



Above: After each New York Giants football game, the Asbury Park Press posts a gallery of game photos on its Web site, app.com. There's only room to print a few images in a newspaper, but online galleries offer limitless space for photographers to post numerous images from every event they cover.

Incorporating multimedia

Text + photos + audio + video + graphics = multimedia.

Suppose you're producing a profile of Ludwig van Gogh, the brilliant painter/composer. Which medium, or *media*, would best tell the story? To show his paintings, you'd use photos. To play his music, you'd provide audio recordings. To show him at work — painting or playing piano — you'd use video. And to explain the impact of his artistry, you'd use text.

To create a multi-dimensional profile, then, you'd need *multimedia*. And though the term sounds intimidating, it simply means combining the tools you're already familiar with — text, photos, audio, video and graphics — to communicate information as effectively as possible.

PHOTOS

Photographs add action, emotion and authenticity to stories in ways that text can't. And nowadays almost anyone can be a photojournalist, whether you're a staffer with a digital camera or an ordinary citizen with a cell phone.

GOOD: Just a single photo can add information *and* visual appeal to any story, even if it's just a thumbnail that enlarges when clicked. You can also turn a photo into an interactive graphic with clickable "hot spots" that produce pop-up factoids. And how about stitching together a 360-degree panorama of a special event?

BETTER: A *gallery* is an assortment of photos organized by topic — usually thumbnails, arranged in rows, that users can browse, select and view in any order.

BEST: A *slide show* is an organized sequence of images, often with audio narration, music or natural sound. ▼ Slide shows require more time and skill to produce than galleries and usually tell stories in a linear way. Users simply hit **Play** and watch the show as images advance automatically.



Click to enlarge

AUDIO

As any iTunes customer knows, downloading audio is extremely easy to do. Which is why online news sites should enhance their coverage with audio as often as possible.

GOOD: Provide a simple audio clip anytime *sound* plays an integral part in a story — a dramatic or controversial excerpt from a speech or interview, for instance. And whenever you cover musicians or comedians, include a sample of what they do. (If uploading audio is too difficult, you can always link to an external site that's posted the audio.)



Click Play ▶ to listen to this audio clip

BETTER: Learn to produce your own audio so you can add narration, music and natural sound to slideshows and videos. ▼

BEST: Create a *podcast*, which is really just a radio version of a story — downloadable anytime, for users who'd rather listen than read. Basic podcasts provide just narration from a reporter or the dialogue of an interview; more elaborate productions feature music, sound effects and larger casts.

VIDEO

It's nearly as easy to produce Web-quality video as it is to shoot still photographs. In fact, on many assignments, photojournalists routinely shoot both video *and* photos. Like photos, videos can supplement text or run independently — often in galleries.



GOOD: If shooting your own video is problematic, you can link to video on other Web sites: YouTube, Facebook, TV network news sites, etc. But if you must, posting your own raw, unedited video is OK, *especially* for breaking news or live webcasts.

BETTER: As your skill improves, you'll want to routinely provide video for **news events** (speeches, sports, protests, parades); **performances** (concerts, plays, celebrations); and **interviews**.

BEST: Print reporters often regard video as just a supplement to their text-based stories, but why not produce video documentaries instead? ▼ Combining audio narrative with strong images can make video packages more powerful than written text.

GRAPHICS

Informational graphics (or *infographics*) use illustrations — maps, charts, diagrams, timelines — to present data in a visual, accessible way.

GOOD: Just a single chart or graph can add information *and* visual appeal to a story, even if it's just a thumbnail that enlarges when clicked.

BETTER: Google mash-up maps are an effective, interactive and relatively easy way to add layers of useful local information to stories.

BEST: Use Flash software to produce animated slideshows like the example at right, part of an interactive tutorial on eye surgery. Flash cartoons are really just a series of frames that create the illusion of motion; by adding captions or narration, you can create multimedia packages that supplement text — or function independently.

