

# Sound in the Story

“

Will the story be best told with words published in a newspaper, or with words and pictures in a newspaper, or does the news have the elements necessary to use photos and audio on the web...?

– Kim Komenich, *San Francisco Chronicle*

## ■ Introduction

I like the quote above from Kim Komenich because it suggests that stories are much more than just words and pictures. Traditionally, the “story” part of any design referred to text. Assignments began with the text. Photos, graphics, headlines and outlines were added to complete the “package.”

Kim Komenich and today’s media designers realize that today’s reader is not necessarily a reader in the traditional sense. Readers (or viewers) scan media impatiently in a non-linear pattern. Yet, these same impatient scanners love a good story and they are likely attracted to stories that feature alternative story-telling methods.

Consider that Americans 8 to 18 spend an average of six hours and 21 minutes a day with media of all sorts, but just 43 minutes with print media. Only 23 percent of Americans 18-29 read newspapers regularly. Those who do only spend about 24 minutes a day with newspapers. About 32 percent of young Americans get their news entirely online.

With the preponderance today of cell phones, MP3 players, portable CDs and digital cameras, today’s young reader is a voracious consumer of media, but not of *traditional journalism*.

If you are a good writer or photographer, you already have what it takes to tell good stories. But you also may be aware of the limita-

tions of telling stories with words and pictures only. How much better would a story about a fire in downtown Franklin be if we could hear the voice of the fire chief and see video of a dramatic rescue?

Still, words – the literal story – must come first. Once the reporter has the facts, it’s possible to ask: “What’s the best possible way to tell this story in terms of words, pictures, audio and video.

We’ll discuss the modern tools media producers have today to capture not only the story but the feeling and drama that allows readers to “experience” the story. Indeed, today’s journalists are more like “producers” who plan packages rather than single stories.

In the 13 short days we have together this winter term, we will be able to explore three “levels” of story telling.

**Text:** Each student must find a story worth telling quickly. While this is not a writing course, we will generate “story proposals” which will guide us as we plan the next two layers of good story telling.

**Photography:** We need stories that have a strong visual component. We will search our word scripts for “clues” about good visuals. A story about puppies adopted during the Christmas season at the Humane Society has much visual potential. Once we have a strong visual story -- one that can be told in words

More 

.....“.....

The traditional version of the 5W's (inverted pyramid) freezes those story elements into informational ice cubes. If you thaw them out, the narrative begins. Who becomes Character. What becomes Action. Where becomes setting. When becomes Chronology. Why becomes Motive. How becomes Narrative.

– Roy Peter Clark, Poynter

### ■ About this course (continued)

and pictures -- we'll consider the story's potential for "alternative" story telling.

**Sound:** Audio is different from print and photography in that it is *linear*, not spatial. But each medium aspires to convey meaning, to impart drama. Photography is timeless because it captures one moment of many. Audio can be timeless in a different way. When it is at its best, the listener does not sense the passing seconds of a defined time line.

When photography and audio are crafted together to show and tell a good story, it's possible to suspend and defy time. You can escape the rules of the universe if you can enter the mind and heart of another human being. That's a lofty goal, but one worth pursuing. Consider the following slide shows:

- **Audio Slide Show: Old Man Green**
- **Interactive Web Site: The Weight**

### ■ My Course Objectives

1. That you learn to see more clearly.
2. That you become a perceptive consumer of media and understand the "language" of media.
3. That you understand that telling a story has both a narrative and visual component.
4. That media design ought to package a journalistic message that contains an opportunity to interact with the story on different levels.

### ■ Required Text

*The Better Photo Guide To Digital Photography* by Jim Miotke. "Sound in the Story," a handout from the Visual Edge project at the Poynter Institute for Media Studies (handout).

### ■ Supplemental Readings

I will be providing some handouts about the use of Photoshop along with other supplements detailing use of the Nikon D70/D50.

I also have tutorials that will help you with software such as SoundSlides and Audacity.

### ■ Attendance Policy/Consider The Marshmallow Story

My attendance policy is based on a simple expectation: I will be prepared for class and will not waste your time. In return, students

should be on time and ready for class unless you've contacted me 24 hours ahead of an unavoidable conflict. Otherwise, I count on you being in class every day.

#### **CAPTURING ACTION**

To capture the perfect moment, set your camera to the "continuous shooting" mode.

- Be sure the event is outside or in a well-lit room. No flash here;
- Hold shutter half way down to lock in subject;
- Recompose, start the series and shoot until RAM fills up.

### ■ Learning versus Earning Grades

I begin each semester reminding myself of a Native American proverb:

- **Tell me and I will forget**
- **Show me and I may remember**
- **Involve me and I will understand**

I like this approach because it reminds me as a teacher that I can't "learn" for you. Instead, it's far better that we learn from each other in a classroom environment where it's safe to take some risks and where it's okay to learn from honest mistakes. I will do my best to correlate my grading to your learning, but please remember I am grading your work habits, not you. The goal is to explore ways to allow your audio slide show to tell powerful stories.

### ■ About Deadlines

Deadlines are important in journalism,



The journalist who can write, shoot, edit, talk and look good on camera... will be in demand. Versatility will be rewarded...especially among those who know how to keep on learning.

– Phil Meyer, Knight chair, U. of North Carolina

but I am aware that college life demands that you juggle many competing priorities. I have formulated a deadline policy that accepts an occasional late assignment but also imposes penalties to discourage chronic lateness. All assignments are due when stipulated. They may be turned in *one day late*, but there will be a penalty of *5 points*. For example, if you earned a 90 on an assignment due Friday but turned it in the following Monday, you would receive an 85. Assignments *will not be accepted more than one day* following the deadline. Given our limited time together, it's very important you communicate with me if you miss a class or anticipate being late with an assignment.

### ■ Participation

Attendance will be taken and absence from class is at your own peril. You cannot make up unannounced quizzes or in-class exercises if you cut class. You must be present in class to present your slides how on the last day of class (Jan. 24). It is important to note that participation accounts for 10 percent of your final grade. Do not confuse attendance with participation. Simply coming to class and occupying a seat will not earn you credit. I expect you to be involved in class discussions and general critiques.

### ■ Classroom Etiquette

I promise to be as prepared as possible and I will try to keep the class varied and enjoyable. In return, I expect each student to come to class ready to learn. That means that when class begins, I don't want to compete with Facebook, My Space or an e-mail on your computer screens. Sometimes I use a "monitors off" policy to keep distractions to a minimum. If you have personal business you must conduct, please come to class early

or stay after to get the job done. Otherwise, I will expect your full attention.

### ■ Equipment/Lab Policies

You will be responsible for a very high-quality **Nikon digital SLR camera** in addition to digital voice recorders. The D70 is a durable product assuming you keep the camera dry and safe from bumps or drops. We will take care of normal maintenance if the camera breaks; however, you will be responsible for theft or damages caused by negligence. Treat the camera and digital voice recorder as if they were your own. For one month, they belong to you.

In addition to the camera and case, you will be responsible for a compact or "flash" card and a battery charger. Finally, you will be using an Olympus digital voice recorder this month. All of these items will be your responsibility as outlined in the "PSJ Borrowing Contract" that you must sign. Please read it carefully.

Also, you'll need at least **two CDs** and a pair of **headphones** or ear buds so you can properly edit sound. Our **voice recorders** require the mini-jack plug (i.e. like you would plug into a portable radio). You may prefer buying a 1 gigabyte portable "**jump**" drive to back up your work. Be aware that your "G" drive is not always the best option for backing up your work.

### ■ Lab Times

Shirk is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday through Thursday from 6 to 11 p.m. There ought to be sufficient hours for everyone to complete projects (though I would suggest not waiting until the night before a project is due to begin shooting or recording).



The photo and headline are the heavyweights. The picture should feed to the cutline, which should explain the photograph and foreshadow the story. The headline bridges what the reader sees in the photo and will find in the story.

– Daryl Moen, *Words and Pictures*

■ **Grading**

Grades for audio slide show final will consider the following areas:

Content/Story Angle	20 percent
Photography	40 percent
Sound and Design	40 percent

■ **Grading Scale**

93-100	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
67-69	D+
63-66	D
60-62	D-

■ **Weekly schedule/Lab Deadlines**

**Jan. 3 / Intros**

**Th:** Finding the story angle  
 Story Proposals due Jan. 10.  
 Read *Miotke*, Chapters 1 and 2 (for Monday)

**Jan. 7-10 / Digital Photography**

**M:** How the digital camera works  
 Read *Miotke*, Chapter 3 for Tuesday  
**T:** The Exposure Triangle: ISO  
 Read *Miotke*, pages 58-71  
*On Assignment:* ISO and Flash  
**Deadline:** 12 exposures due Wednesday.  
**W:** The Exposure Triangle: Shutter Speed and controlling action  
 Read *Miotke*, pages 72-81  
*On Assignment:* The Action/Interaction Photo  
**Deadline:** 12 exposures due Thursday

**Th:** The Exposure Triangle: Depth of Field  
 Introduction to Photoshop and Bridge.  
 Read *Miotke*, pages 82-91  
*On Assignment:* Creating mood w/ Aperture  
 Review Action/Interaction exposures.  
*Assignment:* Fix problem images  
**Deadline:** 12 exposures due Monday  
 Review of story proposals.  
 Quiz over Chapter 4

**Jan. 14-17 / Photo Composition**

**M:** Elements of Composition. Review Depth of Field Assignment. Read *Miotke*, Chapter 6  
*Assignment:* Fix DOF images in Photoshop

**T:** More about Photo Composition.  
*Assignment:* Composition Essay due Wednesday.  
 Return story proposals. Finding visual clues within the story angle. Discuss the photo essay.  
*Assignment:* List 20 possible photo angles from story proposal. **Deadline:** Thursday

**W:** Review of Photoshop steps regarding levels and curves, plus sharpening.  
 “Sound in the Story” handout and discussion.  
 Introduction to Audacity.  
*Assignment:* Take home quiz over audio handout due Monday.  
*Assignment:* “Row Your Boat” audio mix due by end of class Thursday.  
 Return photo angle proposals and discuss.

**Th:** More about Audacity, sound editing and recording. Getting the good interview “A Roll” and ambient sound “B Roll.”

**Jan. 21-24 / Layering of Sound**

**M:** Introduction to Soundslides. Selecting “best” photos and plugging “gaps” created by audio timeline.  
 See Old Man Green and other audio slide shows.  
**T:** More lab work with Audacity and Soundslides. How to prepare images for slideshow. How to finalize the show.  
**W:** Production Day. Timing the slideshow.  
**Th: Final Presentations.**

.....“.....

The addition of audio should then take the picture and the caption to yet another level, the fourth effect of multimedia, where the image, text and audio work together to create an experience that none other could produce individually.

– Brian Storm, president, Media Storm

■ Weekly schedule/Lab Deadlines



Things To Know About The D70/D50

- The color LCD on the back of the camera is exposed and quite vulnerable to scratching. If you lose the protective cover, let me know.
  - The CCD tends to collect dust. Don't take the lens off the camera for any reason. If caught in the rain, wrap it or return the camera to the bag.
  - Though the “build quality” of the D70 is good, it is an all-plastic camera. **Always** slip the camera strap around your neck.
-