integrated into the package, we call the inbox here, where basically as the package plays on our site, we're constantly integrating our readers comments back into it. They're actually helping shape the product as it evolves.

The last thing that we do with this is we integrate interactivity directly into the video, and I'll show you an example of that now. So you can see what I'm talking about. (audio from presentation playing). These are two of our columnists about movies. (audio from presentation playing). And you get to vote.   As you can see, you're pretty involved in the package there. We did a couple of other examples of this. We let people build their own movies, to teach them about the movie-making process. For the presidential election campaign last year we let them basically become a campaign advisor, and follow a whole campaign strategy, build campaign adds. In

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this one, in the section on place your bets, it talked about basically Oscar gambling and then allows you to actually place bets, although not with real money. Although I think there's a business model in there for these sites. But I'll let the business panel get to that later. We know this type of storytelling is pretty effective because we track how people use it. Last year big picture's Oscars, for example, 28% of people who clicked on it spent between 5 and 14 minutes using it and 10% of users who clicked on it spent more than 15 minutes using it. That's about 38% of people who went to this spent more than 5 minutes with it, which, as you know, is pretty amazing when you think about the average user spends about half and hour on a news site over a course of a month. There is a real indication that this type of storytelling actually has a lot of potential for holding user's attention, which I think is great. I think it's because we're engaging the readers and directly challenging them to think about the news.

By experimenting with this over the past few years we've also learned quite interesting few lessons about how to make this type of storytelling better. One of the things is that by combining linear and non-liner storytelling is the most effective. As you saw here, we're letting people skip around quite a bit. Where the first time we did this was basically, you watch it, you sit there, you can answer questions here and there, but it was basically a 15 minute long thing where you went segment through segment and you had no choice. And most people watched the begging and not a lot of people watched the end of it. Now, we basically allow people to go any which way they want and go straight to the section that interests them and, as a result, all of the segments are played pretty equally.   First, last, etc. As a result, people are seeing a lot more of our content, because of that. I think there is a real win there.

Another interesting thing and, to me, that's one of the most interesting things, is that the earlier we've engaged the reader, the more likely we are to keep them. For example, in the first one a couple of years ago, about 2/3 of our users stopped watching the interactive when they got decision point, the first interactivity within any of the segments. But the interesting thing was, for the people who did get into that first interaction, almost all of them went the rest of the way, until the end. Once we've engaged the users, they kept going, they stuck with it. So they key was to interact with them and engage them early on. Now what we try to do, is we try to have a decision point or an interaction with the first 20% of each segment. As a result, of the people who get to that first 20% of the segment, about 80% of those people is going all the way through the end, at this point. Which I think it's pretty impressive. The last thing I want to make a point on is that we've learned that producing the entire project with interactivity right from the beginning is the real way to do this right. The early ones were really built around all the idea that (inaudible), we've got all this great video and we want to take advantage of it and build some interactivity to it, so what we did is we used a lot of the videos we already had and built interactivity around the video, by adding votes and some other stuff. But it wasn't a fully integrated package the way the one you've just seen was. The one you've just saw, for example, you can tell the video quite clearly for the interactive feature. We're basically, recording, planning and shooting the video and

the production of this all around the idea of interactivity and that enables us to have a bunch more integrated experience.   If you think about it, just as print or TV reporters will interview differently, and report and write differently because of their media, we want to do the same in our medium. We want to design this specifically for the interactive user in mind.

The last thing I just want to make as a point, I know a lot of people look at this and say, uh, that's great MSNBC can do that but how could a small site like my site do this? I guess my feelings about that are: a – you don't necessarily need to be part of a network to do that, or even have all of the video resources of a site like the Washingtonpost.com, because we weren't tapping those resources out of the videos we already had, we were going and shooting the video specifically for this process. B – I think there are a lot of ideas here in terms of engaging the audience that you can take and apply to a much smaller level, in individual smaller projects. And C, you saw this project was sponsored, we're actually making money on these projects. I do think that in addition to attracting the audience, there is a lot of indication that this kid of storytelling can pay off in the long run. Lastly, I'll just sum up really quickly by showing one other example and the reason I want to show this is to emphasize the importance why news sites need to be creating more engaging multimedia. As you've seen, MSNBC and some other news sites are incorporating some of the techniques of videogames into our storytelling, which I think is fantastic.

The interesting thing is that videogame companies are doing just the same thing s. They are incorporating some journalism techniques into their storytelling, into their videogames. Check out this one example. (audio from presentation playing). You've just heard him saying accurate and authentic, timely and real. This sure doesn't seem like journalism but if you think about it, the baggage screener (inaudible) that we've shown to you earlier is that we can certainly argue that this is too. And in fact, that's exactly what the company is doing. The company gives players detailed military briefings and analysis from actual military advisors, just like the ones we put on cable television. And the site incorporates Associated Press stories throughout the entire videogame. Current ones. They're continuing developing new missions based on current events, from everything like the capture of Saddam, to the John Kerry swift vote saga, and the CEO says they don't consider this a game at all but, quotes, "a new news paradigm." He says, "we are the news, informative, accurate and timely for a generation raised on interactive media." In, fact, I've just found out they're actually now getting involved in , believe it or not, citizen journalism (inaudible). This company has not only been creating these scenarios but they've just started soliciting actual real life stories from soldiers in Iraq and they're turning actual real life stories, from these soldiers in Iraq, into videogames scenarios that basically describe what happens to them in Iraq. So, in fact, they're basically jumping into citizen journalism as well.

Keep in mind that the video game industry is growing so fast that it has surpassed Hollywood. And, also keep in mind that the American youth is getting more of their news, according to some studies, from John Stewart than from network news to begin with. So don't be surprised at all if videogame is the next thing to join this

influential mix that is influencing the younger generation on current events. The point is that we're no longer just competing with other news site for eyeballs, it's a whole new ball game and the news sites that don't get interactive are loosing their audience to those new forms of storytelling. Thank you.

NORA PAUL: Questions in the house?

AUDIENCE: Alberto, you were talking that you weren't afraid of a citizen journalism. And that's good. If the citizens know more than you do, can you take you they know and put your expert's vision into it?

ALBERTO CAIRO: In our infographics we put a link to send us emails and comment, and things like that. So if some expert reader, something like that, finds things that can be improved or can be changed, and he writes us, we try to keep in contact with him to take advantage of his knowledge. We try to call him, or her of course, and we try to take advantage of this knowledge. With the infographics we can change it.

AUDIENCE: (inaudible)

ALBERTO CAIRO: Yes, sometimes. It depends on how much information he or she provides. If it is comments or something like that we don't but if it is major changes we try to.

AUDIENCE: Alberto, when an online version of a newspaper like El Mundo, generates their own content through infographics or multimedia projects, does it generate any kind of tension with the reporters of the print? Especially when you're covering the same issue?

ALBERTO CAIRO: Sometimes. This is why we've created our own newsroom inside the newsroom. We are inside the same building than the print newsroom, but we are inside, in the middle of the newsroom. But we work actually as an independent newsroom. It doesn't mean we work separately. We try to share information, we try to share resources, sources, things like that for infographics and for text, too. In infographics we don't really have tensions between us, because we work quite closely. We work together in the events, in the information, but then we go separately. But we don't have much tension. There is more tension in the text. Well, I cannot tell you about it, it's not my field.