



Sound

in the

Story

at Visual Edge '03
The Poynter Institute for Media Studies

Balancing the tools in new-media journalism

Don't Tell Me.
Show Me.

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You tell a compelling,
worthy story with words
and sounds the same way
you tell it with images.
You capture emotion.
You get close to your subject.
You approach things
from a new angle
with a curious mind
and a sensitive heart.

Sound bites bite.

A panda bear has just finished his meal at a brew pub, and the bartender notices him signaling the waiter for his check. He watches as the waiter saunters over with the bill and slides it onto the panda's table with a mint and a smile. Just as smoothly, the panda pulls out a revolver and shoots the waiter point-blank. The bartender is shocked to see the panda get out of his chair, remove his napkin, and jauntily leave the restaurant. The bartender runs out after the bear, and stops him in the street.

"You shot the waiter!" screams the bartender.

"Yes, I know." replies the panda.

"Who the hell do you think you are?" the bartender shrieks.

"I'm a panda."

"I can see you're a panda, but what the hell did you think you were doing? You came into my pub, ate a whole meal and then shot that man and walked off like it was nothing! You can't get away with that!"

"Oh yes, I can," says the panda.

"What are you talking about?" gasps the bartender.

"I'm a panda. We're allowed."

The bartender stands there, dumbfounded.

"Really," insists the panda. "Go look it up in the dictionary if you don't believe me."

The bartender goes back to the pub, pulls a dictionary out from under the bar and looks up the word "panda."

The definition reads: "Panda: Black and white bear native to China. Eats shoots and leaves."

People like to say that our attention spans are getting shorter and that no one will listen to anything longer than 15 seconds, a sound bite. Maybe it's not so much that our attention span is shrinking – maybe it's that we have to shuffle through more "content" in our lives than ever before. We have less time to spend evaluating what we see and hear as we search for something worthy of our attention.

When's the last time you walked away from a good joke? If you're hooked, you'll wait for the punchline.

Audio (and video) is different from print and photography in that it is *linear*, not spatial. But each aspires to convey meaning, to impart drama. Photography is timeless because it captures one moment out of many – one instant, forever. 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 timeline, one that you have defined.

When photography, video and audio are crafted to work well together, 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.

But you have to go where you've never gone before.

Use the Force.

If you're a good writer, photographer or videographer, you already have what it takes to tell your stories in other media. Your primary tools are the same as your targets: the mind and heart. Add to those the power of persistence, the passion, the patience; the ability to observe and to analyze; a sense of drama and of moment. You're probably already aware that each experience has different dimensions, and that each story may be told in different ways, some better than others. Some stories are made for film, some are ideal for audio. Some deserve the attention of both. You probably have thought to yourself on occasion, "I wish our readers could hear what this woman sounds like. She's as wrinkled as the bark on a tree, but her voice is like silk." Or, "I could write a caption to describe this picture, but it would mean a lot more if the person could tell their own story in their own words and with their own voice."

You're already thinking about audio, and that it can be a very natural extension of what you are doing. Yes, even if you are shy. If you are able to get close enough to people to make good pictures and build a good text story, they are already talking to you, one way or another. You can help them be heard.

This handout also intends to show you some ideas about audio and some tips for going out and doing it. You probably already have some projects in mind.

"It's all been said before."

You approach an audio story just like any other – looking for something different, a new angle. When Shakespeare penned his plays, he wasn't breaking any new ground with his plots. Drama throughout the history of man has played variations on the human themes of love, greed, betrayal and ambition. It's the way the Bard told the story that compels us even to this day. "The play's the thing."

Audio works when it touches our hearts, tickles our imagination, intrigues our minds. Yes, it's the same for writing, filmmaking and photography. But it's important to keep this in mind: to avoid the trap of thinking that just because audio is new to you, you don't have to be creative right from the start. Even before you learned how to fine-tune your exposures, you were developing your eye. Do that with audio. Do that with both ears, and everything in between.

A story is an issue that is expressed in human events. Take a common issue, a familiar event and come at it from a new and meaningful way.

Lonely old people

A wire service reports a story about a shortage of centers for the elderly in Newfoundland. The initial story runs as a basic list of facts based on a government report. The flow of numbers leaves the listener or reader far from the heart of the story, far away from the real issues and real people.

But what is the story really about? Lonely old people, not numbers in a spreadsheet. In this case, the story was parsed off to a CBC reporter/commentator who created a touching radio op-ed piece based on a hand-written letter full of irony and imagery from a lonely old man. The rote facts (the exact numbers of overcrowding, roster of closings, etc.) were reported not as isolated sums, but woven into the story in a memorable and meaningful way.

If you can show how an issue touches someone's life, you can make a difference to the listener.

Heart in the trees

A radio reporter is covering the inordinate failure of family farms. He gets the standard story in the can, the same interviews on tape as everyone else who had done the story. It's a long-term issue, and it seems everyone has done the expected story. But just as he leaves the farm – with much of the stereotypical story template in his mind – he notices a few remaining oak trees that once shaded the farmer's long driveway. The reporter goes back to the farmer and proceeds to find the heart of the story. The reporter learns that the farmer had been cutting down his grandfather's majestic stand of old oak trees for heating wood, just to survive the winter. As if by magic, the reporter creates a poignant story, based on the imagery of those giant oak trees, the metaphorical pillars of family, strength and fortitude. The specific facts necessary to set up the issue – how many farms were failing and why – were loaded in the story introduction

by the host (and could be done as a sidebar), as a caption would give context to the emotion captured in a photo.

The issue may be obvious, but don't assume the story is.

Memorial tears

How do you cover, in a feature, Memorial Day? Yet another Memorial Day. And there will be yet another Memorial Day next year. At a story conference, editors come up with various word associations for the topic using a mental survey technique. For some reason, several people keep finding the word "mother" in their lists. Then someone else says she knows an elderly woman who goes to the same Memorial Day ceremony each year. The woman had lost her son in the war. Covering the event, the CBC radio reporter shows up and puts a wireless microphone on the woman. Moments after a brief conversation, she pardons herself, walks away and proceeds to her son's grave. There she begins to talk to him. How many stories actually bring tears to listeners' eyes? This one did.

Get close. Audio is an intimate medium. Not all your subjects will trust you with their feelings right away – you have to earn that privilege.

Make my day.

Think of your story as a candidate for dinner conversation. Of course your story is about something important, but would you share it with a friend with the same enthusiasm as that new joke you heard?

Every story is different. When you approach each one, don't jump to conclusions. Observe, analyze, listen and feel. Don't grab at the obvious metaphor any faster than you would snap the cliched shot or write the tired lead. Let things unfold. Be patient. Be vulnerable to failure. Be open. Chances are, the story isn't what you thought it was. Chances are, it's more — and better.

The following pages deal with techniques: with sound gathering, writing, editing and narrating. First though, are a few mantras that apply to all of these processes. Repeat them often as you work. They will guide you on your journey.

Don't tell me. Show me.

Create a virtual reality for your listener. Make them feel like they're wherever you are, not reading the postcard you sent. Make your experience as first-hand as possible by letting your audience draw its own conclusions. Why say "she was happy" when you can show it with her laughter? If at all possible, let your subject communicate the story in their own words, like the mother at her son's grave on Memorial Day. If not, let your own language be evocative. Instead of "it was very hot" or "it was 102 degrees in the shade," observe the effects of the heat: "He shifted from one foot to another to keep his rubber sandals from melting to the pavement."

Paint a picture with sounds as well as words, by including what you hear on location. A simple rooster crow can indicate a place, a time and a mood. The "show me" state requires you to be keenly observant with all your senses. It challenges you to be a little more poetic about whatever comes your way.

If you are ever in doubt about how to achieve this state, play the "your momma" game. Do you remember those one-liners that start out "Your momma is so ___"? "Your momma is so stingy, she pinches pennies in half." Or "Your momma is so messy that when she called for a Rug Doctor, they sent the Rug Priest!" A person's actions speak louder than words, and those actions turn the standard assignment into a story worth sharing at the dinner table.

Listen.

Develop your ear. Once you begin to work in sound, you'll become aware of a new side to every experience. Listen to your subjects, listen to your environment, listen to good radio (e.g. National Public Radio) and listen to yourself.

You already know good audio when you hear it. You just have to take it apart and figure out how it's made.

Be interested, be organized, be authentic

If you're not enthused about your story, why should anyone else care about it? Even the most mundane topic can have a human, and at times, even humorous aspect if you dig around for it.

Be prepared before you record. Learn enough about the issue or the person before an interview, prepare thoughtful questions, and remember to keep thinking during the interview. As you learn more, you'll discover new questions, and by listening carefully, you may find a whole new angle to your story. Be prepared for this possibility and don't be afraid to pursue it.

Make sure your gear is in order, that you have enough supplies and that you're ready for whatever conditions may await you. You may only get once chance to get your audio.

Take good notes along with your audio. Not everything is audible and the impressions of your other senses are a vital part of your story. Some method of transcribing or logging your audio after the fact is important as well. Having accurate knowledge of what you've got will sharpen your focus as you write and edit.

Remember that there are ethics involved in audio reporting that can be more subtle than those in photography. You crop a picture, but only from the sides. In audio reporting, you often have to take pieces out of the middle of sentences, and you almost always have to add sounds in to recreate the experience of a situation. This means you are responsible for assembling recorded segments of reality into some semblance of reality as you knew it firsthand. To give you an idea of the level of responsibility involved here, there is only one small word between Richard M. Nixon saying "I am not a crook" and saying that he is. (Did you know that National Public Radio reporters are not allowed to "clean up" the President of the U.S.? His words must be used without internal edits.)

Readers may not believe what they read in the paper, but listeners tend to think of audio as "photographic proof" of what a person said. They don't even think about what skillful editing may have done, which gives the audio reporter even more power. Take care to be accurate in your facts and in your understandings. It often helps if you can paraphrase a person's statements to them after they speak, or use a metaphor and see if they agree.

Only use sounds gathered on site. People will always assume that what they're hearing is what you heard when you were there. If you really need to use a sound that came from somewhere else, be sure to identify it as such. A story about a Midwestern airport would be untruthful if you used airplane sounds recorded in Denver.

Don't put words in people's mouths. During an interview, you can ask someone to repeat something and speak in a full sentence, but remember that your job is to elicit a story, not build one based on your own preconceived notions.

Don't stage events. When you are recording "wild sound," you are essentially getting the audio equivalent of candid photography. You can't pose someone or something without losing the authenticity. There are lines, of course – if you are doing a story about a fire engine, you can ask the fireman to ring the bell (though it would be far better to record a fire run). However, if your tape runs out just as the demonstrators begin their chant, you would be manipulating the event if you asked them to chant again for your behalf. You had better just hope they chant again later, though they probably will as soon as they see your microphone. People are like that.

Know the difference between a sound effect and a sound event.

Bracket

Just like in photography, you are dealing with a technical beast, so cover your bases. Get lots of ambience, all the relevant sound you can (from near and from far away, if the quality of the sound varies with your position), do multiple takes if you're not sure about your recording levels.

But more than that, look at your story from different perspectives and don't be afraid to explore an interesting little avenue that turns up along the way. "This American Life" on public radio is a great example of the audio path less taken.

Get Close

Make sure your microphone is near the sound, get familiar with your topic and take the time to build a rapport with your interview subjects. You will find that trust is one of the best elements of a great story. Be respectful of that trust, from the interview to the edit. Let people think, allow them to feel. Know that it may take many sessions before a subject will allow themselves to really open up.

This is one area in which photography and audio work especially well together. Both are intimate media, and can be used interchangeably to assist in access. When a photographer spends the time talking to a subject, the subject is less intimidated by the camera because they are communicating with the photographer and establishing a relationship. This helps in creating pictures that are more meaningful, and provides a basis of trust for audio interviews.

Photojournalists often encounter subjects who freeze up for the camera or are acutely conscious of being photographed, even in a setting natural to them. A simple request can put them at ease, such as "Could you show me what you do and describe it to me?" This dual task distracts the subject from their nervousness (and tendency to pose) and establishes a rapport with the journalist. As an opener, it can also yield valuable background material. Many photographers do this instinctively. When they show their portrait portfolios, they describe their subjects in detail: their names, their jobs, their situation – their story.

Technique

Once you've gotten your mind around your story and your heart in it, you need to consider the logistical components of your project:

1. The interview
2. Ambience
3. Natural sounds
4. The Voice-over
5. Supplemental music

The interview.

For a photographer — and even the seasoned writer — the formal on-tape interview can be daunting at first. Many shooters say that they are not verbal people. And many writers could revisit the tips for effective interviewing. Many journalists, under the daily deadline pressure, forget that the main quality needed for a good interview is skill at listening, not talking. Again, many photographers start a story on their subjects in the course of taking their pictures. Interviewing for audio just takes it from there to a new level.

Technically, you want to interview your subject in as quiet an environment as you can. This makes it much easier to edit your interview later and is less distracting to the listener. Take them to an empty office, sit them in a car if you have to. Before you record your interview, listen carefully to the silence around you and make sure there's not a radio in the background or a fan or an electric motor that you didn't notice before. (Hint: if you unplug the noisy refrigerator in the corner, be sure to plug it in again before you leave.)

Get your microphone as close to your subject as you can, ideally about four inches (the width of your fist) from their mouth. Keep it in roughly the same place throughout the interview, and try to keep it as steady as possible. If you move too much, the microphone may pick up the sounds of your motion or your hands rubbing on the mic, known as "handling noise." Use a stand or a boom if possible. Your subject may balk at having the microphone so near. Your job is to put them at ease. You do this by looking them in the eye and showing them with your face that you are attentive. Don't stare at the meters on your recording gear and fiddle with stuff any more than necessary. If you captivate our subject with your interest and, if appropriate, your empathy, they will forget the microphone is there, even if it's one of those big fuzzy ones. (Except of course, if your subject is a kid, in which case anything big and fuzzy is going to be irresistible. Good luck trying to keep them off your fuzzy mic. In some cases, it's wiser to put eyes and a mouth on a mic where kids are concerned – they would rather talk to it than you. But don't do a nose. Kids just have to bop noses.)

Wear headphones so you can hear what your recorder is hearing. It hears a lot less selectively than you do.

Don't let your subject hold the microphone. Not only will it make them self-conscious, they will not have headphones and will not be aware of things like handling noise. Also, some subjects will feel more in control of the interview if they have the microphone; it's your job to direct the questions.

Listen carefully as your subject talks. Listen not only to the content of what he or she is saying, but the quality of sound and how their words may or may not work for your story. For instance, a car with a nuclear-powered bass may go by and drown them out, or they may answer your question with a partial sentence. If you think it's important, wait for the subject to pause and ask them if they could repeat their statement because of the outside distraction, or rephrase that thought as a complete sentence. If you're shy, begin by saying something like "Excuse me, that was really interesting. Could you rephrase that as a complete thought so it's easier for people to understand?"

If your subject is new to being interviewed and nervous, show them that you are interested in their topic. You can assure them that your goal is to help them communicate well. Tell them that they are free to stop and start over if they get tongue-tied. Usually, if you are engaging enough, they will forget all about the interview and just be themselves.

If your subject is confrontational or used to "handling" the media, your task is different. You may need to work to get direct answers to your questions. You will need to be especially focused.

Interviewing notes

As a result of socialization, we ask the questions that suppress 60 to 70% of the information we're looking for. Don't let your personal preconceived notions frame your subject's answers. Listen.

A little conversational socialization can help put your subject at ease, but remember that your job is to feature their thoughts and words, not yours.

Some 5-year olds come up with cool questions because they see the world with fresh eyes and aren't afraid to ask what's on their minds.

Sounding tough, mic-in-the-face gets nothing. A subject braces more the harder you push.

Get the contract, setting up the interview to ask the tough questions in a fair way (a mutual agreement about the content of the interview).

Get it on tape. Keep rolling.

Don't let questions be passed up the food chain — if the person is capable of answering, don't let them pass you off to a public relations specialist. The real action is in the trenches.

What do you really want to know? Ask.

Avoid the inverse law of laziness: When the question is tougher and longer than the answer. (We've all heard the MIRV'd missile attack of multiple-part questions at press conferences. Listen carefully next time and you'll note that the interviewee rarely answers more than one or two parts.)

Nod and use body language to uphold your part of the conversation (when the other person's talking on tape); Don't interrupt (unless the interview is taking a tailspin).

Don't say "uh, huh" or "hmmm" — avoid saying anything that will be hard to edit out later; nod acknowledgment instead.

Phrase your questions so they can be answered as a complete thought.

"Describe for me..."

"Give me a sense of..."

A statement of request — "Could you tell me why..." — gets a more complete response than a question that gets a partial sentence answer or a yes or no. You want your subject to make the pithy analogy — not you.

Prepare! Remember that you represent the average person when you do an interview. But that doesn't mean your questions should be average. Proper preparation will allow you to see deep enough into a subject to find more to enrich the listener and further the story. Depth is valuable. Don't confuse simplicity with laziness. We've all seen the shallow questions some reporters (including ourselves) use when they don't know diddly about a story, say, a performance by a drumming ensemble: "So, what are you doing here?" Most likely, the subject will describe the obvious. But a little more knowledge about the topic might yield a more interesting response: "Could you talk to me about rhythm as the basis of music?" or "In my experience, there's usually one one drummer in a group of musicians. Since a beat seems like such a personal rhythm, how do you all get in sync while still retaining your own artistry?" If you're knowledgeable and sincere, chances are our subject will appreciate your interest and warm to the subject even more. They may even start their answer with "That's a good question!" or "Whoah, heavy! I never thought of it that way before, but you know what I think ..." A reporter loves to hear things like this because it means that your subject is excited about sharing ideas and may be about to blossom forth with something totally new and fascinating.

Just like at a party, people gravitate toward the interesting guests, and you can bet those are the ones with the good stories, the way with words, the clever comeback or witty remarks. If you can help it, interview people who, one way or another, grab your attention by what they have to say or how they say it. This does not mean only talking to people who should write for *The New Yorker*. It does mean trying to avoid people who already know what they want you (and the rest of the world) to hear. These are usually people who are paid to represent something, such as PR people, who are notorious for spouting press releases. If your story is about a new make

of car, beware the auto PR person who has the market-tested slogan and the corporate jargon. Find somebody who has a fresh approach: the engineer who is really geeked on making the car's design come to life, or the test car driver or the trucker who hauls the clay prototype in a refrigerated compartment under a cover sealed for secrecy. If you have to talk to a "hired mouth," try to jostle them out of their rut by getting in touch with their passion for the subject. Ask them about themselves, how they got interested in the topic at hand. Get them off balance so they become real people again, not mouthpieces. This is not easy, but it can be a great source of satisfaction if you don't let yourself be intimidated.

By the same token, don't write people off just because they seem introverted, undereducated, over-educated, opinionated, crazy, or any other convenient excuse you may have for not doing your best. You are an explorer, and there are awesome uncharted territories within the human heart. You will be amazed at what you can find, but you have to dare to go there, and then you have to have the stamina and faith to make the journey.

Interview stages: Development, pursuit, mop-up

Development

usually off tape and somewhat informal

Research the subject so you have a basis for intelligent conversation and thoughtful questions.

Pre-interview your subject, even by phone before in person. Make sure they are someone who is a good talker and can answer your questions in a linear form. If they aren't, use your discussion for valuable research and possible leads to other potential subjects. It's sometimes hard to "pass" on an interview subject, because you don't want to hurt their feelings. Still, it's not kind to waste everybody's time (including the audience's) with a drab or confusing interview. So before you commit to interview a person, find out from others if that person is a good candidate. Better yet, talk to the person with the understanding that you are gathering information. Ask them about their background in the topic and a couple other general questions related to the issue at hand. Then if they seem a good bet, ask if you can interview them on tape, and proceed with these other points.

Get to the heart of what you want to talk about.

Get a "contract," an understanding of what you're going to talk about. (Especially for live interviews.)

Exploration of the issue/story.

Background — what's it about.

Definition, relevance.

Rapport.

Get the facts first (phone numbers, name spelling, pronunciations, details, etc.).

** Try not to go into too much depth or use your most thought-provoking questions at this stage in order to keep them fresh for the interview. You want your subject's answers to be well thought, but spontaneous. You'd be amazed at how much vitality the working brain can add to the speaking voice, and how much genuine emotion can come across from the unguarded heart when it is summoned forth with respect.

Pursuit

on tape

Here's where you start by asking your subject to state their name and title and what they do (good for your reference and it will help you set your recording levels). Then you try a couple of your warm-up questions – the more general ones, to help you and your subject get a feel for things. After that, it depends. You will probably consult your list of prepared questions, asking them in what ever order feels right. You may find that by listening to your subject, you have a number of new questions. Your subject may answer questions you haven't asked or, on the other hand, may not have answered questions you did ask. You are rather like a miner for gold, searching for promising veins in the rock and digging deeper when you think you may be on to something.

Sometimes (O.K., rarely) you will discover the interview equivalent of the Gold Rush. At other times, you will be painfully reminded of that date you had when you stared across the table at the other person like a stump. Mostly you will find that people love to talk about (a) themselves and (b) things they love. If you can dig down to the person and the passion, you will have plenty to work with, and something of value.

Mop-Up

usually after the taped interview, in a follow-up conversation or phone call

Here's where you fill in holes in background information, clarify understandings and verify facts and figures (even experts make mistakes when they are talking, so it's nice to verify that they got the finer points straight and that you have put them in the correct context. Just because the pundit said it on tape doesn't mean it's true. You may be able to tell yourself that you were only quoting him or her verbatim, but wrong information does not respect the audience, either.)

Of course, you don't want to let your subjects influence your story. But you do want to represent them accurately and fairly. Stick to the facts in this stage, but if your subject is troubled enough about their earlier revelations or demeanor on tape to bring it up, be respectful and takes note of their concerns. Ultimately, you will have to decide what to use in your story, and how to balance your responsibility to your subject and to your audience. If you are worthy of your subject's trust, you will go far in achieving that equilibrium.

Bad Habits.

Common Bad Habits of Interviewing

1. Silence = Reflection

We're afraid of silence, therefore we don't let people speak. If there's a pause, we anxiously jump to fill it. Silence usually bothers the journalist first, then the interviewer allows the subject out of the question, or distracts them from a thoughtful answer. Watch the eyes, watch for the far-off look that indicates thought or remembering.

Let them get there, give them time to think.

Back to the front

A young reporter was sent on her first national story, a piece about war veterans in Canada. Get an interview with a crusty war vet, she was told. "We'll run it on Remembrance Day as filler." She quietly sat down with her subject and before she had a chance to stumble, she asked one brilliant question of the elderly veteran: "What was the first day like at the front?" Then she patiently sat back and let him answer. She didn't interrupt with her own thoughts (Were you scared? Was it cold? Did you think of your family?). She gave him time to get back there, to traverse the 50 years back to the war. The interview became a classic example of fine reporting, all because she

let him tell the story. Incidentally, the veteran described in emotional, tear-filled detail his first harrowing day on the front.

2. Multi-Barreled Question

Don't ask more than one question in one breath because most of the question will be forgotten. Then it will be extremely difficult to keep the interview on track and, if the subject is a skilled PR person, to reign them back in.

The second half of a double-barreled question is the weakest and not usually what the reporter had in mind to ask... yet, because speech is linear, the latter question is usually what gets the attention.

Gunning for the President

"Mr. President. You are going about selecting your cabinet. What weight do you give to diversity, experience, personal loyalty..."
Question trails off. The President responds vaguely to the diversity issue, but meanders through issues that are in his mind, not those that were central to what the reporter wanted to explore. Get specific.

3. Leading Question

"Do you not think that throwing the garbage in the river is a bad thing?"

A leading question elicits a very narrow response. The leading question becomes a control issue where you're giving all the information and backing someone into either a bland, non-telling answer or a retaliatory response. Avoid summation and guessing — you'll be taking words from or putting words in the mouth of your guest. The leading question often occurs when the reporter is rushing the interview and has a desire for the subject to state the conclusion you've already drawn.

4. Editorializing

"Isn't that irresponsible?"

Better: *"How would you evaluate those actions?"*

Better: *"The President says, 'This is irresponsible.' How do you respond to that?"*

Like a leading question, editorializing leads to a narrow response and a devaluation of the guest's respect for the interviewer. An interviewer who editorializes risks having the interview turned around and thrown back. A clever interviewer can elicit a better response by doing homework and knowing how the issue involved relates to the public, government, etc. The listeners are smarter than we give them credit — they can make the judgment call from what the guest says.

5. Putting an Assumption on a Question

"We're talking about the need for..., isn't it a good time to start?"

The guest is dealing with your assumption, not their own. If they fight your assumption, you'll be in the editorializing doghouse. Guests with media experience or training are dreaming of these types of questions so they can turn the interview to their favor.

6. Trigger Word Question

A negative word gets a negative response. Careful with "hot" words, they'll anger people. Like "are you *frustrated*?" Or, "Do you believe doctors are being *greedy* by asking for the concessions?"

7. Biased Word

How have you enjoyed the last few days?

Better: *What do you think about the last few days?*

A Stern response

The feature story of the day is that Isaac Stern continued to conduct a concert in Israel during a SCUD bombing. The host/interviewer on live radio leads his question with “This might go down as one of the most bizarre events...” Stern, a man of culture and international respect has to deal with “bizarre” rather than an earnest query. The question might have been: “What your thoughts when you looked at that sea of faces in the audience?” Not: Were you frustrated? Was it bizarre? It must have been a moving event.... Thrown by the word bizarre, Stern was reluctant to share his thoughts with the host and stymied him on live radio.

8. Question That Goes On Too Long

A huge rambling introduction leads the interviewee to take advantage of the situation or simply be befuddled. It’s a case of the interviewer trying to show off knowledge, but it’s bad technique — and not very enlightening. Don’t try to inform the audience with your question. If the guest is confused, he/she will ask you to rephrase the question. Rambling questions show a lack of focus and research. Listen as you watch local and national news programs and the commonality of this ramble becomes painfully apparent.

9. Either-Or Question

Is it this or is it that?

Don’t do the “either-or” thing. There maybe another option you haven’t thought of.

Other Interviewing Notes That Don’t Fit Anywhere Else

- Jolt questions only look good and sound tough on TV. Guests stand hard against these and rarely provide any answers.
- If you don’t understand, ask “What do you mean by that?” If clarification is necessary, ask a better-directed question.
- “How do you feel” is misused and often thrown as a blanket question without context. Use it wisely and sparingly.
- Set up the “What do you think?” or “How do you feel?” with a place-setter like “When you were....” We are asking them to tell a story.
- Listen and think. Have your “agenda” questions, but be ready to foray into unknown territory. Be an active listener.
- If you need to apply time restraints, don’t be afraid to say, “Could you describe, in a minute or so....” Or simply, “Please tell me briefly....”
- Use body language to reassure them you’re listening
- Be aware that subjects who are often interviewed have a pre-conceived notion of what the media likes to hear. If your questions are focused, researched, and demonstrate a knowledge and respect, they will open up with more thoughtful, less “press release” answers.
- Don’t be hesitant to remind your subject about the requirements of audio journalism — that it’s good to respond with a complete sentence with pauses between thoughts, and that if they make a mistake, they can start again. Keep them at ease, just like building rapport with a camera or notebook.
- Let the subject finish their thought
- Break the rules. These are guidelines, but sometimes the blunt “yes or no” question is the only way to nail the story. Push these rules, but do it for a reason.
- There are a lot of things to remember, so don’t beat yourself up if you blow a question or two – every body does. But if you learn to listen to yourself as closely as you do to your subject, you will be able to recover from your mistakes before the interview is over. And in time, you’ll get used to phrasing things in the right way and watching and listening for the little clues for success. There is no real formula, any more than there is one right way to ask a person for a date or a boss for a raise.

Sample Questions

Ask: Who, What, Why, When, Where, How

Why?

What happened?

Then what happened?

Then what happened? (II)

What did you see?

What went through your mind?

What would you say to someone who...?

What did that tell you?

Why did you care about that?

How did/would you respond (to something)?

What makes you care about that?

Why was that important?

What picture remains most vivid?

Imagine you're back at (the scene), how did you feel?

What did you see?

Describe the scene.

What did it smell like?

What stands out the most?

What are the consequences of...?

What's the (best, worst) possible scenario?

What do you fear?

How did/does that affect you?

How did you deal with that?

How do you know?

How does that make you feel?

What went through your mind?

What did he/she/they say?

What were the options?

How would you describe that?

Ambient Sound

This is your baselight – the continuous sounds that make for your background. Record at least a minute of ambience in each location you visit, including those in which you interview. A good idea is to do this before the interview as it will make you aware of any potential noise hazards before they ruin your audio.

Ambient sound is valuable for setting a scene when it's interesting, and it's useful for editing purposes even when it's not. Even a room that seems silent has its own natural sound, or "room noise" and if you were to edit portions of an interview recorded in one room with a voice track recorded in a studio, the difference in the background sound would be noticeable enough to be distracting. But if you ran the ambient sound from the noisier room almost imperceptibly underneath all the audio, it would help to blend the elements and keep the attention on the story.

Another prime use for room noise is for inserting space in an edited interview. Say your subject's chair squeaked loudly while he was talking. Fortunately for you, the squeak didn't interfere with his words. Yet you want to get rid of that squeak because it detracts from the subject's thoughts. However, if you just edit the squeak out, the words on either side of it are too close together - they sound strange. You need to add a little pause in between to compensate for the time removed when you lifted the squeak, so you grab a little ambience to restore balance.

Ambience is easy to forget when you're concentrating on getting a story. But for many reasons, you'll be glad you got it.

Natural Sound and Ethics

These are the audio equivalents of highlights, the “sound effects” that you gather on-site to establish a sense of presence for your piece. It's a good idea to grab these types of sounds wherever you find them: the sound of footsteps as your subject walks in the snow, the ship's bell as it enters port, the cow mooing, the helicopter landing, the wind blowing. As you assemble your audio piece, you will mix in these discreet sounds to add flavor.

While ambient sounds can include these types of things, the focus of getting these other sounds is that they are specific events you can use to help illustrate your story. Ambience is general background sound and the sound effect often takes the foreground. For example, you record your subject pruning trees in March. You get the ambient sounds of the outdoors, but you also record the close-up sounds of his footsteps as he walks in the snow and his clippers as he prunes. You add these sounds in to your story the same way you would burn in areas on a print – to bring out the detail. In the final mix, you hear the wind blowing and then you hear clearly what would otherwise be lost: the fact that this person is tromping through the snow and snipping branches. Sure, you could simply tell your listeners, but why do that when they can hear it for themselves?

Obviously, that's where ethics come in. Your sounds must be authentic. If you're afraid to stick your microphones in the water to get the sound of scuba bubbles, don't substitute a sound effect recording or try blowing bubbles through a straw. If you refer to a particular time or incident in a story, your sounds must be recorded at that time or incident. If you refer to a more general situation, you have the chance to go grab sounds from the story location that may help paint the picture, as long as those sounds occur naturally as they relate to your story. If you're doing a story on dairy farming and you can capture cows mooing, great. But if the cows aren't mooing you shouldn't bribe them.

In a way, using sounds in your story is like bringing a strobe to a shoot. You introduce something that's a little unnatural but which helps to illuminate the subject at hand. You can go overboard with sound effects and end up creating something that never happened. Your goal should be to capture what it honestly felt like to be there.

Supplemental Music

Chosen carefully and used legitimately, music can underscore and enhance the tone of your story, especially longer documentary pieces. However, it is often a poor substitute for good audio reporting, and here's why: A soundtrack (as opposed to music that occurs naturally in a story) is not genuine. It may set a mood, but it doesn't convey true presence. It can be subtext without context, which is why Hollywood uses music to artificially enhance drama. Your drama needs to be real, and should come from the quality of your interview and on-site sound. There are times when a music track is appropriate, such as under narration or as “fill” at the end of a radio piece. But unless your music was recorded on-site, it really doesn't belong in the body of an interview.

Music can be emotionally loaded, but it's also nonspecific. You want your listeners to feel that they are “there.” Besides, unless a radio station with a license is broadcasting that music in the background of your interview, or you have the permission of the composer and performer, you don't have the right to use it prominently in your work. Copyright is a hotly contested issue, especially where the Internet is involved.

Depending on the application, you may wish to check with your legal counsel and review the latest thoughts on “fair use.” Generally, if the music is part of the event (the soundtrack playing in the ballroom), it falls within “fair use” and you're within your rights to use it in the story.

Voice Overs

Voiceover, or narration, is the sound of one voice talking. Well, it could be many voices – if you want a brilliant example, view Ken Burn’s “Civil War.” The voiceover performs like an audio Master of Ceremonies, filling in the blanks, summarizing necessary information, providing context for the other words and sounds. It’s kind of like the headline for the article and the cutline for the photos. (And here’s an example where carefully chosen music enhances the story.)

Ideally, the narrator is you, the reporter, since no one else has the authenticity that you do. You are at the heart of the story-gathering process and you were on the scene.

The voiceover is also the scripted part of the story. After gathering the interview, the sounds and the facts, you figure out what audio is important in telling the story and you knit those pieces together with voice-over in between. VO is a great way to create drama using transitions, descriptions and metaphor. You can use the first-person or the third person, but traditionally, the reporter begins the piece with VO, pops in where necessary and does a wrap-up at the end.

Recording the voiceover is scary to many people. It’s true, it does take practice to find and cultivate your own style. Be nice to yourself. First of all, make sure you write a script that is meant to be read — and heard.

What’s in a Good Script?

A good script is, physically, easy to read. It has larger type, more space between the lines. It is divided into helpful sections. It is marked to indicate pauses or emphasis. It supplies pronunciations.

A good script is well-written for the ear, not the eye. The sentences are shorter and less complex, which may look remedial, but that sounds natural and is easier to follow. Listeners can’t go back and re-read if they get confused. This does not mean you “dumb down” your story. You are simply crafting your work to the demands of oratory, so that your listeners will follow the drama of your piece without a hitch.

Repeat names, not pronouns

Avoid a word which might be confused or misconstrued

Be careful with contractions: “can” and “can’t” sound very alike

Test your script by reading it aloud – does it sound natural? Does it flow well, and is it clear enough that you or another listener can paraphrase it?

Be mindful that the eye glides over words that might trip the tongue, and also consider how words sound when they are spoken together. Words can be music, with their own rhythm, tenor and harmony. Use words of image and action, such as “embedded” instead of “was in.”

A good script is eloquent and evocative without calling attention to itself. It offers seamless transitions from one audio source to the next, from its compelling introduction to its thoughtful closure. A good script is respectful of the story and the storyteller and it is perceptive enough always to dress for the occasion.

There are many, many right ways to write a script. The only wrong way is to give up before you gave it your best.

Recording the Script

Get comfortable. Experiment with various sitting or standing positions, and how to hold or prop up your script. Get used to headphones, or get rid of them if you prefer. If you don't have someone to mind the recording levels for you, don't set them for yourself until you have polished your reading. Your tone of voice will alter between your first read-through and your final preparation.

Remember to stay close to your microphone, but watch out for popping "p"s. (Popping "p"s occur when the plosive breath from a "p" impacts on the microphone and makes a miniature explosive sound.)

Make sure you're recording in a quiet environment. Yes, sometimes the best you will be able to manage is a pile of pillows against the bed in your hotel.

Breathe regularly. When you're nervous, you forget to breathe, and you'll run out of steam as you read.

Read the script a few more times. Think about what you're reading and put yourself in the story. This will help you decide where you need to pause, for effective phrasing, or what you need to emphasize for emotion or clarity. It will also help you pinpoint words that need extra careful pronunciation, especially numbers ("15" and "50" are hard to tell apart).

If you keep stumbling over a word, or a phrase, it may well be that the script is amiss, not you. Change the script.

Use whatever method helps you speak effectively. Some people talk to the photo of a friend. Some prefer to talk to themselves, and others pretend they are speaking on the phone. Often the use of gestures can help in the emoting process. Avoid the monotone — pretend you're telling a story to a friend or your editor. Take your work seriously, but don't take yourself too seriously. You'll get the hang of it.

Again, the goal is to be natural. Pay attention to your pronunciation, listen to your speech with a critical ear, but don't try to be some radio voice. The hardest thing you can try to be is something other than yourself, so don't waste your time.

Editing

You edit your story all along the way. You start by editing out angles as you narrow in on the focus of your piece. You edit when you determine whom to interview and which portions of the interview to use and which sounds tell that story best.

After you've honed in on your recorded components, you write the script that becomes the voice-over, editing it for clarity and content. You record it (many times, if you're like most of us) and put it into your computer as the voice track, along with the other audio elements, each with their specific tracks such as "Interview," "Ambience" and "SFX."

You then do a rough edit of the entire piece for time and quality, removing the parts not essential to the story in a way that respects the subject, the story and the truth (removing a lot of "umms" along the way).

As you polish the piece, you fine-tune your edits and mix the various tracks so that everything is heard in the correct proportions. The voices should be clear and evenly balanced with one another, the ambience subdued, the natural sound effective but not obtrusive.

Make it Natural

Again, authenticity is key. Listeners may not be able to tell you why something sounds wrong, but they will notice it, if only subconsciously.

Have you ever heard a radio commercial that left you feeling a little stressed — even a little breathless? That’s probably because some ad producers have hit upon a new way to cram more talking into less time: they edit out the breaths that announcers take between sentences.

The spaces between sounds can be as important as the sounds themselves. Once you start to edit, you’ll notice how crucial breaths can be, how powerful a pause is. Sometimes you are only a breath away from your goal: an edit that is invisible to the ear.

You will also notice a cadence to the spoken word that varies with each individual. Some people are easy to edit because of the repetitive rhythm and tone of their speech. Others, with more inflection and varied phrasing, can be a real challenge. A person with hiccups is an editor’s nightmare.

Some people are difficult to edit because instead of uttering a concise sentence, they tack back and forth on the way to an idea and it takes reconstructive surgery to piece together a cogent thought. Others are too good to be true: people who speak directly and compellingly, who are sincere and candid at the same time.

There is a craft to editing and mixing sounds as well so that they enhance the story and don’t distract. There is a pacing you will learn, and you will know when the timing and the balance is right. You will become as proficient in the art of editing as you are observant and persistent. You can amaze yourself with your power. Remember who and what you serve.

Evolve.

“Try. Fail. Try again. Fail Harder”

Rule 1

The best way to learn to write is to read and the best way to learn audio is to listen.

Rule 2

Practice is the path to perfection.

Rule 3

Read good stories wherever you may find them.

The *New York Times* and the *New Yorker* are two valuable resources. Rick Bragg writes for the *Times* and has published a memoir, “All Over but the Shoutin’,” that reads well both silently and aloud. He is an author to embrace. “Memoir of a Geisha” is another current example of evocative writing that delivers a real sense of person and place. “Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life” by Anne Lamott is a brilliant foray into the world of words and human experience. She will remind you that part of the process is what we call “noodling,” and she will make you see things you forgot were there. For a taste of what real radio was like (and what it could be) read “The Murrow Boys, Pioneers on the Front Lines of Broadcast Journalism” by Stanley Cloud & Lynne Olson.

Tune to National Public Radio for great examples of the art of audio. You can find your local station on the NPR website at npr.org.

For interviewing, check out “Fresh Air” with Terry Gross and “The Diane Rehm Show”.

For news reporting, “All Things Considered” and “Morning Edition” are great on weekdays, but the longer and more carefully crafted pieces often air on the weekend versions of these programs. “American Radio Works” does superb long-form investigative pieces that can be heard at www.americanradioworks.org

For features, “This American Life” is an eclectic, amazing source for the intriguing, offbeat story. Ira Glass is the host and you will hear that he does a marvelous narration with a voice that isn’t any better than yours. Listen to this program and hear how rules can and should be broken.

For storytelling, listen to the monologues in the last half of the second hour of “A Prairie Home Companion” (produced by Public Radio International). Whoever said that small-town life was boring hasn’t heard host Garrison Keillor talk about Lake Wobegon. He finds drama in everyday existence and winds a yarn so compelling you’ll sit in the car in the driveway to hear it end. It’s hard to believe he does it *without* a script.

For editing, well, that’s a tough one, because good editing isn’t meant to be heard, *per se*.

Some of us credit films with giving us the pacing sense for editing. That’s the inscrutable dramatic tension that helps to make dramas so suspenseful (or humorous). Often it’s not so much what you see as what you don’t see; or how elements are juxtaposed in time. For the former, see the shower scene in Hitchcock’s “Psycho” – for the latter, see the missile sequence in “Austin Powers: The Spy who Shagged Me.”

As you listen to the radio, think about what you’re hearing. Analyze what’s good or bad. Notice the different styles, come up with the questions you’d like to ask the guest on the interview show, evaluate the use of sounds. Be evil and try to spot edits. Make note of the stories that are so good you tell someone about them.

And remember – you can hear those stories again through NPR’s website, npr.org.

As you develop your critical ear, experiment with your own projects. Try these new techniques out on your friends and family — maybe your grandparent or another apropos oral history subject — as you gain confidence in yourself and your gear.

Make friends with the news people at your local public radio station (check npr.org for a list of affiliates). Chances are, they wouldn’t mind showing you the ropes and letting you tag along. They might collaborate with you on some stories. You might even work out a way to combine your skills to do multi-media reporting and involve the local newspaper and/or its web version. When you’ve learned enough about audio, you could become a correspondent – maybe even contribute to an NPR program.

Whether you choose to dive into radio or just use audio to augment your projects, you will be exploring a whole new aspect of your craft – and of yourself. Enjoy.

The Tools.

Recording Equipment

We are at an exciting and rare convergence of affordable audio tools that provide broadcast quality sound when used correctly. Minidisc, flash memory recorders, PDA-based pocket portables, DAT Walkman, even the venerable cassette deck all can serve you well. But no matter the end application, you'll want to gather the highest quality of audio.



PocketRec
PDA-based recorder

Professional Minidisc units like the HHB Portadisc and Marantz PMD-650 can run upwards of \$1,200 for the deck alone. But a Walkman-style Minidisc like the Sony MZB-100 might serve your needs for around \$200. We prefer the Minidiscs because they record on a durable media that is randomly accessible, an important time-saving feature for finding key interview passages. Also, we're enthused by the newest offerings, some of which use the same PC-Cards as professional digital imaging equipment. A true convergence at least in storage.



DATs have been the industry standard, but many radio stations have moved to the Minidisc, flash-memory or hard drive recorders. DAT uses a tape much like video, and is susceptible to dust and wear. DATs are linear and therefore take longer to shuttle through looking for your cuts. Take special care to keep DATs dust-free.

Cassettes are still an option and professional units from Sony and Marantz can sometimes be found for a steal in used audio shops. Cassettes are linear like DAT, but are usually the most simple and durable. Use the highest quality "chrome" cassettes.

No holds barred, Nagra makes a dream recorder, a machine that records on pc-cards that slip into the slot on your laptop. Files can be dragged right into your editing program. Only one NPR reporter we know uses this slick system as the recorder runs in the multiple thousands.

Microphones

A quality microphone is an absolute necessity. Any standard news microphone will work, but some are lighter and smaller than others. Check with your local broadcast supply for their recommendations. For mono recording, we use the Beyer M-58 "Wolf-Blitzer-at-the-White-House" mic. It runs about \$150. Mic cables can be tricky in that they can be wired different ways, which can affect your recordings — you need to get a cable that's wired to the specifications of the recording deck and microphone you're using. Stores like B&H Photo & Video carry specialty cables, and if they don't have what you need they can refer you to a shop that will custom make one for you. You'll probably want your main cable to be about five feet long and made with more robust materials — some people prefer to have a cable that's coiled like the old telephone receiver cord, so it can stretch and contract. It's worth the investment to talk to the experts about what gear you're connecting and order the appropriate cable.

Software

The capabilities of audio software are truly amazing. Even video programs such as Final Cut Pro and Premiere have reasonable audio editing functions, and Final Cut Pro 4.0 ships with Peak DV, comparable to the stalwart SoundEdit. But our favorite is ProTools Free 5.1, and it's a free download from www.digidesign.com. The ProTools software runs on most recent computers and allows up to eight tracks of audio, more than you'll need for all but the most complex news/feature/film project. There are other shareware and expensive programs available, but ProTools is an extremely functional professional standard. And it's free. (ProTools LE runs in MacOSX, but isn't free.)

QuickTime Pro is a handy Rosetta Stone, allowing you to quickly convert audio from CDs and between formats. It's included with Final Cut Pro and is available as a pay-for download. ***For Final Cut Pro users, be aware of the differences between audio settings in FCP and in sound editing programs (FCP uses 48k while ProTools uses 44k).*** There's more on this in the Final Cut manual.

Other Hardware

For the purist audio engineer, Digigram makes a digital audio input card for Mac and PC laptops, although most news applications would hardly notice the additional fidelity. The expensive version of ProTools and other programs can also use special audio cards for desktop machines. Unless you are doing film scores or an album for mastering and mass distribution, no card is necessary. However, Apple has removed the audio-in plug from all but its latest desktops and laptops. In order to get audio into the machine from your Minidisc or DAT, you may need a cable and a USB or FireWire audio adapter or (available from the Apple Store). Audio patch cords can usually be found at Radio Shack — if you're unsure of what you need, bring along your recorder. If you are using a Walkman-style machine, you'll need a stereo miniplug to stereo miniplug cord. If you're using a professional deck, you'll either need a custom XLR-to-stereo-miniplug cord or a common RCA-to-stereo-miniplug cord. Some decks, like the HHB Portadisc, use a simple USB cable to connect to your workstation. The new Mac G5 has an optical audio input.

Audio from Video

As we get closer and closer to the ultimate Swiss Army Knife tool of image and audio gathering, traditional still photographers and audio journalists might consider pulling audio from DV cameras. It's tempting — for not much more than a professional DAT recorder, you can get broadcast-quality digital sound and video. However, be very particular about the features you need, like manual audio level control and external connections for professional quality microphones. In the majority of cases, you'll be disappointed with the audio quality from the on-camera microphone. The Firewire standard is supported by most of the DV cameras and allows direct digital input of the audio and/or video signal into your Firewire-equipped Mac or PC. Video tape is linear, though, and takes time to pull the audio.

Preparing audio for new-media

There are as many recipes for new-media audio as there are gumbo. Flash, the popular online presentation format, makes it easier by offering a range of audio conversion options. Talk to your web team about finding the balance between quality and file size, and consider doing different versions for high- and low-speed connections. For high-bandwidth connections, streaming QuickTime or RealAudio provide viable options to present your hard work. Windows Media Player is pushing to take the lead, but there may be compatibility issues between platforms.

J. Carl Ganter is managing editor of MediaVia. He is a photojournalist, writer and broadcast reporter. His work has appeared in most major magazines, newspapers and on CBS, NBC and NPR. He was audio director, international logistics coordinator and an assignment editor for "24 Hours in Cyberspace," and photographed for the "Day in the Life" book projects. He is a founder of MediaVia, which specializes in journalistic story telling. He has been a contributing photographer to Contact Press Images since 1982 and has been involved in NPPA's Electronic Photojournalism Workshop, Mountain Workshops and has taught Digital Storytelling at the Poynter Institute. He holds a master's degree in magazine writing and investigative journalism from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, and graduated with honors in American Studies from Northwestern. He was a judge for the Best of Photojournalism competition, interactive division.

Eileen E Ganter is senior producer and co-founder of MediaVia. During her 13 years in public radio, Eileen produced, directed and hosted a variety of award-winning radio programs, including the nationally syndicated "Music from Interlochen." She also served on the staff of "24 Hours in Cyberspace" as assistant audio director and as an interviewer, editor, and writer. She has been a coach/instructor at NPPA's Electronic Photojournalism Workshop, the Mountain Workshops and the Poynter Institute. She holds a master's degree in radio and television production from the University of Detroit. With Carl, she recently completed "With These Hands," a documentary in print, radio, video and Internet featuring four Michigan farm families. It can be found at www.wth.mediavia.com. Eileen and Carl have received numerous national and international awards for their reportage.



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The Bibliography.

Editor's Toolbox

A Reference Guide for Beginners and Professionals

By Buck Ryan and Michael O'Donnell

The Editor's Toolbox is a cross between a college textbook and a reference manual for things you learned and forgot. From basic writing skills to copyediting to visual journalism. While it doesn't cover new media, it reinforces the roots.

Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect

By Bill Kovach & Tom Rosenstiel

"Journalism is going through a crisis of conscience, confidence, and purpose. The authors "identify the enduring principles that define journalism as a profession and a calling. This is required reading for every journalist, photographer and citizen.

Bird by Bird

Some Instructions on Writing and Life

By Anne Lamott

Here's a piece that should be on every journalist's bedside table. Lamott gets us back to the heart and soul of writing, from where all good journalism — old and new media — grows.

If Want to Write

A Book About Art, Independence and Spirit

By Brenda Ueland

Write with love and enthusiasm, that's Ueland's message. Carl Sandburg called this book, "The best book ever written about how to write." From good words and good thoughts come good pictures and good stories.

All Over but the Shoutin'

By Rick Bragg

Bragg is a writer's writer, a photojournalist's writer, a writer who paints vivid, evocative pictures. This is a beautifully crafted memoir by the Pulitzer-winning New York Times reporter.

The Murrow Boys

Pioneers on the Front Lines of Broadcast Journalism

By Stanley Cloud & Lynne Olson

"*The Murrow Boys* is the first book to tell the collective story of the talented and spirited correspondents who, under Murrow's direction, formed CBS's pioneering World War II team. They were intellectuals and wordsmiths first, whose astute reporting and analysis were like nothing else on the air."

The Murrow Boys, those pioneering radio journalists, faced incredibly similar circumstances as we do today. They grappled with an entire new medium (TV) and a severe paradigm change in the news business. Their transition from radio to television compares hauntingly with the current shifts in the news world.

National Public Radio Training Catalog

Available from:

National Public Radio, Training (212) 414-2958

635 Massachusetts Ave., NW

Washington, DC 20001-3753

NPR offers a series of excellent training audio tapes and videos covering radio reporting topics, from interviewing to technical skills to project production.

Soundportraits.org

Wow. What amazing work these folks do. Remember hearing Ghetto Life 101 back in 1993 on public radio? If not, even if you did, this is required listening for all-media story tellers. It's the incredible "audio diaries of LeAlan Jones and Lloyd Newman, two young boys living in one of the most notorious public housing projects in America." Listen to the other powerful work archived here.

Americanradioworks.org

Here's another home of radio broadcast journalism at its finest. These are long pieces that carry away your mind, placing you inside a Nicaraguan garment factory or on the march with America's drug war.



Transom.org

Probably the most in-depth website dedicated to the independent radio producer. A must-visit for the beginner and seasoned pro.