

2006 – International Symposium on Online Journalism

Day 1, Panel 5: Multimedia Journalism Narrative: Should Online Journalism Embrace Traditional Video, or Try a Richer Blend of Video, Photos, Animation, Text, etc.?

Moderator: Donna DeCesare, Assistant Professor, School of Journalism, UT Austin

Panelists:

Jen Friedberg, Multimedia Producer, Star-Telegram.com

Bart Marable, Creative Director, Terra Incognita Productions

Mindy McAdams, Professor and Knight Chair in Journalism, University of Florida

Jose Manuel Valenzuela, Editor, ep3.es (El Pais' multimedia magazine), Spain

Ashley Wells, Executive Producer/Editorial Concepts, MSNBC.com

ROSENAL CALMON ALVES: The millions of people, all over the world, who are watching our webcasting, are very anxious to start this new panel on multimedia, video, and the new narrative of the Internet. My colleague, Donna DeCesare, is going to moderate and chair this panel.

DONNA DECESARE:OK. I'm Donna DeCesare, Assistant Professor in the photojournalism program here at the University of Texas at Austin.

These are exciting terms to be a photojournalist, or a documentary photographer, or videographer. Our visual reporting and narrative skills and aesthetic sensibilities are gaining renewed attention in newsrooms, and the maturing multimedia environment of online journalism is providing greater room for innovation not only at the big newspapers, like The New York Times and the Washington Post, but also in the smaller news markets.

Our panelists today will be considering whether online journalism should use traditional video or a richer multimedia blend. Do we follow the broadcast model, using narration? Do we follow the tradition of cinema verit, using only the voices of our subjects? How long is too long? Does the passive viewer model work online? Or is the interactive model, in which video is but one component of a package, leaving the reader/viewer greater control over the story experience, more effective? What is more effective at capturing the younger core audience that everyone is looking for today?

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Each of our five panelists is an innovator. And each brings a different perspective and expertise to some of these questions. At lunch today, Jen Friedberg at the Fort Worth Star Telegram she's the Fort Worth Star Telegram's first multimedia producer. She also described herself as the bridge between the online and the print side at her paper. She has a lot to share with us about what visual storytelling strategies are working in her newsroom and her community.

Bart Marable, director of Terra Incognita Productions, whose passion as a designer of educational interactive projects has earned him top museum clients like the Smithsonian, has numerous awards and accolades for his work, and many insights about design innovations, including the use of video, that can help journalists think outside the box.

We are also very fortunate to have with us today online pioneer and expert educator Mindy McAdams, who holds the Knight Chair for Journalism Technologies and the Democratic Process at the University of Florida. Mindy is one of the sharpest and the most broadly-informed critics on new developments of all kinds online, and her book *Flash Journalism: How to Create Multimedia News Packages*, published by Focal Press, is quickly becoming the Bible for teaching flash journalism.

Jose Manuel Valenzuela, of Spain's top newspaper, *El Pais*, will share insights about the innovations he is making at the youth-oriented online magazine *EP3/EP Tres*, an interactive arts and cultural magazine aimed at bringing young readers into the environment of the newspaper, to catch them and hopefully bring them to the news pages, also, of the paper. [laughter]

And finally, we have Ashley Wells, who heads the editorial research and development team at MSNBC.com. He will share with us some of his most recent innovations that his team has been trying at MSNBC.

And so Jen?

JEN FRIEDBERG: Hi. I'm Jen Friedberg, with the Fort Worth Star Telegram, and I want to start off by showing you this piece, called "Operation Grackle" do you guys know what grackles are? They're noisy birds, and they we have a big problem in downtown Fort Worth, where they like to hang out because there's no natural predators. So anyway, we got some local folks who thought it might be a good idea to introduce some predators to Fort Worth.

[There is an inaudible interruption from the audience]

No, they went with hawks. So we sent out a still photographer and a videographer and they followed the falconers around for a night.

[Video begins. A man speaks.]

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FALCONER: My favorite way to put it, too, is you have an unbalanced equation. The reason you have so many of these birds downtown is because the predators are just gone. Because of humans, and activity, and development. Well, all we are doing is reintroducing the predators. And it balances that equation, so now these birds are going to roost closer to Trinity River, where they're going to be preyed upon. But the difference is, they know they're going to be preyed upon here or there, so they don't congregate in this nice area.

The good thing about it is, the hawk only has to take a few. And it just, it puts the [inaudible] in the whole flock. And when they see one or two of their comrades that's all it takes. My favorite analogy is [inaudible] if you see a crowded beach in Florida, you know, during the summer, and then, all of a sudden one day, there's a shark attack, what does that beach look like the next day? It's the same kind of theory.

When this goes down, it's going to be pretty fast, so[

The man releases the hawk; the hawk is shown, presumably eating a grackle; the hawk is shown again, perching on the man's hand]

[inaudible] that's kind of how he does it. [inaudible] And he eats them; everything he kills, that's food for him. So tonight we flew, in this area of Weatherford and Main, roughly, [inaudible] pretty much pursues by the method of attacking whatever tree is the most full of birds, with the highest density. And in fairly short order, he was able to grab his first bird.

But you do have an issue where the roost will move from place to place, so in the future, we'll fly multiple Harris hawks down here to cover strategic points. So if the birds try to move from one location to another, they'll be met with another predator. In fairly short order, they're going to start roosting, in my opinion, closer to the Trinity River and places a bit farther away from downtown [inaudible].

But I do want to be clear that right now, we're not being paid for this service. But this gives us a unique opportunity to show the city of downtown Fort Worth how it would work. It's a "try before you buy," and then [inaudible]

[the credits for the video roll]

JEN FRIEDBERG: OK. I brought up this one for several reasons. Number one, the guy who shot video, this was his first time shooting video, ever. He was actually an intern. And we were joking that, if this had if this were a story we made up, "Go shoot hawks eating grackles at midnight," you know, that we couldn't have made up a better joke there. But he was like, "Yeah, I'll go for it!"

And something else was we sent two photographers for this. We sent the guy who's going to do the video, and then we had our veteran, Joyce Marshall, who's a fabulous photographer, to go and do the stills. So we figured, if worse came to worse, we'd get the audio off of the video camera, and pair it off with her stills. But what

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surprised me was that the video was good, and the stills were good. So I ended up combining it.

Something that our staff was asking a lot is, "Why are we doing video? Isn't there TV?" You know, "Why is it important that we produce new video content?" And I explained to them that we're not trying to "out-TV TV." They do what they do very well. But what we're going to do is something different.

And, yeah, it's a little rough. A lot of it is handheld we do encourage people to use tripods when they can, but they don't like to. So it's just we're thinking this is, sort of, the essence of journalism; that we can be out there, and be your eyes and ears if you can't be there. So they bring it all back, and in this case they kind of left it all with me, and I put the whole thing together, and they went about their business. But what we try to do is to get the photographers to at least edit, at least ingest their own video a little bit. Because that helps reinforce, in their minds, what was good; what was bad; was the zooming good or bad; how did that work?

And another thing is I mentioned, we don't want to be TV; what I said, instead, kind of picture, like, "This American Life" from NPR, but with video. So that's kind of the model we're following, and we're trying to let, as much as we can, let the subjects tell their own stories.

The other thing I wanted to talk about was how important it is to give everyone a video camera on your staff who wants to. To start, we're actually requiring everyone to learn how to do video. And then whether they actually do it on a regular basis, we'll decide a little bit later. It'll be if they don't want to do it, we don't want to make someone do something they don't want to do all the time. But, like, if we didn't have that policy I mean, here's Raoul, he'd been interning with us for three days, and he's like, "I'll take a video camera." And we're like, "Yeah, give Raoul the video camera!" So I like that we have this open policy, because it preserves a diversity in vision. And we worked very hard to get 25 people or so who have a unique perspective. And if you start limiting how many people you're going to let produce content on your staff, you're limiting the product that comes out.

So I want to show you this is something that this photographer came up with himself, this "Muscle Garage." And when he first told me what he wanted to do, I was, like, "I don't see how that's a story."

[A car engine revs, loudly]

Oh! Sorry! [laughter]

This is his vision I don't know how to control the sound, when it goes inside there.

[The video, which is entitled "Muscle Garage," begins playing. Rock music. A tattooed man is pictured, leaning against a yellow "muscle car." A man bench-presses a weight bar.]

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Well, you get the idea. This is all archived on our site. So, this is Darrell's idea of a fun time. He wants to hang out in this place where they fix cars and they work out with free weights. Because he thinks that'd be cool. And what I'm trying not to do is I'm trying not to say "No." You know? I'm trying not to say, "Where's the story idea in that?" Because he goes through, and he actually he worked with a reporter, and they actually wrote a story about this thing, and I don't want to go back to the intro, because it'll make that loud sound again. But you can actually go through, and you know this is something that, normally, would not get covered. And something we talked about is that there is, depending on how you view the Internet, there's infinite space, basically. I mean, why not? I mean, if we have the time and the resources to let Darrell and a reporter go hang out there, why not put this up? And why not make something special out of it, that people can come and enjoy? But, if we didn't let Darrell shoot video, we never would have seen that.

And this piece here is this guy was probably one of our last ones to take up the video camera. And he was very resistant to it, at first. But we sent him out to do an "aftermath of Katrina" kind of story. We said, "Well, just take the camera with it; if you don't feel like using it, don't use it." So at the end, he comes back with, you know, 50 minutes of tape, and he dumps it on my desk, and says, "I don't think you're going to get anything out of it, but if you want it, here it is." And this is, I think, one of our most powerful pieces so far, about a guy and this is his first night, returning to his house.

[Video begins; a man speaks.]

ROLAND: I've been back here, now, for I've been coming back here for the last six weeks after the hurricane. And I've been making an attempt to fix my, repair my home. And it's just been impossible. FEMA had given me 2000 dollars, and then they gave me 2300 dollars, and with that little money I had to live off of, in Houston, buy gas it's a 350 mile ride from New Orleans to Houston, and coming back. So you're spending at that time gasoline was real high. So you spend a large portion of your money going back and forth, and you only can stay here until dark. And then, after dark, you have to get out of here and find a hotel.

Go back to Houston, and hopefully you wait and try to go back to FEMA, and petition them for a small businessman loan. I drove taxicabs here in New Orleans for 26 years. And I asked for a small businessman loan to resume my taxi industry. Here's my cab, sitting here in the rear of my house, where I've left it. It's been right there all the while. And if I just had a loan for that, I'd be able to start my business back again, and earn a living.

[He's pictured in the front yard. He continues speaking, but some of the audio is inaudible.]

[inaudible] I pay my taxes, and I'm sure everyone in the Ninth Ward pays their taxes. And yet we can't seem to get enough help here.

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JEN FRIEDBERG: OK. So, here's another case of where, you know, this piece goes on for, I think, five minutes. You're never going to see a full five minutes of Roland talking on TV. And maybe you don't want to. Maybe you listen to thirty seconds, and you're like, "I'm done with Roland." But, if you make it through to the end, maybe you have a very different perspective on what it's like to actually be in this situation, and be living through that.

So I think I think this is, this fusion of newspaper, NPR-style reporting, and video, is kind of what the essence of new media is going to be. This is, to me, the best that's going to come out of this. I think a lot of people Texas was affected by how many, the refugees, or I can't remember what they wanted to be called. But basically, we had this huge influx of people, and it was affecting our daily lives, and I think people were less than sympathetic. Especially six months later, and we're still hearing about it, and we're like, "Why can't they get their act together?"

So I think this by doing something like this, that illustrates the kind of challenges that people are actually facing on the ground in New Orleans.

[applause]

BART MARABLE: Hi, everyone. My name is Bart Marable, and I'm the creative director and also the partner at Terra Incognita Productions, which actually is located here in Austin, Texas.

I feel something of an outsider at conferences like this mostly because we while we produce interactive content and interactive narratives, we primarily focus on museums, cultural institutions some media outlets. But the work that we do, at many times, is at the polar opposite of timelines, as far as editorial deadlines go. Our work, that we do, is yet on the other end, also has a lot of spiritual connections with the journalism and journalistic efforts.

Our studio specializes in interactive content. And a lot of the work that we do is online. One of the things that I really wanted to talk about today was this connection, and this duality, between one of the issues that was raised earlier, of how much direction should you provide for your visitors, and how much should you really provide an experience that allows them to guide their own experience? This is something that we have really thought a lot about, over the years. When the web first came out, it was the rage to develop something that was, just, completely non-linear. And the thought was, "Let's give the visitors complete control, to decide their own journeys through the content." And I think all that was well and good. What we found was that it really didn't create the powerful experience that we thought the interactive media really should provide. And I think that the storytelling of it was really being diminished by this ultimate control that we were giving our visitors.

So, what we've done is we've really worked, over the last several years, to develop a model that we've really applied to a lot of our projects, that tries to walk that line,

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between allowing visitors to really control their experience, as much as possible, but also providing a compelling linear story for those who choose to really approach it from that direction, as well.

From our experience, we find that when visitors come to one of our projects, they're really one of mainly two types. One, they come in knowing really nothing about the topic, whether it's human evolution, whether it's the Lewis and Clark expedition, whether it's the art of Africa. We find that some people come in knowing very, very little about the subject. And they need a really compelling introduction to really immerse themselves in it. At the other extreme though, we find that we have expert visitors that are coming in. And these may be academics, these may be students, these may be somebody that is just looking for something very, very specific. And so what we try to do in our projects is try to create an experience that really meets the needs of both of these audience types.

What I'm going to show you today are three projects that really try to strike that balance that really try to meet the needs of both of these audience types. The first one that I'm going to demonstrate for you is an online exhibition that was developed for the Missouri Historical Society, for the national Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Exhibition. This is an exhibition that's currently traveling around the country; it'll be opening in Washington, D.C., a little bit later this year. And it celebrated and commemorated the two hundredth anniversary of the core of discoveries, the journey across North America.

And this one was a companion to a physical exhibition, but while the content was based on the physical exhibition, we wanted to create an online experience that could do things that would never be possible in the physical space. In doing this, what we've done is we've created three different approaches to seeing this story. One of which is really the very traditional approach of what you think about when you think about Lewis and Clark, which is their journey across North America, in this physical landscape.

And this journey, we created it's an interactive journey map, that allowed the visitor to really follow the journey of the core of discovery from the east coast all the way to the Pacific, and back again. And, in doing so, we wanted people to really be immersed in that story. To create this really compelling linear story that had a clear beginning, middle, and end. And so, throughout this, you're able to really quickly jump into this journey map, that creates an experience which is, I think, compelling, immersive, and uses not only images and text, but also animation, sound, to help create an experience that is very immersive.

[Music plays]

What we did in this project, and in this journey map, was really to combine two cartographic traditions. One was the Euro-American concept of the map, which was about the physical space. The other side was the Native Americans' concept of the map, which was what, actually, people did with the landscape. And so by following

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the journey map, you're able to follow this story, that's very well integrated into the map.

As you move from the young United States, and through North America, the soundscape changes. The landscape, the sounds of what you're hearing, the music, the ambient soundscapes, these all change, really reflecting reflected on where you currently are in that journey. The other thing that we've combined, too, are quotes. And so, as you're going through the experience, you can hear quotes from members of the core of discovery.

[A man's voice:]

JOURNEY COMMENTATOR: The plains of this country are covered with a leaf-green [inaudible] well-calculated for the sweetest and most nourishing hay, interspersed with copses of trees, spreading their lofty branches over pools, springs, or brooks of fine water. Groups of shrubs, covered with the most delicious fruit, is to be seen in everyB

BART MARABLE: Another interesting thing that we tried to do, in trying to create a richly-detailed tapestry of information, is throughout this, you're also able to switch back and forth between a modern map and the 1803 map, so you can get a sense of context as you're moving through the space, from the modern perspective, to really put it in context for visitors. Because once you really get into this especially into the western United States, I think it really becomes, you lose your sense of where you currently are.

The other thing that we've also provided is, throughout the experience, you're able to click on any of the objects you find, and explore these in high-resolution detail. So that, if you're wanting to really grapple with the primary sources of this content, you're able to get in very closely and very quickly to understand the details of the story. It's funny, because the curator actually commented she'd seen things, actually, seen things in the map that she'd never seen before. She'd been working with these things for years, but being able to see these things very closely made makes a big difference.

Now, while the journey provides, more of a chronological approach, we also provide a way for people to explore it from a thematic standpoint, as well. And so, in doing this, you're able to explore these same this same story, but from a more thematic approach. For example, issues gender issues, cartography, diplomacy, all of these are issues that really, that really were addressed in more of the cultural landscape, as opposed to the physical landscape. And so, throughout this perspective, we're able to provide a way for people to explore it in a more thematic grouping, Again, throughout this, you're able to click on any of the objects. You're able to see them in high detail; you're also able to explore more information about those specific objects.

The final way that you can explore the story is, actually, through these objects themselves. And, through this gallery, what we've done is we've combined all of the

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images and all of the objects that you could have accessed through the journey, and also through the thematic exhibits. And combined them all into a randomly-accessible search, that you're able to explore. And so, for instance, if I'm looking for items that contain the word "Shoshone," you're able, very quickly, to narrow down your search. And this is an approach really for expert audiences, that are coming in they know the journey, they know the story, they're really looking for something very specific. And you're able, also, to tailor that search, too. So, as opposed to saying, "just contains the word Shoshone," I'm looking for things that were made by the Shoshone. You can narrow it down even much, much better for you. So, this is one example of how we've walked that line between giving people that random accessibility, but also telling a compelling narrative.

Another one I wanted to show you is actually an older production; this was actually from 2000. But it's still, hands-down, our most popular piece. This is a program that really tries to combine the best of a television documentary with the best of a museum exhibition, into one piece that we call an "interactive documentary experience." We created this site, really, at a time when broadband was just on the cusp of popular penetration. And, in this, what we wanted to do was really to give the sense of watching a television program, without all of the overhead of streaming video. So what we did is we created more of a "faux television" experience. We used animated stills to help create a very rich experience, even though it didn't have full-frame video.

[Music plays.]

Can you hear this OK? OK.

DON JOHANSON: What is it that makes us human that gives us the ability to reflect on the past and ponder the future? Who we are as a species, and where we came from, make up the basis of a fantastic story, spanning more than four million years. I'm Don Johanson, and I'm one of the many researchers dedicated to discovering and interpreting the evidence for human origins: evidence that provides the framework for the human story.

It's a story that begins in Africa, where our ancestors first stood up. Over millions of years, they continued to evolve, and eventually they spread out across the globe. Some species adapted to the changing world, while others went extinct. Today, only a single species of humans survives. That species flourished because they developed a culture: a culture more complex than has ever been seen before. This is their story. This is our story.

[Fade to black. "Becoming Human" fills the screen.]

BART MARABLE: What "Becoming Human" does is it combines experiences much like this much like television, a very linear, cinematic model. But also combines it with more hands-on, interactive content, in ways that really bridge those two pieces together. Throughout this, we have thirty minutes of programming just like what we

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watched just a second ago, that you can really watch from beginning to end, just like you were sitting back, watching a television program. But you're also able to explore it in more hands-on fashions, much more like a museum exhibition.

So, for example, in this one, you're talking about interpreting evidence, you're able to have exhibits that explore different facets of archeological explorations. You're also able to explore, just randomly, of a reference level where you have the ability to explore the hominid species in ways that, I think, just provides a good reference tool, that supplement the overall narrative, but are ways that are, also, randomly accessible as well.

The beauty comes, though, when you really combine all of these three things together. And so, for example, if you're watching the documentary, we provide bridges between the levels.

[Music plays. The video shows two vehicles driving through an African savanna.]

VIDEO NARRATOR: Harare, Ethiopia, is a place of pilgrimage for those of us who study human origins. It's located in the northern [inaudible] region of the country, and can be inhospitable at times, when temperatures reach 125 degrees.

BART MARABLE: Now, as you're watching this, it's talking in general about paleontological digs. But there are these points where it says "to learn more." And, in doing that, what really happens is the documentary pauses, and you basically have a cul-de-sac that you can explore. This is another exhibit, and this is an exhibit that we could have just as easily accessed down below see, this is "Explore a Dig." And so, this exists in that level but what we've done, is we've jumped from that linear program to one that is a user-directed experience.

This is a fun one, because it actually allows you to explore a paleontological dig in this recreated environment; you're able wander through it; you meet these various scientists in the field, and it goes into more depth than you would have gotten into, in this main narrative. But one of the things is it allows the visitor if they are interested in that, it allows them to extend that story. If they're not, the story basically just continues on. And, in fact, once you close it, you pick up where you left off. So it's like, basically, you're pausing your Tivo, you're exploring something in a reference book, and you're picking it back up. And so it's that whole idea that really permeates throughout the experience.

The other thing that I wanted to show you and, let's see, I'll just close my window here is an online exhibition that we did for the Library of Congress. And this is the last piece that I wanted to show you, but I think it also demonstrates many of these same principles, between interactive narratives that allow people to really explore the story, but also gives more of a voice, a guiding voice, that provides a linear thread that people can follow.

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This examines the relationship of Winston Churchill to the United States, really, throughout his entire life. His mother was American, so he was really half American. So he had this lifelong relationship with the United States. And in this exhibition which actually was also based on a physical exhibition at the Library of Congress we were really impressed, when we were doing the on-site visit, with the fact that the curator really loved to give these guided tours of the exhibition. And we really noticed that, in doing that, he really brought up a lot of details that we had never seen before. And it was a very document-heavy exhibition, and there were a lot of stories that would have really been overlooked, just by casual browsing.

So what we've done is, quite literally, we've brought the curator's voice into this online presentation. And the idea we had is that we wanted to feel like, that Don, the curator, is sitting right beside you, and pointing out certain things, like, "Oh, this is a really interesting story." Structurally, it's very, very similar to what we did with Lewis and Clark. There's a linear story that you can follow, and in this case, as opposed to a physical journey that you can take, this is more of a chronological journey. So you're following, in essence, a timeline of Winston Churchill's life.

We also have the thematic threads that you have, which again explore these stories, but from a more thematic approach, and collects the content together in these thematic threads. But what we've done that's, I think, different than what we were able to do in Lewis and Clark, is that we have the voice of Don, that really helps to bring to life the stories in ways, I think, would not have been possible, or just practical, from a standpoint of Don, obviously, giving these audio tours. But I think that we were able to bring some of that experience of what was done in the physical space in ways that, I think, really added to the overall experience of the online experience. Because we wanted to really create an experience that allowed that visitor to really hear the insights that didn't really fit into the text, didn't really fit into the panels, but nonetheless were very interesting details that helped to bring this to life. This is an example of one, from the D-Day.

CURATOR: This is a situation map, showing the position of the Allied units and the German units as of midnight, on June 6, 1944: D-Day, when the second front was finally launched against the Germans.

This is a very interesting map, because of the second line of the map, off to the left, where it reads "HQ. FUSAG" that is, "Headquarters, first United States Army Group." There was no such "First United States Army Group." It was a phantom unit used to deceive the Germans into thinking that the Allies would attack to the North and to the East, at the Pont de Calais, the shortest distance across the Channel. It was a deception that worked brilliantly. The phantom unit's commander was supposedly George S. Patton, the one who the Germans feared the most. The Germans fell for it, hook, line, and sinker. They kept an enormous number of troops waiting for this secondary attack which never materialized.

The success of this operation was made possible by the use of Allied code-breaking methods. This is the greatest secret of the war, the ultra-secret. The British, the

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Poles, the Americans, had broken the German codes, and were using them to fight their enemies.

This is a very, very rare document, that has the word "Ultra" stamped on it. Ordinarily, these items of intelligence were communicated by word of mouth, and not through written documents. This particular Ultra document shows that they were reading the Germans' mail and were able to use their predictions of in this case, German air craft units to attack Germany, and reduce the air threat. One of the reasons you never see this kind of document is given on the last page, where it reads this document is, quote, "to be destroyed by fire by addressee after reading."

BART MARABLE: Which, obviously, they didn't, or we wouldn't be able to have it here but I'm kind of glad they didn't. And so, this really takes something that could have been a very flat presentation, that you see it, and even though it's laid out in this graphic presentation, and even though these are fully clickable and explorable, I think by adding that extra voice in there, I think, gave it a life that really infused it with some character.

And then, finally just a last thing to show you is, much like Lewis and Clark, you're able to also explore this story from purely the object standpoint. And so if, for example, I'm wanting to see objects from 1941 to 1947, you can very quickly rein those in. And then, also, if you just wanted to see photographs from that time period, then it very quickly consolidates that all for you. So this is a way for your expert audiences to find, really, what they're working for. So I think that, what I really the thesis that I've had today, is this same project can really meet the needs of multiple audience types, both those that really look for a story to be told for them, and those visitors who are looking to combine their own story. Thanks.

[applause]

MINDY MCADAMS: No, I have to switch to the PC. Amy said she could do it. Is Amy here?

ROSENAL CALMON ALVES: Amy's not here, but you can push the button.

MINDY MCADAMS: Oh, it's the button that says "PC." And then it becomes a PC. Is that how it works? It's OK. I have an audiovisual aid here. I'm not from Texas; I'm from the championship school. [She holds up a University of Florida T-Shirt. Laughter] So. I just thought I'd put that on the video. That's OK. Texas will Texas will have another year. Let's see. Is it here yet? There we go. Now mine is this one. OK. I'll check my time all right.

I'm not going to talk about video, although video is in this panel much. I mean, I'll mention it. But I'm looking more at this idea of multimedia narrative. I, personally, as a user, would like to see more multimedia online, because I enjoy it. I don't really like to read long things online. I would rather read them in another medium, especially if the text is all in one place. So, you know, when we say "multimedia"

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today, what do we mean? We don't mean some slideshow in an auditorium, usually, And we mean a certain kind of experience, that is these three things. [She's referring to the visual aid, which indicates that multimedia is "interactive," "personal," and "computer-based."]

If you're making multimedia, and you're not keeping all three of these things in mind that it is computer-based, and I'm only showing you a PowerPoint today because I don't really like to show the multimedia in a room, because the best multimedia is really personal. And you're sitting at a computer, and part of the experience you get from the best stuff is because you're twelve to eight inches away, or however close you sit. So you don't get the same experience in this room, with a screen. So I'm not going to play any of the stuff; I've got screen shots for you.

And the order of what the presentations are rich in, I think, is really important too. It shouldn't many of them have more text than they should have, today, and I think a lot of them have far fewer images and visual material than they should. Because, I feel, that's part of what communicates with us, in this relationship with the screen.

So, you know, you've got these two kinds of ways to tell a story. I mean, there's more ways, but, you know, with the screen, and with a computer screen. You can do this linear thing, that's a lot like a movie or a TV show, or a story in a newspaper that even though the story in the newspaper is really just a bunch of little chunks, they've been deliberately and very carefully strung together by a reporter and the editors in a certain order, so that you know, hoping that you will get sucked into it, and enjoy it, and understand it, by following that order, that somebody has been really careful to create to you. That's the first that's a linear media, right?

So multimedia is, for me it doesn't work when it's linear. It doesn't work well. It doesn't captivate me. It doesn't give me the fullest experience I could have with it, if it's linear. Because the big difference here and people who really talk about interactivity and storytelling talk about letting the audience be in control. Now, not letting the audience go off on all kinds of tangents, obviously. The author, the reporter, the storyteller, comes with a story to tell. Like Homer, in ancient Greece, had his story; he knew what the whole story was. But he might tell it to you in a different order, if you, the audience, were starting to get squirmy and noisy. He'd jump to something really exciting, like, you know, "and then this monster came out," you know? Because he could tell you were getting restless and bored with the theoretical part.

So I'm first going to talk about a very, very recent story, that came out last fall, and this story in a combination of its print version and its multimedia version the whole thing, everything about it, won an IRE medal this year. So we're talking about an investigative story. It's extremely deep. Deep. Huge amounts of data here. Months, maybe years, of investigation by the Bergen Record in New Jersey. Let's see I need to refer to my notes, so I don't get too far off track.

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It was a five-part series in the newspaper, and one of the things I like about the online presentation is the how to say this? The execution of this presentation is highly sophisticated. The programmer, a guy named Yuri Demidov, who I'd never heard of before I saw this, but apparently works for the Bergen Record his mastery of the Flash and the interface design is fantastic. But I'm going to complain about the storytelling. OK? So separate those two things in your mind. We've got stories up there online where people just learned Flash last month, and there's all kinds of things that don't work very well. This story is not like this at all. I mean, this guy it loads fast. The sound is fantastic; the controls are wonderful; the text is clear and sharp and readable on every single screen; the quality of the photos are wonderful; the quality of the video is great. So the production quality of this piece is fantastic. OK?

But what we have is things like what I've got here, over on your right, there's a list there of amounts of different kinds of toxic waste that were dumped by the Ford Motor Company in this area of New Jersey, that the story is about, over three years. So you've got things like "three million gallons of paint sludge." You've got a list of about eight or ten items that, if there had been an infographic, you'd already know it by now. You would know everything they dumped in three you would have known it thirty seconds ago. You would have known how much they dumped. If there were a map here, you would have known where.

But right now, you're stuck with the text, and a couple nice pictures of Fords, which you know it does have graphics. It's not a text-only piece. They went to great lengths to make it graphically interesting. But did they tell the story in the best possible way? I want a bar chart or something. I want to see, what does three gallons of paint or what does three million gallons of paint sludge look like, compared with 73,000 gallons of thinners and oils, right? And these items. So that's what I mean by "We've gotta have more graphics to communicate what the information is." Especially if you've got a lot of big numbers.

Now, another kind of graphical information on the previous screen, I'm talking about information graphics charts, pie charts, bar charts, proportional things. You know? Communicating with pictures. Communicating with maps is something else all together. This map onscreen there's a little scroll bar in the upper right-hand corner. This is as big as it gets. You can't blow it up. You can't zoom on it. It scrolls up and down. It's really, really long and tall. It's clearly from the newspaper. And it's gorgeous. It's a gorgeous map. But, like with the zoomify thing that Bart just showed us, They should have zoomified this. We should have been able to go into the map, and the map should have shown us more of the story, and given us a lot of data. Now, yes, that would take a ton more work. But they put a ton of work into this piece. And it's beautiful, and I think they had the technical skills to do it. But they didn't have the storytelling experience with in medium. I'm expecting great things from Demidov, if he stays there. I hope he'll think of some storytelling things next.

This story was also shot by a fabulous photographer the guy who shot the fireman raising the flag above ground zero in New York, he's the photographer of this piece.

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Thomas what's his name? Freeman, is it? Franklin. Thomas Franklin. The photos are beautiful in this piece. And they're mostly segregated, off in the photo section. OK? Now, they do open within the story to a bigger size. There's, like, littler ones in the print story, that you'll see a screenshot of in a second. And then you can, like, blow some of them up, but not all of them.

But you could have used the pictures to drive the story, because a large part of the story is not about Ford and the business and the junk on the ground, but about people like this little girl, who have horrible cancers. I mean, it's toxic sludge, right? You know how it works. And, of course, they're poor; they're a minority group; they used to be mine workers. So they were, just, left to live in this place where they've got all this sludge and disease. So you could have used photos of these very real people to compel people to understand this story. But that's not the way it was told.

And finally, this is what most of it looks like online. Now, what makes this a much better effort than a lot of big online packages is at least the story is in the package, and not something they've got these links where they throw you out, and all these windows pop open, you have these long scrolly things. At least there's none of that. But I would say the story shouldn't even be there at all. I mean, not in this form. Not as 25 screens of text like this. Now you see, there's a little button in column one, for a picture? That'll blow you up a picture. These are both cameras. Some of these have video that also blows up. And it's integrated really well. It works fantastically.

But who's going to read this? In this form? I mean, what you do, you hit "next, next, next" 25 times for, like, each of the five parts. And it's very readable, and the writing is fabulous. This is one of the best-written investigative pieces I've ever read. But that's not what I do online. I don't read online. And I don't think a lot of people do. So I'd say, you know, what you'd really want to do with a story like this is you want to break it up in a different way. You don't want to give me five print stories, that were designed for print, that were written for print. That were told for an audience reading a thing that they hold like this [she pantomimes holding a newspaper]. In the environments where we read. Not here. But, you know, sitting in an easy chair, sitting on a train, sitting on the toilet, of course. You know? There are places you read, and this is, to me, not one of them. Not read, like a long thing.

So, if you break it up into hooks instead of those narrative stories, you've got a lot of compelling ways to let the person get into it. Who were these people? What was the problem? Who was the villain in this story? And then, these hooks can be propelled or the user can be propelled through these hooks using motion, using zooms, some stuff like Bart just showed, right? The Ken Burns effect, when things zoom in and out even though a lot of photographers hate that, because you're not going anywhere, if it holds my attention and gets me to understand more of the story, then it's working. Right?

And this whole idea of I don't advocate that we stop telling stories. But the little stories that you weave together, so skillfully, to make a big piece in the newspaper, should stay as little stories when they go online. They shouldn't be woven together.

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They should stay as the little stories that they are, and let the user explore them on his or her own. So the idea to keep in mind, I think and I don't mean to bore you. A lot of you have been looking at this stuff for a long time. And you know that it should be an experience. But the idea of an experience that we get immersed in I don't think a journalism story is ever going to be quite like a video game, or a massively multiplayer role-playing game. We're not talking about that level of immersion, where you don't leave your seat for ten hours, right? We're not talking about quite that much.

But I think we are talking about more than people more experience, more immersion, than people have when they're holding a newspaper and reading a long investigative piece. And partly because of this intimacy and personal-ness that you get from this close experience, especially with compelling photographs. And also, in some cases, with compelling video. If the things from the video are large, and they talk they reach you. Not just some some of the damage footage from Katrina is ah, I'm running out of time. Some of the damage footage from Katrina is very compelling, because you're like, "Wow, look at all that damage." But some of it is from very far away. And you know what Charlie Chaplin said: you know, if you want people to cry, you zoom in, you get close. If you want them to laugh, you zoom out, you fall on the banana peel. So that's the wholeN

ow, this is an ancient piece, in terms of multimedia. And I hope most of you have seen it and looked at it many times, as I have. The amazing thing about it is it still stands up. You know, five years later, this thing is still a good story. Now, it's not the best story, ever, in the whole world. But it stands up in so many ways, I thought I'd point out. First, the story is about doctors from Duke University who go down to Nicaragua. At the point of this story, they'd gone down three times three separate occasions, to do heart surgery on little Nicaraguan children for free. And the children have congenital heart defects. OK?

So the heart animations there's four heart animations, showing you exactly what congenital defects the surgeons fix on these real children. It's not a whole primer on heart surgery; it only explains what four defects do they correct on these exact kids on this story.

This map zooms; it starts with a big map, of almost all of North and South America. Then it zooms in to show you Nicaragua. Then it zooms in, here, to show you exactly where the surgeons went on the trip that Joe Weiss went along with. I forgot to say, this great piece is by the great Joe Weiss. And that's probably why it still stands up. Let's see so maps, not only maps that get big, but maps that move, maps that tell a story all by themselves.

And photo slideshows where there's audio, where the text is not a label like a newspaper, like the worst kind of caption in a newspaper. Sometimes newspapers do great captions that help tell a story, that you can't see just by looking at a picture. But a lot of times, in today's newspapers, somebody just slaps some label on a picture, and it doesn't really tell you any story at all. Well, the captions they aren't

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really captions. The story, the photos, the audio in this piece, "Touching Hearts," they all go together. And it moves through individual stories to tell you about individual cases, different doctors, different kids.

Finally, this I like to show this because, if you organize information in a visual way, you can also convey information sort of like what the toxic story didn't do, with the text list. This shows you, at a glance, that 17 children were operated on on this particular trip. You can look at each of their stories if you want to. But you don't have to. But you know you can. And then, the other thing over on the right is the name and the title of each of the medical personnel who went along. Not that we know who they are, and we have to look at every one. But, at a glance, we can get an idea of how many and what kinds of medical personnel went along on this. So.

You don't give people choices just for the heck of it, just to give them choices, so you can say, "I gave them some choices! They can click on a thing!" No. You know, the choices are what propel the story. You let the user be in control not that they can do anything, but they can decide which things interest them. So that the experience is the story. The experience they have is the story that you want to tell. And this is, I think, my last screen yes.

So when you just watch and the longer you do it, the longer you watch, the more passive it is, right? The longer you're sitting there, with your hands in your lap, I guess. But, you know, you want to click! The longer you sit, the more you want to leave, or go, or do something, or change it. So this idea of making it short enough, and giving the user enough control, is what actually permits the user to experience the whole story. If you have a story as gigantic as the Bergen Record's "Toxic Legacy" it's huge. Now, how many people are ever going to read or experience the whole thing? I don't know. But that's not the point. The reporter's mission is not to force people to read the whole thing. The reporter's mission is to let you understand that people were hurt, Ford dumped toxic waste, the EPA didn't clean it up, New Jersey's still paying for it; you know, there's a lot of parts to the story that you could get across in thirty seconds, that might, in fact, lead the user to want to spend a minute, five minutes, twenty minutes. Right? How do you get I mean, Ashley knows how to get you to spend twenty minutes on one thing. That's what he does. Right? Well, that's what we all need to learn to do. How do you get people to actually stay and experience the story? You give them the opportunity to control the experience themselves.

If you want to link to those two stories, you can just click a link from this little snippet; it's snipurl.com/opzr. And you can see a list of links, of not only "Touching Hearts" and "Toxic Legacy," but a bunch of other stories that I think are really good stories.

Thank you.

[applause]

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JOSE MANUEL VALENZUELA: This is the EP Tres, EP3. What we do is El Pais, directed and dedicated to the youth. And that's the problem. [laughs]

The paper edition we have a paper edition is edited on Fridays. And that would have to be different from other online editions. It's unconventional version of a newspaper. The web is the place where we are trying to innovate. The web has three parts. The principal part is this you are seeing, is the magazine multimedia. We have another zone that we call "talentos" talent. And the "agenda." And the "agenda," you have information about 55 cities. This information about how to spend your free time, in cities, is very unconventional, too. Concerts, films, things like that.

And, in the site we call "talentos" here, the readers, or the audience, is the protagonist. In this site, the readers show their works in the fields of photography, drawing, music, ah literature, everything. And it's enough to browse the files, and the rest, readers can see and value the contributions to this form. Then, once a week, we select the best artist from this site. And we do ah a special report. In the magazine multimedia and in the paper. In the paper, we have two pages to publish the work of some people painting and photography. And ah but now we are talking about the multimedia zone of this, the magazine.

For us, the more important things are the stories they can tell. The format is just a way of showing it, in the magazine; what we claim is to inform the readers as you see about cinema, music, theatre, technology, sex, things like that. And we want to reapply the form to, to show new artists. So we want to inform and offer entertainment.

We are something like a TV show for young people. But we are not a TV, and we are not a paper. We don't have its limits maybe we have other limits, but they are not the same. In a multimedia, there are different elements. Not only text, not only video. We must use all of them to get a new kind of storytelling. To combine these elements, we use Flash software. And this is not any more the text is not any more the important thing in the stories. Because what we think is we have not to use a rigid structure to do a story. We prefer to combine the elements, and find the best structure for each story.

For example, you have you have music. What is the most important thing, in this type of news? The songs. People, when ah search for music, wants to see the songs. Wants to listen to the songs. If you are in a conventional media, in a newspaper, you can read a report about, for example, record in the paper. But in Internet, you don't need to write this. You don't have to say to the people, "Hey, this is a good album, this is a bad album." You can just put the video clip or the audio, and people has to know by themselves if they like or not. But you can do more things than only the video. You can ah also show text. It is more like on MTV, the person the man who presents says something about the song. We do, more or less, the same. Sometimes we we do more things. And we have another kind of things for example, you have the video, you can see the video on the screen, but you can read a lot of the ah, how they recorded the album. And it's the same with the rest of the stories.

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What we do first is to know what element we have to tell the story. Then we choose what are the most important, and how we can show it to the audience to make the story more attractive. This way of working we mention the way one of the stories that we publish make us different. You know? Where you can find a lot of different kinds of storytelling, and not like with journalism or with magazines. For example, we do premieres of short films. You can see these are films about People is saying, is looking at these films a lot. Here you can know more. You have an interview with the director, a picture with the credits, and you can see more things. We do games and things like that. We are trying to change.

Ah we are free we are free, to put the stories up. This is the most important for us. We don't have to run a newspaper; we are a magazine. We don't have the limits of TV or a radio station. But we have another limit. For example, in Internet, people don't look for videos or audios. When we do videos not this example, because these are film. We do videos, about three minutes, three minutes and a half. Not more. Because it goes out. The same with the text. But we can combine videos, audio, to give the audience something different a new kind of entertainment, with shorter stories. So if you like a certain story, you are going to see the next story. And now it's about a film. If you go to the cinema with your grandparents, they give you one of the tickets. [laughter]

I try to explain you how we work. In our team, we have four writers, one graphical designer, one multimedia editor, and three Flash developers. We work with some freelance, too, for the cartoons. It's a kind of cartoon, here. And things like that. And[

A short cartoon, entitled "Talentos," is played.]

Ah there is a thing that I must note about our writers. They know nothing about Flash software. Why? Because that's not important. We want writers with good ideas, with good stories, writers that will target our audience young people so we have very young writers. And because we think that it's the same in other media. A writer, on the newspaper, doesn't need to know how to print the pages or how to distribute the product, but has to know how to write correctly and how to look for exciting stories. We think it's the same on the Internet.

The first thing that do our writer is to think what can he get for the story. Later, they go to our editing tool, and they just have to fill this form with the rest you can browse the multimedia files, too. And with this, what you do is to generate a pack of XML files with a link in between. Once you have this, you can move the files Once you have this, you have to decide how to show this pack in a Flash page.

We have what we call, for this, what we call "skins." Skins are like dresses for the stories. A skin is a framework in which you can insert your content. We have a lot, and we are doing new skins almost every day, with the flash developers and the graphical designer. Some of them are good for video; some of them are good for

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pictures. In others, you can put other elements, or whatever. You just have to choose one of this, and you'll have the skin that is going to be the story. Ah later, to put their stories at home is quite easy, too. These are examples of skins.

And to do the homepage is very easy. You have a system of numbers, assigned to positions and that's all. We ah as you can see, we are trying to [beat nobody]. But this is collaboratory, and we look for new ways of storytelling on Internet. We are changing every day. We are now looking at this page, but I know that in a few months, you are going to see a lot of different things on this page. The first time people that used to be very conservative they look at us, and they say, "This is a very complicated webpage. I hate it. I run out" and ah, that's all. But, fortunately, that's just a first impression. We are now growing very fast. We have about 400,000 unique visitors a month. And we are happy, because each month we are growing, now, 20%.

We have another handicap, a very, very big handicap, that we are overcoming. We are a part of El Pais, a newspaper with old readers, like all the big newspapers. And we have to say to the youth, "Hey, boys, your fathers' newspapers has a lot of things for you!" [laughter] That's not easy because young people are used to hate the things that their fathers do. And but, with time, we are changing this image that young people have about El Pais. And that's all.

[applause]

ASHLEY WELLS: All right. [responding to an inaudible comment] I can't help it; I come from California, originally. The first the keynote presentation, this morning, was a lot about media companies needing to innovate, to stay relevant. And that fit really well with my presentation, so I just went with it.

And it's a little bit of a story about what I do; what we call "editorial concepts," which is a new concept, even for us. And it may be a story of how we, kind of, lost some of the innovative momentum that we had, back in the dot-com boom era. And if it's a story that you can't, yet, relate to, then maybe you will in the future. Because it has to do with the impact of business, technology, and personnel on how you can be creative with multimedia and video content. And a disclaimer the big asterisk here I'm not claiming that photo, audio, slideshows, aren't innovative or aren't creative. I'm just saying that they probably aren't the be-all, end-all of what we can do with multimedia interactivity on the web. We've been using them for a while. And I kind of wonder what's next.

So, at MSNBC, we used to create a lot of very graphical, even simulations very rich, interactive things, that the whole point was to engage you, to get your hand on that mouse and start clicking around, and by doing that, you would experience new things, and we'd challenge you to think about topics in a way that, perhaps, no other medium was going to do. And so these are some of the things that we did that I thought were fun, in the past. And I'm not sure if any of you have ever seen some of

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them. But this one's pretty common; it's old. the "Baggage Handler Game" gets talked about somewhat frequently.

And one of the big things that we did was this "Big Picture," up here, which was an interactive TV show. I'm not going to open it up, because it would take too long to show, and I only have, probably, thirteen minutes left. So I'll be merciful. But, essentially, it was something different than what I've seen in other places, in that it was a multimedia, sometimes video-driven, sometimes photo-driven narrative, that would stop and then let you do something. So it would give you an opportunity to engage. And perhaps that was running a race, and then learning about how fast the fastest human could run in 50 years. Or, in the case of covering the Oscars, it was, if you were a director or a writer, or wanted to develop a movie, what kind of bio biopic picture would you want to create, and what would the process be to do that? And so you'd hear from directors who had done that, and then you'd start creating your own. And we intersperse them.

We learned a lot by doing that. And that was mostly centered around narrative, interactive structure, in that if you want to combine interactivity and, kind of, linear narrative, then there are probably about three ways you could do that. And the top one, here, is maybe one of the first ones we tried. And that was, we'd hit you with narrative all the way to the end, and then we'd give you a chance to be interactive, and explore, and do stuff like that. And the problem with that is, that if people get bored in the beginning, they're never going to know it was interactive in the first place, unless you tease it really well. But mostly, people don't know that they're going to be able to interact with the screen. Because it looks kind of like TV or video, and they're not used to doing that anywhere.

And so, the second one was another piece in a Big Picture that we had done this is all Flash-based, by the way on the future of the Olympics. And it started out right at the beginning: you got to run a race. And the premise was: how fast could the fastest human run fifty years from now? And we just said, "All right, we're going to guess, people would think maybe five seconds, for a hundred-meter dash." And so, you hit the space bar, and you hammer on it, you run as fast as you can, and you will never win. But it gives you a chance to play the game. And then we went and talked to Olympics coaches, who told you, "Yeah, the human body doesn't really work that way. You can't run that fast. Although here are some estimations." And so, after they tell you about that, you get a chance to run the same race again, only you decide what goal you're going to set, and you run against it, and at the same time you face competitors like Carl Lewis and Jesse Owens, who run at the same pace that they did when they won Olympic medals. And so, by getting the interactivity up-front, telling some of the story and then getting you back involved, we're challenging you to think and giving you opportunity to really learn from what you just made a mistake in trying. So it's almost like taking lessons from education.

And then the last part was the biopic piece from the Oscars, that I kind of mentioned earlier, where you start out with a little bit of narrative, and then we let you create something or part of it, at least and then we continue with some narrative, and

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then you create another part, and then a little bit more narrative, and then another part it's kind of an iterative process, a step-by-step process. And, to me, that one works pretty well, too, depending on what the subject matter is.

But, in a lot of cases, we want to use, kind of, this combination of graphics and audio and video and interactivity to tell you a story that, often, is very abstract in nature. It's not something that you could go and put an audio slideshow together on, because it doesn't exist. We've made it up. And, to me, those are the most challenging things to do, and also the biggest potential for challenging people to think and learn new things.

So we did all this. And we did it for several years; I did it for six years. And then, one day, our GM comes in and says, "Yeah. But does it scale?" Well, what do you mean, "Does it scale?" Yeah, you can make it bigger. [laughter] But, unfortunately, that's not what he meant. And his point was this: we can make a Big Picture. And something like 550 man-hours would go into each one. And they would generate something around, maybe, three- to five-hundred-thousand page views. Because we're in a business of page views. That's how we sell our advertising. Unfortunately.

And these things, in order to be a smooth experience in Flash, don't refresh the page all the time. And even though we might get it sponsored for 200,000, 400,000 dollars, and easily cover our costs, we can't make them, all the time, at the same kind of pace that we can make top news stories, that get a million page views, or top news slideshows that, every time you click a picture, if there's eighteen of them, you get a page view for every one of those, the ad refreshes for every one of those. And it ends up getting 10 million page views. How do you compete with that? Well [laughs] perhaps you try to add some technology to the format, so you can make it really quick. But the art of the practice and art of journalism actually takes human effort. Right? There's no amount of technical know-how that's going to do that.

And besides I don't know if you guys have noticed, but it's getting more and more complicated to make stuff these days. [laughter] And I had been to a conference in Las Vegas two weeks ago, called "Mix 06," where Microsoft was kind of pimping all of their new technologies, and it was Atlas and Windows Presentation Format, and all of these things that were competitors for Flash, and it just kind of makes your head spin. I mean, how are we supposed to figure this stuff out? Well, it comes down to, you need to hire really bright people who are good at multimedia and design, and also are very technical-savvy. Because otherwise, you get all of your ideas shot down by all the rest of the people in the room, who sit there and say, "No, we can't do that. We can't do this." Well, I'm not particularly interested in what we can't do. And I don't like that excuse. So why don't we go try to break all the rules, and just do it anyway?

And, to that degree, at MSNBC we've formed a small group called "editorial concepts," which is a group that I lead. It has two other people on it, now, although we're trying to hire two more. It's very difficult to find these people, because the talent pool is very, very shallow. And so we stand separate than multimedia editors,

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and designers, and all those things. We can do all those things, except that we have the power to break out of the mold. Maybe that was a quick peek at some of the stuff that we're doing. I did that for dramatic effect. Because we don't just do multimedia. We do design and site features, and whatever else we can dream up. And we went and recruited an NBA player, that is a rookie, to blog for us. Because we thought that would be an interesting thing to do. So it's "editorial concepts;" it doesn't have to be multimedia. And so I just show these other things as teases that you might, someday, see on our site. But I don't really want you to see them. [laughter] Anyway.

So here's an example of one of the things that, when "editorial concepts" was first formed, Katrina happened. And, right out at the gate, we saw it as an opportunity to break out of the mold of our traditional site, and start to try to innovate, not only with multimedia but also the form of blogging and other things. And so I don't know if you guys have seen this, but I will open it up, briefly. Because it's got some interesting things that go on in it, at least. And chief of which is that we felt, in order to bring you into the story of the destruction, and the scale that was down there, what we really needed to do was take you there. And I didn't want to do some kind of illustrated map, so that you could walk around the town or something like that. It was more important for you to see it. And so we created this panoramic effect, where you can almost stand and face in different directions, and see different things that are going on.

And part of what we were advocating here was that it was very visual and dramatic, but it had multiple layers to it. That you could tell stories, like we normally would, although they could be shorter blog dispatches, and have a heavy dose of multimedia in them, kind of, naturally. And we could tell stories about people, and we could present them in different ways. You can pick who you want to learn about. And then we can create ways of also archiving all of this stuff, that informs, maybe, future elements of our site.

And so we're creating something that's multimedia, and breaking out of the form, and instead of getting hit with the "Yeah, does it scale," well, actually, it does. Because it's format that we can turn around for the next disaster, if we want to, or we could change the header and make it something else. But at the same time, we're experimenting with ideas we want to do with the site later on like this, where you can sort by postings with the most comments, postings with the most photos, or you can decide that you want to see summaries. And if we take that little piece, and put it on the site, it's hard to argue that this project didn't scale. We actually got something out of it, and we think of it as, we design the concept cars, and we take this, which was maybe the seat, and it becomes part of our site and maybe the whole car didn't. But this part did. And it helps justify the cost.

The other thing we try to do is we went down there and we recruited citizens to blog for us. Now, this isn't particularly multimedia, except in the way that we represent it right here. Although we're trying to buy a bunch of digital cameras for them. I'm not quite sure how that investment will go. But anyway, here you see citizens who we

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recruited are posting photos and blog entries, and they have been doing so for quite some time. It adds another dimension to the story; perhaps if you're not interested in "big media's" angle, then at least you can read what the people who live there think.

A big aspect of this was that we enabled comments. And, just so you know, we don't accept all comments automatically. They are held, and filtered, and editors go through them one by one. Which is actually a system that works pretty well. Things that are objectionable never appear in the first place, and we only really discount those that are off-topic, or attacks, or have language just like what was previously mentioned.

But another aspect of the project was, you have to think about multimedia holistically. And how do you, not just create the little window, or the project that it's in, but even the entry point? Which this little module has been on our cover, off and on, for a good many months now. And, essentially, the highlight moves down the page. It's just a little bit of motion. It doesn't really interfere with the rest of the page, but it also gives every link a visual element, and tells you if there's a slideshow involved. Or an audio sequence, or something like that. So if that's the kind of thing you're interested in, and that's what's going to get you into the story, let's expose that right up-front. Let's not miss that opportunity.

Another thing that I hesitate, even, to go into, but [The visual aid displays a picture of Ashley Wells wearing a bulky camera outfit. Laughter] We experiment. Our job is full-time innovation. Other people at our company innovate, but it's our job to do it full-time. And one of the things we found out was, at Microsoft, they have a big research group. And someone in that research group had developed a video camera that shoots in 360 degrees. And they even had a helmet for it, it turns out. [laughter]

And so we went down to Bay Saint Louis, in coastal Mississippi. We rented an RV, and we brought some of the Microsoft geeks with us. And I said, "Look, I'll be your human tripod or bipod, as it were. And just outfit me. And I will go, and talk to people; I'll walk through their homes, or whatever it takes, and we'll just see if we can do something with this." Because you can't imagine, until you go down there, the scale of the destruction. Still photos and video do not do it. In every direction you look, everything is destroyed.

And so we thought, OK, here's a great use of technology. We're taking, maybe, what might be the next form of multimedia of course, it's not going to be fashionable, if you have to wear that all the time. For the most part, we strapped it to a care, and we put it on a map, which I'll show you. This isn't live yet. But I wanted to, maybe, give a preview of it for this audience. Not that we're trying to debut it or anything, because it may be several months. But this is a map, like Google Maps, that you can move around, except that we've marked photos, and 360 video, and audio slideshows, and everything we've done down there. Some demo stuff's in there right now. But if I wanted to open this up I wonder how long this'll take to download,

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because as you can imagine, 360 video isn't this big, it's that big. And it's very, very heavy, and Flash actually no facility for, actually, showing it. So we had to make all that up.

And, as it loads I'll explain this over on the side, we're actually using the map technology here. So here, I can look this way, or I can look that way. I can pause. I can jump ahead a block if it loads. And this arrow, right here although we're still working on it is really engineered to show you the path in the city that you're driving, the checkpoints along the way which you can click on and get to and the direction you're facing as you drive through it.

Now, this particular one is a silent drive-through. Some of the ones that we did in homes actually have the person who lived in that home narrating what all used to be there. Or we drove down the street, and a historian is telling us, "This house used to be there. This is who lived there. This is what it used to cost. It used to be yellow." We also gathered photos of what all those houses used to look like. So look forward to us putting that together. But that, to me, is one way that you can take multimedia to the next level and embarrass yourself at the same time. [laughter]

Another thing that we've kind of specialized in doing is: how can you build templates that really maximize the richness of multimedia and interactivity, when you get to do it? When you can justify that it scales, because you've got a template that does half the work for you. And I'll click on this just to show the template itself, which is something that we've built in our publishing system now I guess it's been somewhat of a success. But it's this page that, when it loads, it pushes down because it's got the ad build into it, to begin with.

[A female voice speaks:]

MOCKRACY ANNOUNCER: Hi, I'm [Dara Brown.] Welcome to the Mockracy.

ASHLEY WELLS: I'll shut her up. [laughter] But anyway here, so we're experimenting with other things, like blue-screening video, and having an anchor or host be able to walk out in the environment. And combining graphics, and things like that. But it's not just graphics. It's that the entire presentation is something that you can customize.

So you create your own avatar, your own person, and you join this Mockracy, and it's really all about alternative voting methods. And the only way to learn about those is really to use them. How are the ballots different? Does it affect the people that win? I don't know. We talked to some experts that kind of thought they might, and one that didn't think it would. So let's create an experiment, an environment, and put that to the test. So I'm going to be I'm going to take this off mute, because it's actually more fun to listen to the

I'm going to be a rural person.

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["Rural" music lots of banjos plays.]

And I'm going to be I'm going to pick my party as "Tree-huggers" or something like that. And essentially, that now I'm a citizen in this experience. And it's telling you, OK, you live in this fake land where there are not five districts, but one big one, and now you get five votes. And so, who are you going to vote for? Are you going to vote based on the color of your person? Or the party? Or where the people on the ballot live?

Anyway, I'll skip that. And as you're thinking about it, we've got these little experts who talk to you. And you just have fun with it. You know? This is an abstract idea. You can't create an audio and photo sequence that's going to tell you anything about how to vote that you're going to care about. It's just a difficult topic. And so I'll cast my votes, just to show you what happens I can cast three votes for this person.

MOCKRACY ANNOUNCER: And the winners are!

ASHLEY WELLS: And so, here you see the results. And the results aren't made up by us. It's participatory journalism, in that what users do is the result and the conclusion of this. We've ceded all control. It may be a complete failure. It may be that alternative voting methods don't do a damn thing to promote diversity or better representation. And, if that's the case, then you're going to see it, because users just did it. And all these fake people may have won or not, and you may or may not have voted for them.

And so, to me, that's really a narrative interactive that is multimedia. Because it's graphics and video it doesn't use any photos but it's a personalized experience, and it's participatory beyond someone sending you a comment, or trying to get you to write a story for them. And we've given up control of the outcome, which I think is interesting to do, in some cases. It's not always the safest route to go, but why not take risks?

Another thing we did was this I'm not going to open it up, because I'm running short on time. But, essentially, in the same kind of template, we're able to turn something like this around pretty quickly, because we don't have to worry about the rest of the page around it. But in the process of creating the template, we've left a very large visual space that our colleagues can do whatever they want to with it. We do the first couple to try to show them what's possible in this space. Now, whether they're going to do stuff like this or not is certainly not up to us. We'll just move on to the next thing, and provide another opportunity. But in this one, the shuttle launches, and you can change the[

there is an inaudible interruption from the audience, presumably asking Ashley Wells to show the multimedia content]

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OK. I'll show it. It may take a while to load. It's pretty heavy, because it streams three videos at the same time. I'll make sure the sound doesn't jump out at us. This is something that took us about two days to turn around. And we can use it again.

LAUNCHPAD ANNOUNCER: [inaudible] main engine start. 7 6 5 three engines up and burning. 3 2 1 and liftoff of Space Shuttle Discovery, beginning America's new journey to the moon, Mars, and beyond. And the vehicle has cleared the tower.

ASHLEY WELLS: So here, we're not challenging you to think, other than, "What would that camera angle look like?" Which isn't a whole lot of thinking. But it is a way that you can use and it truly is multimedia, right? It's three videos at one time, plus a lot of graphics, plus the sound. It's multimedia on steroids, right? And it's very big. And big is compelling.

And so this is experience that I think, if you hire people that are technically savvy, then you can get around the technology problem. Because they're going to make things that, automatically, are reusable. If we have another event where we might have more than three cameras, we might have ten, we can design a graphic, locate the cameras, get the video feeds in order, and we're done. Same page, same everything. Everything's reusable. And so, to that degree, I can go back to the GM and say, "Yeah, this can scale." It's not going to be viewed just once. Ever.

And that is, really, the bulk of my message, is that

ROSENAL CALMON ALVES: All right!

[applause]

DONNA DECESARE:[inaudible] very inspiring. So.

[questions are solicited from the audience]

DONNA DECESARE:[asking questioner to approach the microphone] Could you come?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Bart, could you give just a real quick idea of the resources involved in the pieces you did, and how long they took?

BART MARABLE: Yes. Actually, it depends largely on the client. Sometimes we'll have a client that will actually bring us content. In the case of Lewis and Clark and the Churchill piece that I showed, actually both of those were based on existing exhibitions. In those cases, we'll take the content and then basically break it down to its constituent parts, and then reassemble it in a way that works very well online. We never take it full-scale and basically put it on the web. You always, basically, do a breakdown and then create the stories.

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The other one, "Becoming Human," was actually an original production. It wasn't based on an existing television documentary; it wasn't based on an existing exhibition. It was a completely original production. Time scales on those for "Becoming Human" was actually about nine months, I believe. For Churchill, I think it was about five months. And for Lewis and Clark, it was actually really drawn out, because it launched in three phases. So it was about eleven months. But it depends on that one was in different phases.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: How many people [inaudible]?

BART MARABLE: We have a core team, in our studio, of five people. But that's also supplemented by our clients. And in the cases of things like the Library of Congress, they came to us with content that was exquisitely organized, being librarians. And we really appreciated that. [laughter] We don't always get that. And so, we actually were able to use that from using existing content. They did the image collection, and so we really drew heavily on those.

With a case like "Becoming Human," we actually, you know, co-wrote the script, we did a lot of the images, the maps, all of what you saw there as well as the interface and the engineering of it, we developed we also worked with, just, the development of the story lines. So it was a much more involved process. But, typically, what we'll have is we have our core team, and we'll typically bring in experts for specialized needs, like specialized photography, scanning, to specialized production. But we also draw on the clients, too. Because they're also the experts. They have a lot of expertise, that we like to draw on as well.

ROSENAL CALMON ALVES: We have another, from the millions of people all over the world. [laughter] Now we have a question from Uruguay, the beautiful city of Montevideo hello! Hello! [Solidat Caliveros] says, "I would like the conferences to tell us something about the experience of providing mobile content. For instance, I would like to know something about El Pais's experience with mobiles, or MSNBC.com's data service that has just been released, as well as for the other point of view of each panelists about using mobile]"

JOSE MANUEL VALENZUELA: [inaudible] In EP3, now, we are doing a web portal for the mobile phones. You can we have, in the phones, the "agenda," with information for leisure. With some videos some videos that we produce for the web. They are about two minutes, one minute and a half, you can see them in the video.

ROSENAL CALMON ALVES: It's paid? Or

JOSE MANUEL VALENZUELA: It's paid. Yes. Yes, yes, yes. And El Pais, in general, has a lot of service by phone. On web you can read the paper, on web. And alerts, a lot of things. We use, now, mobile too for contests, things like that. And now we're using, too, for participation. Now everybody is taking pictures, with their phone, and things like that.

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ASHLEY WELLS: Here's our mobile experience, which I have on my phone, right now, in high speed. [He displays his phone to the audience.] This is the latest video headlines from our site. It's very big on my phone, because I have a big screen. But it's all playing live, using E-Video, high speed network. This is something that we just put out there in beta, and frankly, I didn't know much about it. I downloaded it before I came here, figuring the question might come up, or someone might want to see it. [laughter] I've been playing around with it, and frankly, I think it's really cool.

ROSENAL CALMON ALVES: And it has repercussions in Uruguay!

ASHLEY WELLS: Yes. And here's something I would note, that's relevant, I guess, to multimedia and video in general, is that ah if you don't have the scale of a site like ours, and you want to monetize your video, our your audio-driven slideshows, or something like that, think about distributing them in different ways. Either on a cell phone, via podcast maybe attach some ads to it to monetize it, make it ad-supported so it's free to users.

Or, better yet, take the YouTube model, where you can copy a snippet from, maybe, our site, and put that video on your blog, and it runs an ad in front of it. So we don't care where you see your video, as long as you see the ad, and we get paid. And we could do that with audio slideshows, too. It's just an idea.

ROSENAL CALMON ALVES: So you don't care if it's your video in another site, and another company, with another brand, and your video inside it?

ASHLEY WELLS: That's exactly what YouTube is doing now. They don't own the content rights, and we do. So we could, in theory, decided that we wanted to do that. But, basically, if we're going to monetize this via ads, then you want the most eyeballs to see it. And does it really have to be your site they have to come to to see it? Maybe not.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: This question's for Ashley and for Jen. How involved are you at the beginning of a project, before it's launched?

JEN FRIEDBERG: That's something I'm trying to become more and more involved in. It depends on what the project is and, sort of, where it originates. But, ah, generally, when everything goes as planned, we have a planning meeting before anybody starts reporting or taking video, and talk about what kind of an end product we would like we hope to see. And then we look at what resources we have, and who we think will do the best job. And then we send them out, and then we kind of don't worry about whether they come back with what we had planned or not. Because, you know, at that point, you have what you have, and you just put together the best presentation you can.

So, pretty much, right now I'm shepherding it through the whole way. What I showed you guys were all were templates we have, that play video; they also play the slideshows with sound, and they also do just plain photo slideshows. And, you

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know, that way I can take a day off, and small things that we do on a daily basis two or three of them can be put up a day, and not have to do anything. And then that leaves me free to concentrate on the bigger pieces.

ASHLEY WELLS: As for me, given the nature of my job, a lot of the project ideas actually originate with us. And then, we'll go ahead and proceed on working on them. If they don't originate with us, and it's just an idea "Hey, we want to do something about Katrina, and we're going to send people down there" then, often, it's thrown to us to figure out what to do with that. And we come back with suggestions, and then we may be involved in building it, if it's experimental, if we don't have any facility for doing that in our publishing system. And then, once we do that, and set it up so it can be done, we step away. And then we just move on to the next thing.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: There are a lot of multimedia journalism students in the audience right now, me included. And either right now, or pretty soon, we're probably all going to be looking for jobs very similar to y'all's. So I was wondering if you could share any advice for us, as far as what are the really important skills and experiences that we need to be building right now to be successful?

DONNA DECESARE: Yeah, I think each one

JEN FRIEDBERG: OK. We're looking for people, and this is something that, we're getting to the point where we're looking to bring in a second person. So I think I think you are going to see I'll get your cards later. [laughter]

I think you're going to see the job market opening up, for this sort of thing. We would want people who would have the broadest cross experience possible. So, if you know at least, the basics of editing video, sound, and Flash work, then that's going to make you marketable.

ROSENAL CALMON ALVES: We have many here, from my class. So. [laughter]

JEN FRIEDBERG: Also, if you speak another language, that would really help, too.

BART MARABLE: With our studio, I really like what Tom Kelly, at Audio he describes the ideal person, at their studio, as T-shaped, in terms of experience. They're very broad-based in a lot of things. But they also have a deep core competency in one or two areas.

That's, I think, a really great way to express what we've always known, which is we feel like, we like people who have a very deep experience, whether it's programming or production design. But we also, we need to collaborate. And so, having a broad experience, and far beyond just what you're pigeonholed into we don't want just a programmer. We want somebody that can also understand narrative, and

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understand to tell stories. So I would really look at broadening experience, but also finding one or two areas that you're really, really good at, too.

ROSENAL CALMON ALVES: Ashley, are you hiring, too?

ASHLEY WELLS: Oh, you bet. [laughter] I think we have, maybe, three or four different disciplines that are specific design, although there's graphic design and there's UI design, and they're two very different things. We have multimedia editors and there, again, there's two very different things: photography and photo editing, versus video and video editing. We have both. And then we have what's called an interactive producer, which is a technical skill; you should know a lot of Flash, Actionscript, Javascript, definitely HTML and CSS. And, for my team, I look for people who have experience in across all of those, but, like Bart said, in-depth experience in one or two of them.

MINDY MCADAMS: And I can add recently, at my school, there was a room full of editors who came to talk to us. And, one after another newspaper. They were all newspaper and magazine people. They were all print people. And they said, "We're looking today, on a student's resume, when they give us a resume, is we want to see that they can do more than one thing. Preferably, three or four things. Not that they're an expert in all of them. Yeah, we want a core journalism background, like we've been telling you all along but now, yes, we definitely"

And they even said, they definitely want them to know HTML. Which, I was like you know, there's been a lot of years where they've been telling us kids don't need to know HTML. And now they're like, "Well, if they don't know any HTML, we find they're not really what we need." So I think what the newspaper and magazine people are looking for has changed in the past, say, one to two years.

ROSENAL CALMON ALVES: One of the things that has changed is that the concept that, you know, the old yeah. The old I can do that, right? The old model, the old paradigm, was that we don't need to know what is in the print plant. You know? Those are other people! We are just journalists! We just do our business! That's not the new paradigm. You have to have, at least, some knowledge.

I think a colleague friend here was saying that he was hiring in another university, and not this one, of course. And the person, you know, said, "Do you know HTML?" And the students did not even know what HTML was! So that is that has been a dilemma that, fortunately, here we have been insisting in another one But in many other places, people are not, you know, studying that. Because they say, "No, no, you just be a good journalist, and that's going to be OK." It's not going to be OK. As we are seeing, here. [indicating the next questioner] Here is another example of a good student that you can hire.

ASHLEY WELLS: I'd take it one step beyond that, and say you shouldn't just know HTML. You should be able to tell me how a webpage works. It comes from a server; it goes through this; it lands on your browser. That kind of thing.

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AUDIENCE MEMBER: All right. I noticed that a lot of these interactive things have so many elements coming at the people, like, all the time. You have sound going, you have the print, you have the video. Do y'all try to limit the amount of, like, effects that are coming in at once? And also, with the video, I've noticed short video usually works best. Do y'all have an actual limit on the time of the video?

JEN FRIEDBERG: We aim for like, our daily presentations, two and a half to three minutes. And we do have we let people do personal projects, where we let them go a little bit longer, because we're kind of thinking, if it's interesting enough to them, then hopefully, other people will find it interesting. I don't know.

And I do try and limit how much stuff is going on in your screen that you didn't ask for. So I like a presentation to come up, and maybe have one or two little elements that move, and then stop. And then it's up to you how much chaos you want going on, after that.

BART MARABLE: Everything that's on the screen needs to support the story. I think that there's a time for cognitive dissonance, and kind of the an overwhelming experience. But most of the time, you're really trying to get people to and in our case, we're trying to explain something, or try to interpret a subject. And really, everything that happens on the screen should really serve that purpose.

And the length, I think you do have, obviously, some technical considerations for how large to make the video. But I think that those are quickly diminishing. I think that, now, the issue is more of what's appropriate. And I think that, really looking at sixty seconds is appropriate in some cases, three to five minutes in others. It really depends upon the length of the story. But, whatever you do, I don't think you're really talking about these large blocks of time. Even in something like "Becoming Human," there's thirty minutes of programming, but it's divided up into three-minute segments. And so it's very small, discrete pieces.

ROSENAL CALMON ALVES: A few years ago, I learned from Elizabeth Osder, who is there, looking through the webcast hi, Elizabeth! she was talking about the future of journalism, and she told something that I found very interesting. We are going to go to a "tell me more about that" journalism. And I think when the more we evolve, in online journalism, the more we utilize multimedia elements it's or "Becoming Human," that you did, it's kind of, you know, "Tell me more about that."

And it's sort of a paradox, because they were saying in the last few years, that Internet has to be, every time, has to be very short pieces, except well, short, but in-depth, if you want. And I think many of the package all of the packages that we saw here described are giving those opportunities for going in-depth, right? This kind of, getting your interest, and then, you know, "tell me more about this," because this is what you want to know more. Am I right? Am I wrong?

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ASHLEY WELLS: I think there's always that debate, how long should videos be, how long should linear experiences be. We've done a lot of research and tracking around that, and I can't, obviously, give away all of that, because of trade secrets, and it was expensive to do, and it's a tactical advantage for us to have. [laughter] But I can tell you that the idea that things have to be two minutes? Not necessarily true.

MINDY MCADAMS: There's one example that I sometimes show. It's a seven-minute-long video. And it's not interactive at all. But it has a lot of multimedia in it; it has a lot of charts and graphs that, like, animate in the middle of it. And it's driven by a really personal story. It's from the World Health Organization, and it's about the combination of tuberculosis and AIDS in Africa. So I think you could Google it, if you find it on the WHO website. And it's seven minutes long. And the first time I opened it up, I knew it was going to be seven minutes, and I thought, "There's no way I'm watching this whole thing." I just know I have no attention span. And I thought, "Well, I'll look at it to see what it is." And, to my amazement, I watched the whole seven minutes. And then I watched it again. So but that's really, really rare. Most things I get bored with after two and a half to three minutes. And yet, I always think of that one exception. Seven minutes. So, it was different.

ROSENAL CALMON ALVES: There's also that song. An animation, a song. That narrative

MINDY MCADAMS: Oh, the JCB song! Ah! Oh, it's really long!

ROSENAL CALMON ALVES: Eight minutes!

MINDY MCADAMS: It's an animation. It's this fabulous British pop song, and it's an animation, and it's a music video, really. But you look at it, and you're watching the animation, because it's just so wonderful. Yeah. JCB. I don't know you look up, you Google "JCB song." And it's a JCB is a kind of steamroller or something. And it's about a kid riding on the JCB, with his dad.

JOSE MANUEL VALENZUELA: For videos I think that, when you do a conventional video how do you say? For example, people you have to explain, it's like a new, in Internet it was short. Like a TV report. But there are other genres, which do you can put thirty minutes, perfectly.

ASHLEY WELLS: Never underestimate the will of the American people to waste time at work. [laughter]

JOSE MANUEL VALENZUELA: For example, we have some films, and people are looking at some films that have fifty minutes, twenty minutes, and it's perfect. It's a good format for that. The same if we have an interview with the Rolling Stones, we'll do one hour.

ROSENAL CALMON ALVES: One hour!

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JOSE MANUEL VALENZUELA: Maybe. [laughter]

ROSENAL CALMON ALVES: Ah, another one that can be hired!

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I am a UT journalism student, and I'm taking multimedia class, and personally, I went to the New Orleans, to take some photos and video about the hurricane relief. And that "Rising from Ruin" that package was so impressive. And I've seen it before, actually. Before today.

But I was wondering when I went there, it was really, like, huge work. And I was when I saw that package, I was thinking, like, "Wow, that was amazing. They put a lot of people here, maybe, a lot of work and time here." And I was wondering, when you put that many people, and effort, and time here, does it work for your business? When, thinking about the business, and doing reporting, and comparing with the funding you put in it Is that worth to do that? That's one question.

And second one is, I want to know more specific information; I'm wondering how long it took to complete all the package, and how many people engaged in that, to make that package? And how did you provide the work, specifically? Like graphic designer, producer, video editor, video shooter actually, photo shooter? I think a lot of people worked for that.

ASHLEY WELLS: Where to start. That started in October. And it's an ongoing package. Between October and January 1st, we had two people from MSNBC.com on the ground there every single day. Living in a trailer which I drove down there, from Baton Rouge. [laughter] Awful smell in that trailer. As far as man hours put into that, we're still counting. Now, we only do it one week out of every month. But it's got to be somewhere in the thousands, because it's whenever someone goes down there, there's always a writer, and there's always a multimedia editor, who will either shoot videos or photos, and gather audio, and do slideshows and things like that.

Back at headquarters, my team which was just me and one other person, until recently did many iterations of the design and functionality of it, and all that kind of stuff. And I would say we spent, probably, a good two months of our lives reworking the package as the editorial direction changed, and trying to advise what direction it should go, and what we should do about it.

As far as, does it pay off from a business perspective; like I was saying, like the Big Picture things that we did? This would be that, like, on steroids, except for, in this situation, it's getting more page views. It's continuing to get more page views; it's probably in the good twelve million page views or something by now. Don't quote me on that. But it was also an opportunity where our GM came in and said, "Look, this is an important story. Whether or not it matters on a financial level, it matters on a human level. And we're going to take it as an opportunity to experiment and see what we can do to evolve our site, not just our project. And so, in some ways, that's how we justified it." [applause]