



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

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.



First Lady visits local schoolchildren

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.

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.)

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.



Click Play to listen to this audio clip

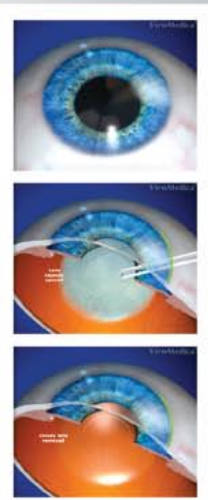
GRAPHICS

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.



ANATOMY OF A MULTIMEDIA PACKAGE: "GOING DOWN THE CROOKED ROAD"

In 2005, *The Roanoke Times* produced "Going Down the Crooked Road," which ran as a six-part series in the newspaper and as a multimedia package on roanoke.com. Music writer Ralph Berrier Jr., photographer Kyle Green and multimedia editor Seth Gitner traveled Virginia's Heritage Music Trail for months researching and recording this celebration of mountain music.

The design of these pages is simple and effective. For each town in the series, the story runs in one wide leg against a tan screen. In this dark brown rail you'll find links:

Profiles combine photos and bio boxes to introduce you to local musicians in each of the six regions.

Slide shows provide photos and captions that document the musicians, musical instruments and colorful characters in each town along the trail.

Road maps offer directions for driving to each town on the trail and pinpoint selected highlights. (These maps are printer-friendly, too.)

Recipes capture the local flavor of each region. Dishes include cornbread salad, squash casserole and white grape juice cake.

Podcasts provide additional audio commentary by Berrier, who wrote the series.

Side trips guide you to festivals, museums and offbeat highlights along the Heritage Music Trail. (They tell you which radio stations play the best bluegrass music, too.)

"Going Down the Crooked Road" can be viewed at: www.roanoke.com/multimedia/crooked

To visit each page from this six-part series, just click the town's name on the map at left — or click the name of the town in the row below.

THIS LINK takes you to the site's multimedia menu, which includes options such as these:



Videos capture the sights and sounds as you drive from town to town, including music from this concert by bluegrass legend Ralph Stanley.



Photo slide shows focus on the land, the life, the musicians and ordinary folks along the way.



Instrument guides discuss and demonstrate dobros, banjos, mandolins, guitars, fiddles, etc.



Music mixer plays a song, then lets you raise and lower the volume of each instrument.