

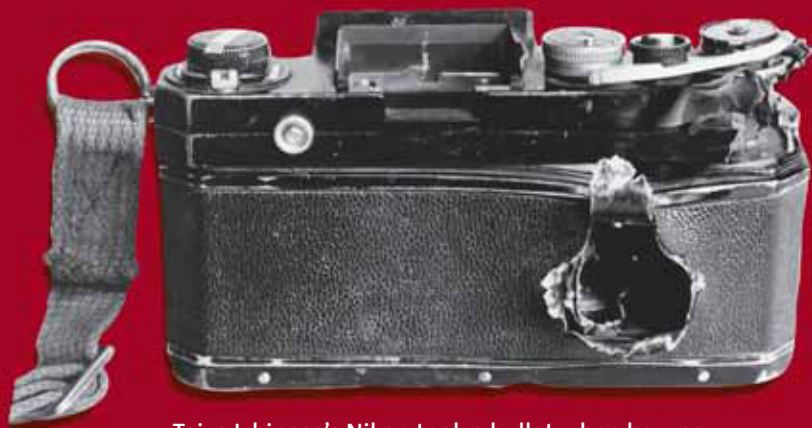
Nieman Reports

THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION FOR JOURNALISM AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

DIGITAL NEWSBOOK

Visual Journalism

Fresh Approaches and New Business Strategies
For the Multimedia Age



Taizo Ichinose's Nikon took a bullet when he was shooting the Vietnam War. Cameras and images change, yet the photojournalist's mission is the same.

**'to promote and elevate
the standards of journalism'**

Agnes Wahl Nieman
the benefactor of the Nieman Foundation

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DIGITAL NEWSBOOK

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Cover: Bullet-torn camera that belonged to photographer Taizo Ichinose who was killed during the Vietnam War, the year after his camera was shot. Photo by Rikio Imajo/The Associated Press. Courtesy of IMMF Foundation.

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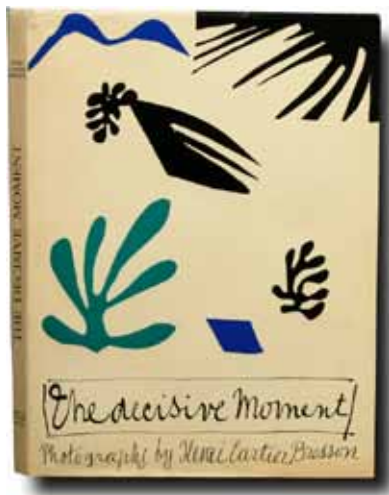
Visual Journalism

Fresh Approaches and New Business Strategies For the Multimedia Age

Context. Layered information. Voice. Movement. Transparency. Photographer as “author.” Subject as “storyteller.” Image as “instigator.”

Words and phrases that even a few years ago were not used to describe the practice of photojournalism surface today with hesitant certainty. Where the digital road is leading those whose livelihood relies on the visual portrayal of our contemporary lives might not be entirely clear. By adapting to technology in shooting their images and in how they publish and distribute their work, photojournalists are constructing roads that are already taking them in new and sometimes unanticipated directions.

It was more than half a century ago when an American publisher placed an abstract painting by Matisse and an unforgettable phrase onto the cover of a portfolio of 126 photographs taken by Henri Cartier-Bresson. That title—“The Decisive Moment”—defined for the last half of the 20th century what photographers set out to capture. That the book’s



French edition carried the words “Images a la Sauvette,” which translated is closer to “images on the run,” didn’t seem to matter nor did the different treatment of images and words; his French edition had captions, while the U.S. one did not.

A few years later, in an interview with The Washington Post, Cartier-Bresson observed: “There is a creative fraction of a second when you are taking a picture. Your eye must see a composition or an expression that life itself offers you, and you must know with intuition when to click the camera. That is the moment the photographer is creative. Oop! The moment! Once you miss it, it is gone forever.”

Today high-definition video cameras can create high-resolution images at a rate of 30 photographs a second, eliminating the need to know when to click the camera. With audio in the mix, the decisive moment yields to the visual voice. An image, still or moving when shot, will inevitably appear on a screen accompanied by the voices of the photographer and subject telling the story. This task was once left for a single immovable image to do.

In this Spring 2010 issue of Nieman Reports, photojournalists explore the new pathways that their images travel in the digital age. Those at photo agencies share ideas about online business strategies designed to give photographers the time and resources their work requires. Few photojournalists receive what David Burnett refers to as “magic phone calls” from photo editors, the ones sending them with pay and expenses on lengthy assignments to distant lands. So the need to find new revenue streams in a marketplace saturated with images rests heavy on their minds.

Photojournalism's destination and audience, once pre-ordained by the news organizations that paid the cost of doing business, are now in flux. Digital possibilities are limitless, but what is now required of photojournalists are an entrepreneurial mindset and a facility with digital tools.

On the Web, photographs now act as gateways to information and context, to stories told by participants and conversations held by viewers. Illustrative of this are two examples,

separated by 10 years. One was created in 1996 as a portrayal of the Bosnian conflict, at a time before most journalists considered the Internet as being about

much more than e-mail; the other, published more recently, provides a glimpse at the Web's potential as subjects in photographs come to life through flipbook-style animation.

In "Bosnia: Uncertain Paths to Peace,"¹ an early Web



Photographs create a navigational grid for the Bosnia project.

¹ "Bosnia: Uncertain Paths to Peace," is archived at www.pixelpress.org/bosnia/intro.html, a Web site examining possibilities in digital media, directed by Fred Ritchin whose case history of this Bosnia project can be read at www.pixelpress.org/contents/Witnessing/case/case1.html.

photojournalism project by The New York Times, Gilles Peress's photographs serve as links guiding viewers along a narrative trail of their choosing to background material about Bosnia and into discussion forums. Primitive by today's multimedia standards, this project was prescient in providing context with a click and in recognizing the expanded role of photographer as author.

Today photojournalists constantly consider which form and what venue will work best for optimum engagement with an audience. To display an uplifting visual story of daily life in Iraqi Kurdistan, photojournalist Ed Kashi partnered with MediaStorm to weave thousands of his photographs into a flipbook-style digital animation. The result is an emotional journey told through photographs that gradually change to simulate motion, as music paces the visual ride. An index of images on the site leads viewers to captioned photographs for deeper context.

Multimedia. Motion. Music. Maximizing impact. Measuring influence. Even words like “meta-photograph”—seeing the image as a digital entryway to revealing layers of content and context—sneak into the photojournalist's vocabulary today. In this issue, photojournalists write about pushing through the digital disruption to find inventive uses of digital media—ways they hope will pay. ■ — Melissa Ludtke

Failing to Harness the Web's Visual Promise

Today, too many news organizations still don't take advantage of digital media's capacity to give readers contextual information and to engage them in finding out more about the story the pictures tell.

BY FRED RITCHIN

"A subtle, politically astute, and fascinating account of the dizzying impact of the digital revolution on the trajectory of the photographic image." - PUBLISHERS WEEKLY, STARRED REVIEW

AFTER PHOTOGRAPHY

FRED RITCHIN



Sometimes looking back helps us to know more about why we arrived where we did. But this journey back in time can also be disheartening, especially when we discover that we don't measure up to our potentials.

Take, for example, a few words I wrote in the Summer 1995 issue of Nieman Reports:

Journalists are entering a time of great possibility when more effective models of reporting, explication and discussion of the news can be built, with greater involvement of readers and a

variety of new ways to present information. It is also a moment of severe peril, for if the established news sources do not understand how to both safeguard the credibility of their reporting and incorporate new ways of sharing what they know, their role in this evolving information society will be severely eroded.

I concluded: “The implications for a democracy are overwhelming.”

That journalism failed to move beyond the limited repurposing of the print and broadcast media and into the welcoming territory I wrote about—into places with an expanded sense of possibility—is beyond dispute. In part, this is because dissimilarities between digital and analog media weren’t taken seriously. Instead, repeatedly and almost universally we attempted to put what we’d previously done onto a screen-based template while marveling at the new efficiencies of the digital and simultaneously giving away our work for free. If this were Greek mythology, we—the know-it-alls in the journalism community—would be portrayed as having been devoured by a seductively ephemeral Web, not realizing it was much more than

simply a substitute for “dead trees.”

I still remember a mid-1990’s Nieman conference in which Arthur Sulzberger, Jr., the new publisher of The New York Times, somewhat cockily announced that, while grateful to the Internet pioneers, the brand names had arrived and like Old West homesteaders would now be claiming the territory. But that brand name, like so many others, lost some of its place and reputation when available 24 hours every day, for free, in more or less the same form as on paper, and for too long relied upon its branding without recognizing that it also needed to be a pioneer. Nor did the Times’s self-righteousness help when its reporting was too soft on the Bush administration’s plans to invade Iraq without, as it emerged, any weapons of mass destruction to be found there. Those pesky pioneers writing blogs seemed, at times, more reliable.

I write this with regret because I was the one that the business side of the Times had asked in 1994, before the domination of the Web, to take a single daily issue of the Times and transform it into a multimedia platform in a project that lasted the course of a year. Back then, the Times online was charging foreign subscribers \$30 per month. While our somewhat idiosyncratic model

was initially popular among the newspaper's management, the allure and uniformity of the Web was judged preferable, and the Times, like its competitors, joined the stampede to a reassuring homogeneity.

The Photograph—New Views

In our increasing desperation for audiences and advertisers, we also have been profligate with our major asset—authenticity. Nowhere has that been more evident than in photography, where an indiscriminate use of Photoshop has moved photography from a too-credible medium to one that is being repeatedly questioned and repudiated. Somehow we have reached 2010 without the reader or viewer knowing, despite every media outlet's privately held guidelines, what each publication considers permissible to do to a photograph without distorting its initial meanings—a subject that I warned about in *The New York Times Magazine* in 1984.

Recently, the picture editor of one of our most reputable national publications, when asked in a public gathering by a professional photographic re-toucher to define the boundaries of ethical image manipulation, could only respond, "I will

know it when I see it." What then is the reader to assume?

Digital media give us ways not to depend upon the waning credibility of the photograph. On the Web, photographs may be contextualized so that readers can have a larger sense of what happened. Information can be embedded in each of the image's four corners. Online viewers can make that visible by rolling over each corner with the cursor, thereby revealing substantial amounts of context. Not only can a factual caption reside at one corner, but the photographer's personal opinion of what occurred can be found at another. Or an interview with the subject, pictures taken before and after, and links to other sites that might be helpful, including the photographer's own Web site, could be hidden within the image for a curious viewer to explore.

As this photograph is shared—and re-published in multiple venues on the Web—all of this information travels with it, guaranteeing that the photographer's point of view cannot be completely overridden by the accompanying articles.

None of this could happen on paper.

As well, there are enormous new possibilities for storytelling in the

hyper-textual environment of the Web. Photographs can be layered so that the initial image is amplified and even contradicted by the second hidden underneath to give a more complex point of view (such as to reveal the staging of a photo opportunity with the second photograph underneath, or to show another perspective of an event such as the expressions of onlookers). It is possible to think of photographs or even pieces of photographs as nodes that link to a variety of other media, what I call hyperphotography, rather than as images that are sufficient in and of themselves. In this way, the reader becomes much more implicated in the unfolding of a story when she has to choose pathways to follow as a means of exploring various ideas, rather than being presented with only one possible sequence.

A large 1996 Web-based photo essay that I created for The New York Times online with photographer Gilles Peress, "Bosnia: Uncertain Paths to Peace," did just that, leading one commentator to write in *Print* magazine:

Visitors cannot simply sit and let the news wash over them; instead, they are challenged to find the path that engages

them, look deeper into its context, and formulate and articulate a response. The real story becomes a conversation, in which the author/photographer is simply the most prominent participant.

I would strongly urge that mainstream media involve others, including those at universities, in coming up with these new strategies. It is young people who are going to invent their own versions of journalism if it is to be revitalized and appeal to their peers. Just as the capabilities of the iPhone have been amplified in multiple directions by the tens of thousands of applications that people are writing for it, why can't journalism be rethought and enlarged by opening it up to new ideas and strategies from the non-professionals? This, in fact, might be the most salient contribution of what so many call "citizen journalism." ■

Fred Ritchin, a professor of photography and imaging at New York University, is the author of "After Photography," a book about the new digital potentials that is being translated into Chinese, French, Korean and Spanish. His blog is www.pixelpress.org/afterphotography.

A Different Approach to Storytelling

‘... photographs require context to tell a more complete narrative. The best thing for photojournalists to do is to slow down, become a little more engaged, and spend a little more time on their projects in a much more intimate way.’

CONVERSATION WITH BRIAN STORM

Melissa Ludtke, editor of Nieman Reports, spoke with Brian Storm, founder and president of MediaStorm, a production studio based in Brooklyn, New York, which publishes multimedia social documentary projects at www.mediastorm.org and produces them for other news organizations. Trained as a photojournalist, Storm worked in multimedia at MSNBC.com and Corbis where he pioneered approaches to showcasing visual journalism in new media. In their conversation Ludtke and Storm discuss the limitations of photography in a time of digital media and Storm explains how the work of photojournalists can evolve to tell more compelling and complete visual narratives. Storm believes photojournalists, in developing new business models, can gain greater control over how and when their images are used. An edited transcript of their conversation follows:

Melissa Ludtke: Let's begin by talking about a photograph taken in Iraq by Los Angeles Times photojournalist Luis Sinco. His photograph of Marine Lance Corporal James Blake Miller, battle weary, with a lit cigarette in his mouth, became an iconic image, in your words, of the “macho bad-ass American Marines in Iraq.” I once heard you say that it was in the media's response to this photo that you could see what's wrong with photography as a medium today. Can you explain why this is so and where this thinking leads you?

Brian Storm: It wasn't about what's wrong with photography, but this image underscored one of the great limitations that a single photograph has. It's that we each bring our own perspective, our backgrounds, and our own prisms to a photograph because still images inherently lack the con-

text—the rest of the story. The captured moment doesn't tell you what happened before or after, though it can be incredibly powerful in getting you into an emotional state. I feel photography needs to have context around it to be the powerful storytelling mechanism that we're trying to create here at MediaStorm in a multimedia format.

Ludtke: At MediaStorm, working with Sinco and Miller, you've cre-

ated the multimedia presentation “The Marlboro Marine,” developed around this image. And it turns out that this Marine's story is much different from this photograph—viewed as an iconic image—might have made it seem.

Storm: Very quickly the photograph became labeled as “The Marlboro Marine,” which is quite a title to give a picture. It created a lot of conversation, was published widely,

Looking Beneath the Surface of Stories in Iraq, Iowa and Rwanda

Providing storytelling and context for photographs is a major motivation for MediaStorm's multimedia projects, such as the three that founder Brian Storm discusses in the conversation.



“**The Marlboro Marine**” by Luis Sinco. This Los Angeles Times photojournalist's image of Marine Lance Corporal James Blake Miller became an icon of the Iraq War. “The Marlboro Marine” tells the story of how Miller tries to heal the scars of war and how two lives became connected by a photograph.

but it's not an accurate representation of the real story. James is a human being who as tough and macho as he looks is dealing with incredibly severe post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) from what he experienced in Iraq. Some estimate that up to 30 percent of our soldiers returning from conflict are dealing with PTSD. While he may look tough, his life has been turned upside down by what he's experienced, causing incredible conflict at home

and in his life. He filed for divorce and he's tried to kill himself. He's really, really struggling with life. No picture conveys that in a way that a 16-minute documentary does when it gives him a voice and allows him to tell his story. Of course, Luis Sinco's experience on that story is also very compelling—his relationship with Miller and the many ways he crossed that line as a journalist where you get heavily involved with your subject.

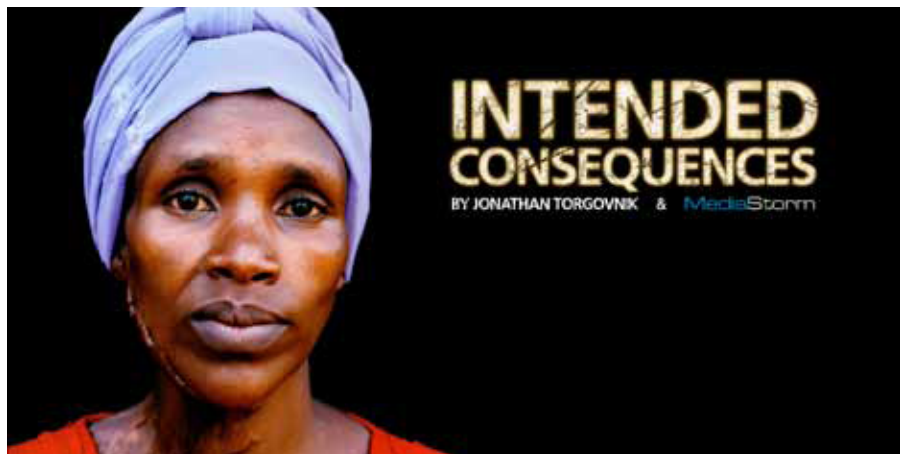


“Driftless: Stories from Iowa” by Danny Wilcox Frazier. As the economies of rural communities across America fail, abandonment is becoming commonplace. “Driftless” explores a Midwest that resides in shadows, a people quietly enduring America’s new economic reality.

Ludtke: Does this speak to your vision for a photojournalist's role in the future? To step away from shooting the image and do what? Engage with the subject more directly? What then is the difference from a photojournalist's work 10 years ago to now in the way that you envision this?

Storm: The biggest difference is slowing down and spending more time with the subject. It's not just

taking their picture; it's giving them a voice. To do that, it's not just using an audio recorder or a video camera to do interviews. It's asking questions which allow the subject to give context to the story—to provide the rest of the information needed to truly understand the power of those moments. I'm not suggesting at all that we stop taking still pictures; they are an incredibly powerful way to communicate. But photographs require context



“Intended Consequences” by Jonathan Torgovnik. An estimated 20,000 children were born from rapes committed during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. “Intended Consequences” chronicles the lives of these women. Their narratives are embodied in photographs, interviews and oral reflections about the daily challenges they face today.

to tell a more complete narrative. The best thing for photojournalists to do is to slow down, become a little more engaged, and spend a little more time on their projects in a much more intimate way.

Ludtke: What training is necessary for extraordinary photojournalists, who have proven themselves in the old way of doing things, to get them to where they're going to feel comfortable moving in this direction? Or able to do it?

Storm: Photographers are inherently technical so adding audio and video is not a huge leap for them. Yet audio and visual storytelling are crafts. To become a truly terrific radio reporter is hard work. It takes the same kind of study and continual practice that becoming a great photojournalist takes. Video is exponentially harder because you are dealing with a lot of things all together at once—visual sequencing, motion, audio levels, moments and so on. So I've always tried to encourage photographers to start by using audio only. They're already very visual people. And many of them are already spending quality time with their subjects. The biggest challenge is, as a photojournalist, we're taught to be a fly on the wall;

we are taught to not engage with our subjects. Our job is to disappear, become small and invisible so that a subject can do exactly what they're going to do without any coaching or any “can you do that again?” kind of thing, which is pretty common in the video world.

In a lot of ways that's why photojournalists are so well positioned to do these kinds of in-depth stories because they already know how to disappear. But at some point along that arc of reporting, a photojournalist needs to break that wall and say, “I know I've told you that I'm not here, I know I'm trying to disappear from your life and document it as it is, but I really want to sit down and ask you some very specific questions.” And that's a different kind of journalistic experience than I think photojournalists are used to having.

There's real tension around that. Why do it? When? And how? What questions can you ask? How do you ask them? All very important skills that photojournalists need to grow to do these kinds of stories. They're not new skills that haven't been developed by those in radio or broadcast so it's not like we need to reinvent how to do it from the ground up. It's not black magic but it is a

craft and to do this in a way that is powerful and compelling is a skill that takes time to learn. You have to do these kinds of interviews a lot before you get to where it works well.

What we try to do in our workshop is underscore how these are singularly crafted skills. One of the great challenges is to have one person do it all. It's very complicated. But take a story like "The Marlboro Marine." No question that Luis was the right person to have those conversations because of their relationship and intimacy gained through his coverage. A trust has been developed, and Luis knows James's story better than anyone. So this is not a daily turnaround; it required several years to play out, and it's still playing out. In those cases of long-form, in-depth coverage, I think the single vision is ideal. And that's where bringing multimedia skills to the reporting process is really critical.

Stories that are covered over a long period of time with a singular vision are very powerful to me. But it's rare for one person to have all of these skills. Collaborative teams to which people bring their expert skills are very powerful. Take Danny Wilcox Frazier who did "Driftless: Stories from Iowa." That is five years of work by a world-class photojour-

nalist that was published in a beautiful book. But there are only 4,000 copies of that book, and on MediaStorm's Web site we had 10 times that many people watch the visual narrative of these stories on the first day it was live on our site.

So while the book is critical, it's not the key element of a photojournalist's franchise. The franchise includes the cinematic piece for broadcast, the Web, and mobile. There is also an exhibit and licensing of the project and still image for magazine publishing. Each of these elements has a role in the franchise. This is what we're about—helping photographers realize their projects across multiple platforms so they can get the most exposure, reach the largest body of viewers, and generate the most revenue possible so that they can continue to do this type of in-depth, long-form work.

Ludtke: I recall you saying "If you're a photojournalist today and all you do is editorial assignments, you're dead. You have to have good syndication. You have to have multiple clients. You've got to do corporate jobs. You've got to do weddings. You've got to bust your ass." Your example of Danny Frazier illustrates that, right?

Storm: A very good example. Having a diverse business model is critical for any small business. We don't all have to shoot weddings but we need to think about creating a variety of opportunities for each project. Danny's project also exemplifies what needs to happen in the reporting process. If Danny started that project with a vision for the franchise, I think he would have reported very differently. His vision was to create a beautiful book. But in my opinion that was not as complete as what we're able to put together with additional reporting and collaboration. Danny partnered with Taylor Gentry, a terrific cinematographer, and they gathered video and conducted interviews after he'd already finished his book. Now what if Danny had those skills and had been gathering audio and video during the whole five-year period when he was doing this story? That would have been incredible.

Ludtke: Then what's on MediaStorm would have been a contemporary project in that sense.

Storm: Yeah. With this one, we're revisiting something where a photographer arrives with five years of work. "Isn't this amazing?" he'll say and I

respond, "Yeah. But do you have audio?" That's sort of our first question. Without that it's really hard for us to take it into a cinematic state. So we're trying to get visual journalists to go out with this understanding. Change the way you report and all of a sudden you have a product for distribution in many different formats.

Ludtke: This is what photographers need. This is the reality today. To be a photojournalist means a level of engagement across so many different platforms in media. It's not just the photograph that's destined for a single publication or a contract with one magazine.

Storm: There's certainly room for photographers to focus on that, if that's their choice. It's just hard to argue with the impact that photographers can have if they evolve—evolve and become a more complete storyteller. The biggest payback is that really for the first time photojournalists have authorship. For so long, they have not had authorship in our craft. Usually they'll shoot pictures, send them somewhere, and someone else picks which one goes in; often only one picture of a three-day shoot gets used. This is why for so long photographers have

gravitated toward books as the premiere display of their work because they're heavily involved in curating the edit and it is their prized possession. When a photographer gives you their book, they're giving you a piece of their soul. It's just this really important object for them because they have had that authorship.

Now, with multimedia, authorship jumps several octaves; you're involved in a whole new way. In the epilogues of our pieces, Danny, for example, has the opportunity to tell how he put this project together, to talk about the rationale for why he did what he did, or how this project changed him as a person or to issue a call to action.

Ludtke: So a voice is not only given to the subject at the other end of the camera's lens, but the photographer is speaking, too.

Storm: That's an important issue. But I'd also caution that just doing multimedia with a photographer being interviewed isn't enough. We need to be more aggressive in reporting and in doing interviews and gathering information while the project is in play. Because the story is not about us; it's about the subject. The epilogue is incredibly valuable in terms of creat-

ing some transparency around who the photojournalist is who did the work because much of the public still thinks photojournalists are like paparazzi. And they're not. These are hardcore journalists doing sophisticated storytelling, tackling important subjects, and providing information people need.

Ludtke: What remains a bit of mystery is how the high-quality photojournalists are going to find ways of being supported in the marketplace today.

Storm: That's obviously the question because the profession is shrinking and we're losing terrific journalists every day. Only the strong will survive. We're going to lose some of our best people and that keeps me awake at night. Constantly on my mind during the last decade has been finding a way to solve this issue of our best photojournalists exiting the profession completely and losing institutional knowledge.

The solution relates back to photojournalists creating their franchise—having one client that you're heavily reliant on is a recipe for a quick exit. Why take that approach when these new outlets are opening up and you can reach a larger audience and gen-

erate the kind of revenue needed to stay in business. And we're not talking about millions of dollars.

Ludtke: We're talking about having a decent career, decent living.

Storm: Exactly, and I think those opportunities are greater today than they've ever been.

Ludtke: They just have to be conceptualized in new ways?

Storm: Yes, and from the start of the reporting process. I'm excited about the next few years in this industry because I feel like people in the industry get it now. They understand they have to grow. Sure, it's hard, but if it was easy to do, everyone would be doing it.

Ludtke: This brings my thinking back to the ubiquitousness of visual images—cameras on mobile phones; Flip video cameras; high-quality, highly mobile, HD hybrid cameras; and the digital ease of instantaneous global distribution. Makes one wonder how images are valued at a time when there are so many.

Storm: I've been thinking a lot about this lately, and I have to say

this is the best thing that's ever happened to our profession. The fact that everyone has a camera, that everyone can report and can publish on YouTube. They're in the game. They are part of the process, and the audience now has a greater understanding of how hard it is to do what we do. And when they see something that's truly special, I think it resonates with them in a way that it simply could not have 10 years ago because they're part of the conversation. They are telling stories and they are completely engaged in the conversation.

A decade ago, when I sat in a newsroom and everyone said to me, "Nobody's going to watch a story about Rwanda. Nobody cares about Rwanda." I always was like, "What are you talking about? Of course they'll watch it. Of course they will care. We have to get them the product before they're going to watch it and care about it. If we cut it off at the knees because we think they're apathetic, it'll never happen."

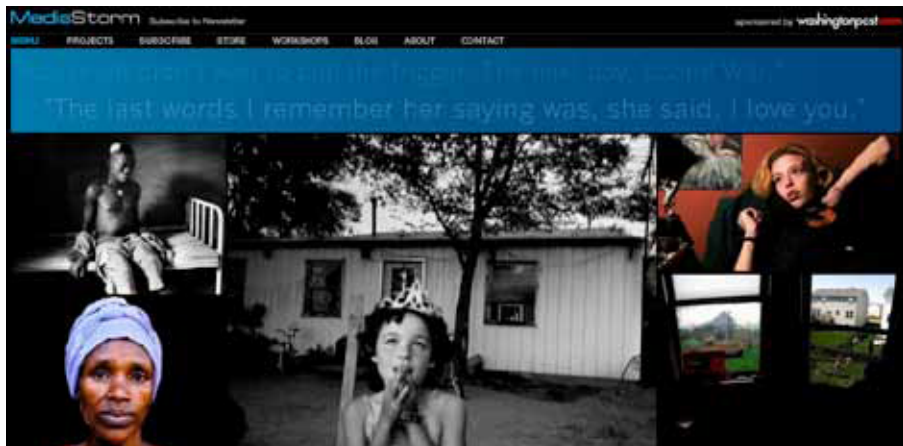
The irony of what I see happening today is that the people who are apathetic right now are the ones who are sitting in newsrooms. They're seeing their resources taken from them at such a prolific pace and they're being asked to do more

with less—right now the mainstream media has almost reached a level of apathy that's paralyzing. But the audience that you just described is totally fired up. They're totally engaged. They're totally a part of the process of telling stories. And they are starving for good projects. And when they get them now, they spread them at a pace that we've never seen before via the statusphere and blogosphere.

Ludtke: So the digital distribution lines accentuate this?

Storm: Yeah, very much. We've never been in a situation where one person could, say, watch "Intended

Consequences" [about Rwanda] and then turn around and post it on Facebook for their 600 or so friends. We've never been in that situation before where people could spread things as quickly as they can now. And what are they going to spread? They're going to spread quality. It's almost like a social currency now to say, "Hey, I think this is great." That social currency just didn't exist before. Now, you see something and immediately you curate that. Facebook is my new front page—it's how I access information from around the world. My social network is shaping and curating for me what is important, and that is absolutely revolutionary. ■



These multimedia projects can be seen at www.mediastorm.org.

From Film to Digital: What's Lost? What's Gained?

‘Today, it seems that speed trumps all else, becoming the way success is measured. It might be better if other factors—such as content, reliability and value—were to trump speed when it comes to evaluating visual journalism.’

BY DAVID BURNETT

My camera filter—should it be 30 magenta? Ten never seemed quite enough, and 40, well, it was a little too magenta. For decades this decision punctuated my daily life as a photojournalist. Why? The short answer: fluorescent bulbs. For the past three decades, they’ve been ubiquitous, yet no color film worked without camera adjustments in this bluish/greenish light. Flesh tones came out a very ugly blue. Getting people to look “normal” required adding a little reddish filtration. Hence, 30 magenta—somewhere between purple and red, in mild enough amounts so that flesh tones could be rendered realistically.

There was not much that an editor could do to correct the image after my shutter snapped. Film was our medium. Digital rendering existed on music CDs and image scanning but the

digital camera wasn’t yet the size that photographers could use. Nor was everyone eager to replace film. It had a certain physical sturdiness and the quality of its image, well, it would be hard to match. While processing time could be frustratingly slow, there was something that felt definitive and assuring when those individual frames were finally in your hands.

Film is now yesterday, and where digital will take us in photojournalism is impossible to know.

Magic Phone Calls

For 40 years, I’ve worked as a photojournalist. Despite the rise of TV back in the late 1960’s, there were still plenty of magazines eager to publish photographs as their way of showing readers what was happening in the world. It was my good

fortune to start out at such a time—when still photographers were much in demand and those magic phone calls from editors came my way.

In November 1978, Time's picture editor, Arnold Drapkin, reached me with such a call.

"Are you free these days?" he asked.

Not wanting to give him the impression I wasn't working, I replied, "I could be."

By that afternoon, I was in his office.

"We'd like you to go to Baluchistan," he told me.

"Great! Where is it?"

"I don't know," he replied.

On a world map on the wall, we located my destination in a western province of Pakistan, a scene of tribal activity and, even then, a center of intrigue. In the two weeks I was there I took pictures that ranged from Ashura self-flagellation parades to young girls weaving rugs to a portrait of the Khan of Kalat, one of the reigning tribal leaders. In the language of that time, such assignments were called a "country story," combining visual depth with comprehensive reporting. I left with dozens of rolls of Kodachrome and Tri-X lovingly packed into caption envelopes and headed for Karachi to figure out my next move. As often happened, rather than heading back

to New York, we'd look for another story in the region, and at that time I'd been hearing about the unrest in Tehran. The shah was confronting the rise of fundamentalist forces so after talking with Contact Press Images, my photo agency in New York, I decided to go to Iran—and ship the film back to Time on its own.

Tehran, 1978

Arriving the day after Christmas in Tehran, I found myself in a place that was slowly falling apart. The evidence was all around me: There was no immigration officer to stamp my passport, no interrogation as to how long I wanted to stay. I just walked through the airport corridors, got my bags, and found a taxi to the city.

Figuring out the logistics of how I'd do my work there was another matter. We had no mobile phones and no Internet, which meant no e-mail or easy way of communicating with those back home. And to get home what I would shoot meant finding people who were headed West and would agree to carry my film. (Now, when I hear those security announcements admonishing passengers not to accept anything from strangers, I laugh at the memory of what we went through.)

Choosing someone as a “pigeon” started with a taxi ride to Mehrabad airport. With the dissolution of civil order, I’d walk unchallenged into departure lounges where I’d find crowds of travelers whose sole interest was fleeing Iran. My job then became convincing someone of the importance of this mission to get my film safely to Paris—and from there it would be flown to New York. What amazes me to this day is that every roll of film I shipped this way reached its destination.

Back on the streets of Tehran a day rarely passed without an event of some significance, but in an era before cell phones finding out where I should be proved a constant challenge. However, with Time’s stringer in Tehran also being The Associated Press bureau chief—with his own team of stringers alert for news tips—my sources were good and reliable as they used phone booths on the street to report on what was developing.

The revolution was bubbling up on Tehran’s streets and at University of Tehran. Messages from Ayatollah Khomeini—still in exile in France—were played at Friday prayer gatherings on audiotape cassettes. On the street I had the feeling that I was chasing a race already in progress; the starting line had already van-

ished and no one could tell where the finish line would be. So I leapt into the middle and followed the action, and thereby came to learn more about what was happening.

Back in New York, editors followed news reporting about the increasing unrest. In some ways, the few days of delay that existed before my film reached them was good since by the time they saw the pictures they had a good sense of what they were looking for. Today, this idea seems quaint as satellites—and Twitter and Facebook—deliver live video feeds and TV stations often broadcast unedited video before journalists there have even absorbed its significance (or insignificance) for themselves. For me, the idea of having a knowledgeable editor be the one to look first at my images always made sense.

Enduring Value

Today, it seems that speed trumps all else, becoming the way success is measured. It might be better if other factors—such as content and reliability and value—were to trump speed when it comes to evaluating visual journalism. Add to these elements the enduring power of an image and its ability to touch the public in ways that provoke thought and motivate

them to become engaged, and now we're arriving at what might be a pretty good formula for figuring out what that elusive word "value" means.

During the past decade, many photojournalists have swapped their camera bag for a backpack. Gear for the camera is now supplemented by a laptop and wireless card, audio equipment, and other multimedia devices. Yet with us now, perhaps not so visible but just as weighty, is another companion—the feeling we have of always rushing. Competition in our business seems to be more about speed than value.

With cameras everywhere and everyone having one, the playing field of image taking and instant distribution is leveled. Still, how an

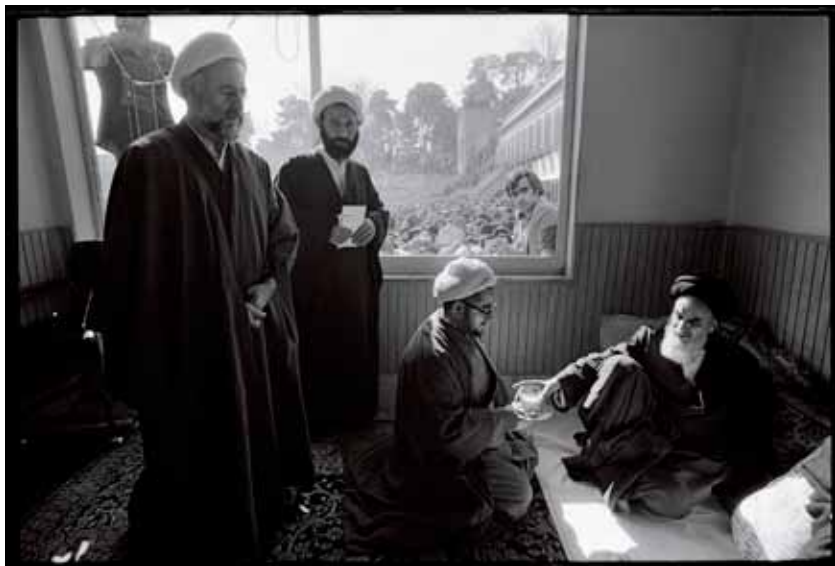
image's journalistic value is evaluated ought not to tumble down to the lowest common denominator. Speed matters. To pretend it doesn't is to be out of touch with our digital age. But there are (and will be) times—and I hope plenty of them—when lasting dividends will come by taking a deep breath, sitting back, and absorbing what well-conceived photographs tell us. It's remarkable what a picture can convey when we give it time to do so. ■

David Burnett is the cofounder of Contact Press Images, a New York City-based photojournalism agency. His images, shot in some 80 countries have appeared in Time, Life, Paris Match, Geo, and Fortune.

44 Days and the Portrayal of History in Tehran

I had been in Iran for more than a month when Ayatollah Khomeini returned from exile in France on February 1, 1979. He soon set up headquarters in the Refah School in a quiet Tehran neighborhood. Tens of thousands of supporters streamed through the school grounds each day to pay their respects. I photographed Khomeini from those crowds, standing in the midst of the excitement and tumult. After four days of quietly pestering the media contact who was a former economics professor pressed into service to deal with the foreign reporters, he finally agreed that perhaps seeing the imam from inside the school was worthwhile.

Moments later, I was granted permission to enter a small classroom. If outside, where the crowds stood cheering, I'd been embedded in noise



Ayatollah Khomeini is served tea in his room at the Refah School by Ayatollah Khalkhali. *Photo by David Burnett.*

and chaos, when I stepped inside this room, I found quiet serenity as Khomeini handed his teacup back to Ayatollah Khalkhali, who later would be known as the hanging judge of Tehran.

This photograph could rightly be called a scoop, to use the language of that time. As I left the room, I stuffed the film canister deep into my jeans pockets and hoped for its safe journey back to my hotel. From there, these undeveloped pictures would be taken to the airport and carried by someone I'd never met before on their journey to my editor's desk in New York.

Now, 30 years later, photographs I took during the 44 days I worked in Tehran are in a book, "44 Days: Iran and the Remaking of the World," which was published last year by National Geographic Books.

— David Burnett

Newspaper Employee to Nonprofit Director: A Photojournalist's Journey

The idea behind Wéyo 'was to capitalize on our collective years of journalism experience and turn our narrative storytelling abilities toward work with nonprofits.'

BY CHRISTOPHER TYREE

People say I'm an idealist, and I guess I am. Perhaps that is why I became a journalist two decades ago. And maybe it's part of the reason that in 2008 I left a great full-time job as a photojournalist at The Virginian-Pilot in Norfolk, Virginia, a newspaper with a well-established reputation for embracing narrative—and visual—storytelling, to head off in a new direction.

So why did I leave? My goal was to launch a media and design company with a clientele of nonprofits for whom I and other photographers would shoot pictures they needed to get their message out. It would be a different way of using photojournalism to tell vital stories about people and places in need of public awareness. Of course, my

start-up soon collided with the nation's debilitating recession. My poor timing was confounded by the reality that most nonprofits didn't have much of a budget for marketing, even in the best of times.

Was I stupid or passionate? Take your pick, but I've always believed that success will happen when passion and inspiration collide. With the launch of Wéyo, those ingredients are present in abundance.

Even in my newspaper work, I was drawn to stories that held out the possibility that awareness could bring about change. I especially liked those focused on inequities. Ideas for stories came to me in the course of street reporting or reflected my small town upbringing in rural western Virginia. And after I saw how some of my pub-

lished images influenced legislation or helped to find homes for those without or brought hope to those suffering with an illness, I was hooked. I knew this potential could be realized.

My desire to convey compelling images was what drove my work as a journalist. Yet as years went by I became less certain that working for a newspaper was the best way for me to do what was in my blood. Journalism seemed to be less about

public service and raising awareness and more about giving readers the infotainment they craved. Over time it became clear that either my newspaper or me would have to change course.

Wheels Start Turning

Then in 2004 I had lunch with a friend from National Geographic. We talked about how the magazine industry was changing and a lot of



Dr. Benjamin Mach, one of the “Lost Boys” physicians, visits with a child during a weeklong clinic at Akobo Hospital in southeastern Sudan. Photo ©Wéyo.

photojournalists were finding it difficult to get their pictures published at places where their work had been much in demand only a short time ago. Even though my newspaper still published my work, it seemed only a matter of time before these trends would hit closer to home.

In 2007 I met a kindred spirit, photojournalist Stephen Katz. He'd returned to the States from Nigeria after doing some pro bono work for Physicians for Peace, a nonprofit based in Norfolk, Virginia. His images were incredible, but what really caught my attention was how he had captured them. Turns out that he had talked his way inside of a mental hospital, if it could charitably be called that, to photograph the inhumane ways patients were being treated. What he showed me was haunting; taken together, these pictures told a vitally important story. Yet he told me that no news organization was interested in publishing them.

It was hard for me to connect these two thoughts. On one hand, I couldn't stop looking at his photographs; on the other, what Stephen was telling me meant that few others would ever see them. This realization led to me to explore in more depth whether this was happening

to other photographers and if so, why and what could be done to bring these images to public awareness.

Here's what I learned: There are hundreds of nonprofits and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) doing remarkable work in troubled regions throughout the world to make better the lives of people who are mentally ill, homeless, disenfranchised or are dealing with a host of other all too familiar problems. Most of these nonprofits and NGOs don't have the people on-board who are able to bring to their outreach efforts and their Web sites a compelling visual display of their initiatives and efforts. Yet these are precisely the kind of images that Stephen and I have the skill and desire to shoot.

Creating a business connection between what we want to do and what organizations like these need seemed an obvious direction for us to head. In thinking about setting up such an enterprise, we knew that nonprofits, especially small ones, are perpetually short on financial resources and the money they raise is targeted at providing services. We found instances when writers and photographers donated words and visuals; even so, we quickly recognized the challenge that these small

nonprofits confront in figuring out how to use visual material effectively to communicate the importance of their work.

So Stephen and I did what two idealistic photojournalists would do. We sat down for a sushi dinner and started to select the building blocks to construct what would be our new business. Its name is Wéyo. In Haitian Kréyol, Wéyo is “to see them.” While unusual for a company name, its fit was perfect for us. We had gone to Haiti in early 2008 to produce pro bono a documentary video for Physicians for Peace, and it was there, in a steamy, pungent hospital room that our passion joined forces with our inspiration.

Starting ‘To See Them’

In Haiti, we’d found our name. Back in the United States, we founded our company. The idea was to capitalize on our collective years of journalism experience and turn our narrative storytelling abilities toward work with nonprofits. We envisioned that our photographs, videos and narrative text would be used to design Web sites and other marketing products as a way to bolster fundraising and attract volunteers. As we got underway, we found ourselves in the

company of other writers, designers and editors of amazing talent who, like us, were alarmed by the changes taking place in journalism. Some decided to join us at Wéyo, and together we formed the company’s nucleus and designed a roundtable approach to our projects to make best use of our varied special talents.

By late 2008, we had our first contract working with a local children’s hospice to produce content and develop a new Web site. Later that year we produced for a Web site, TreeofLives.org, a short segment that also aired on the Christian Broadcasting Network. Within a week our efforts to tell this visual story had garnered Tree of Lives more than \$15,000.

We also produced and published a story for Need magazine about a group of “Lost Boys” who had immigrated to Canada and now were returning home to the Sudan to work as physicians. Samaritan’s Purse Canada, which supported these young men’s education and journey home, used our video as a fundraising tool to aid these doctors. [See box on page 32.]

In the editing process, we were at the mercy of our clients, who we knew from the start had a difficult time figuring out how best to tell

their own stories. As a result, some of our projects lost their intensity as we were forced to edit out some of the power, heart and creativity that we felt strengthened the stories and believed would have motivated donors and volunteers.

Historically, small and even mid-sized nonprofits have had very little experience in marketing. We discovered that in many cases we had to devote an equal amount of time learning about these organizations and teaching them how to tell their stories in emotionally powerful ways as we did producing the visual material.

So far Wéyo's operations have been sustained on the initial investments that Stephen and I contributed. Add to that our passion, many sleepless nights, and too-many-to-count volunteer hours from many of our team members, and the formula for what keeps us going emerges. Even with what we've been told is an attractive business plan, we can find few potential investors who are

willing to take a risk on a start-up like ours that is working for cash-strapped nonprofits during these tough economic times. And banks will not consider lending us money until we've been in business for at least three years.

Despite our economic peril, we're doing precisely the work we set out to do—the work we feel we're trained to do and work that we believe matters, despite our meager profit. Still, we know it's time to take our company in a different direction—one that is increasingly familiar to our photojournalist colleagues as they find

‘Despite our economic peril, we’re doing precisely the work we set out to do—the work we feel we’re trained to do and work that we believe matters, despite our meager profit.’

places for what they do in emerging pockets of nonprofit journalism, much of it happening on the Web.

Wéyo needs to become a nonprofit so that we can keep doing what we're doing. As a nonprofit, we will continue our same collaborations with other nonprofits and NGOs. Our goal is the same as when we ate that sushi dinner and discussed our vision for what would become Wéyo. Taking all we've learned as

photojournalists, we are now finding new ways to harness the power of visual narratives in work with our nonprofit clients. Pairing these projects with a variety of digital platforms, we can bring stories of triumph and despair, stories about the challenges people face and the help they receive, to new audiences.

Without taking the chance we have with Wéyo, I'm convinced that a lot of these stories would remain untold. We intend to do what we can to tell them. ■

Christopher Tyree is the president and CFO of Wéyo Inc. Learn more about Wéyo at www.weyow.com.

'Lost Boys' Return to Sudan as Doctors

As he stood beside a dirt airstrip in the remote village of Akobo in southeastern Sudan, Dr. Michael Tut Pur squinted into the scorching afternoon sun. An ancient DC-3 banked to land. Months of anticipation showed in his round dark face as the plane kicked up a cloud of red dust. The plane carried boxes of medical supplies—surgical instruments and vital antibiotics—that his hospital staff desperately needed. But the plane's passengers were its most precious cargo. Villagers had gathered to greet them.

As cows grazed on the runway, screaming children swarmed around the new arrivals. Dr. Tut Pur's infectious smile warmly greeted the nine men. It had been more than a year since the 10 of them had been with each other, though their epic journey together seemed like it began a long, long time ago. Friends now, they were children then, so-called "Lost Boys" fleeing the southern region of Sudan on the heels of a civil war. They were among the thousands of frightened refugees who fled Sudan to escape the fighting between the Muslim-controlled government and Christian rebels in the south.

Now, more than two decades later, these 10 men—trained as doctors—were together in a part of the world desperately in need of their expertise. Samaritan's Purse Canada, First Presbyterian Church of Norfolk, Virginia, and the University of Calgary arranged for and funded



People wait to be seen by the “Lost Boys” doctors in Akobo, Sudan.

Photo ©Wégo.

this reunion. They also supplied medical instructors and support staff as part of this weeklong homecoming trip. It was part of a continuing education program that had begun in Canada in 2005 after Dr. Tut Pur and his friends arrived there as immigrants from Cuba.

Stephen Katz and I, cofounders of Wéyo, a nonprofit that utilizes the power of narrative storytelling to help nonprofits and NGOs, were hired to document the remarkable journey so the story could be shared with supporters of the mission and potential funders.

Read more about this trip in *Need Magazine*. Selected as being among the brightest of 600 children, these boys had been sent to Cuba and educated as doctors. As youngsters, they barely escaped their country's civil unrest by crossing the river near Akobo, across from Ethiopia. Now they had returned to the country of their birth as doctors. In treating those who had once fought against them, these young men were providing hope for peace and reconciliation in this still war-torn land. ■

— Christopher Tyree

The Impact of Images: First, They Must Be Seen

Through photographs transformed into comic images and other creative collaborations, the work of a photojournalist is connecting with new audiences in creative ways.

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARCUS BLEASDALE

In 2004, as war raged in the eastern Congo over access to gold deposits, I waded with my camera through dirt and mud in a goldmine in Mongbwalu. Here gold was being mined, then shipped through Uganda to traders in Europe and Asia. Payments for the Congo's gold enabled the purchase of more weapons and this prolonged the war that was terrorizing those living in this region with the brutality of rape and pillage.

Photographs I took on that trip were used in collaboration with Human Rights Watch to compile a report, "The Curse of Gold," which



Members of the Congolese Revolutionary Movement, in their stronghold of Zumbé, have been accused by Human Rights Watch of using rape as a weapon of war.

examined in depth the reasons for it and the consequences of its continuation. Since those financing the war—the gold merchants—lived on other continents and were dependent on the continuation of this trade for their wealth, it was

difficult to connect the pieces and harder still to make what was happening on the ground matter to those whose actions could make a difference.

In our attempt to bring this story to the attention of these international gold traders, Human Rights Watch and I worked together to create an exhibit of my mining photographs in Geneva, Switzerland, where Metalor Technologies, one of the leading gold mining companies, has its corporate offices. We invited to the exhibit's opening night gold buyers and mining company executives as well as financiers, stockholders and journalists. Immediately after seeing this exhibit, Metalor Technologies halted its purchases of Congolese gold.

This experience convinced me that combining visual awareness with thorough research, like that done by Human Rights Watch, could create a powerful force for positive change. Clearly, this exhibit of my photographs opened minds and led to substantial changes in the company's business policies.

After this breakthrough was achieved, the war in the Congo migrated to other regions of the country as other minerals and metals grew in value. Conflict flared in the

Kivu provinces over mining access to coltan—short for columbite-tantalite and used in cell phones and computer chips—and cassiterite, a heavy dark mineral that is the chief source of tin.

In my mind, the question arose: How could my work as a photojournalist be used to confront these problems with similar success? By now, it was apparent that trying to create awareness through having my photographs published by a news organization was no longer viable in an industry struggling with its own set of problems. With circulation at publications of long-standing news organizations falling and Web sites—free to browse and enjoy—often tailoring content to attract particular audiences, budgets to support the work of those of us who take pictures in the midst of war and famine, natural disasters, and killing sprees are shrinking fast. With similar rapidity, places to publish our work are also disappearing. All of this is now forcing photojournalists like me to seek out alternative solutions for how to get our images in front of viewers, especially those whose awareness can likely spur action.

Challenging as they might be, these changes aren't paralyzing. In

fact, they can be invigorating. Markets evolve and practices change, and as they do it's up to us to look for opportunities.

Recently, in Europe I taught a group of young students. When I asked how many read a newspaper in print, two hands went up. "How

many read your news online?" Every hand went up. We have to rethink our audiences because if we do not react to that show of hands we're going to lose this generation. They're game-centric and on Facebook and Twitter. My niece and nephew are 14 and 17, and when I



In nine months gold miners excavated a pit in northeastern Congo in 2004. Most of these miners are combatants who control mineral-rich areas and profit from their exploitation.

Dealers buy stones in Mbuji-Mayi, Congo's diamond center, in 2005. Many dealers become pastors in order to use religious influence to convince their congregation to sell at beneficial prices.



am with them, I think a lot about how I can make them and their peers the next generation of concerned people willing to become engaged in finding solutions. How do I reach them? How do I get them to understand that conflict is wrong?

People consume information—at least fragments of it—in much larger quantities than in the past. It's my job to present this younger generation with visual images they will understand and find engaging. If they remain uninterested, it isn't their fault. It's mine.

Taking a Comic Approach

At about the time I was teaching these young students, I was collaborating with a comic artist, Paul O'Connell, on an article for Ctrl. Alt.Shift. Our partnership revolved around the idea of us combining our various skills to create new ways of delivering messages. What this meant is that Paul took my photographs from places like the Congo and transformed them into a comic strip to tell the story to a different audience.

Comic readers are likely not to be your typical magazine reader. Our target was a different demographic and the results were outstanding.

We reached the readers we set out to reach—heard back from them with positive praise—and were invited to exhibit our work in a leading London art gallery normally reserved for artists such as the British graffiti artist Banksy.

One step always seems to lead me to the next so now I am thinking of ways to build more roads to this younger generation. I find myself thinking about whether it would make sense for a photojournalist to team up with a software gaming company to create a trailer for the next big movie. Maybe in this way gamers could become aware of the exploitation of natural resources—and the effect it has on the people who live in these areas of the world—that go into producing the devices they use to play these games.

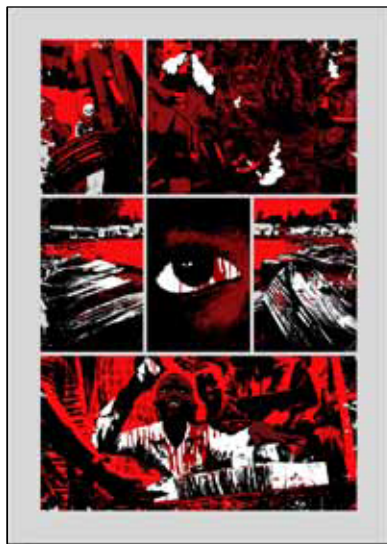
Instead of thinking about reaching a readership of a few hundred thousand people with a few photographs and a story, the ambition builds to promote awareness among millions—and to do so in a way that would even be fun for those doing the learning. That possibilities abound is what makes my work exciting again. We are in discussions with a large influential nongovernmental organization about a pos-

sible collaboration with Silicon Valley to connect with the people who play these electronic games.

Those who are the age of my niece and nephew aren't likely to ever buy a magazine or newspaper but if the work of photojournalists can be partnered with these new avenues of distribution, this generation will be informed and engaged. That I can promise. ■



Marcus Bleasdale won The Anthropographia Award for Photography and Human Rights for "The Rape of a Nation," which documents human rights abuses in the Democratic Republic of Congo.



Comic artist Paul O'Connell transformed Marcus Bleasdale's photographs of exploitation in the Congo so that his message could reach a new audience.

Pushing Past Technology To Reach Enduring Issues

‘I want my students to be engaged not just about making a product ... they’ll submit to the College Photographer of the Year contest—but in thinking critically about the process and aesthetic choices.’

BY DONNA DE CESARE

When the challenges of teaching photojournalism in this age of accelerating change leave me unsettled, I seek inspiration in the story of an enigmatic teacher who has charmed me since childhood. Although I know this teacher only as an ephemeral figure in family reminiscences about my Italian grandfather, I am in equal measure curious about and deeply grateful to him.

As a boy, my grandfather Donato De Cesare never was able to attend formal school. He worked shining shoes on the streets of Rio de Janeiro. Papa had natural artistic talent. He amused himself between customers by drawing on the surface of the street with chalk. One morning an art teacher who had been admiring papa’s handiwork for weeks approached with an offer of classes in

his studio. Papa was thrilled but my great-grandfather wouldn’t hear of it. The teacher pleaded, offering his instruction without charge but to no avail. “Art is for people who don’t have to work” was my great-grandfather’s final retort.

Today some might say that photojournalism is for people who don’t have to work. The crisis in our industry has resulted in layoffs and in a “voluntary” exodus among freelancers as many find that they can no longer sustain a living from reporting news. It is challenging to face a classroom of worried students confronting a job market that is shrinking even as it becomes more technologically demanding.

I’ve never viewed teaching as being constricted by notions of vocational or professional training, but that is also a part of what we who

teach photography in journalism programs do. The unpredictability of the present and the fast pace of change makes learning the history of photojournalism seem less relevant as a road map to many of my students. More commonly, many students now think that what they need most is more Photoshop or Final Cut Pro tech classes instead. And they face tremendous self-doubt. Contemplating a career as a photojournalist may take an even greater leap of faith than when I was their age.

And this is precisely where my grandfather's art teacher comes in. Although papa never formally studied art or made money as an artist, he continued to draw all his life. He cherished forever the gift of that teacher's interest and belief in his talent. Although good teaching is a vastly more complicated business than validating student self-confidence, that art teacher broadened my grandfather's intellectual horizons and the way he saw both his role and the role of art in the world.

Understanding Why

The stakes in the changes that photojournalists are confronting are about much more than learning software or choosing equipment, which

is where so much of the conversation among photographers takes place. As Fred Ritchin so compellingly points out in his book "After Photography," a paradigm shift has brought significant new ethical challenges as well as new relational possibilities among narrative elements and between photographer and protagonist or photographer and audience.

While how we finance and sustain our work is not a trivial question, I'd argue that this challenge is in many ways a healthy continuation of the dilemma photographers have always faced.

Perhaps this is why on the first day of each class, I show students a documentary film about one-time Life magazine photographer Hansel Mieth. Many have never heard of Mieth, despite the fact that for many years along with Margaret Bourke-White, she was one of only two female staff photographers. Mieth's humor, her passionate commitment, and her authenticity and courage come through in filmmaker Nancy Schiesari's portrayal and interviews. Many of my students are unfamiliar with the House Un-American Activities Committee hearings but after watching "Hansel Mieth: Vagabond Photographer" they leave with a deepened context for understanding

the ethical challenges and consequences that some journalists have faced in protecting their sources.

Choosing exemplary work from the canon of photojournalism to illustrate concepts, as well as modeling through my own creative work and engagement, forms one pillar of my teaching. The other is giving students opportunities for practice that open the way to their own discovery process.

If all we do is teach them to adapt new tools and modified TV formulas to computers, we miss the point. I want my students to be engaged not just about making a product—the three-minute video or audio slideshow they'll submit to the College Photographer of the Year contest—but in thinking critically about the process and aesthetic choices. Even more urgent is the need to convey to them an understanding about why they are setting out to do this work and what else they can do with the skills they acquire.

Four Stories

I use the evolution of my documentary work on gangs to model some of these points to my students. Nearly 20 years ago—when I began exploring the aftermath of war in the

barrios of Los Angeles—I realized that gangs were filling a vacuum in the lives of immigrant youths from war-torn El Salvador and Guatemala. Over time and with the support of several different grants, I documented the spread of U.S. gangs to post-war Central America. These photographs garnered awards and I wrote about this project in the Fall 2006 issue of Nieman Reports in the story, “Documenting Migration’s Revolving Door.”

Over time, I became convinced that the core of the story’s power resided in the unfolding life circumstances and choices of several of those gang members. I settled on four stories told through the experiences of individuals whose life circumstances and decisions highlight the critical issues of poverty, trauma, human rights, and criminal justice. And I created an online bilingual project, “Destiny’s Children,” to be the vehicle for my visual storytelling. This project has been a long time in gestation, and that’s had advantages for me. It’s allowed my thinking to evolve and enabled me to consider my role not only as a photographer but also as a historian and teacher whose aim is to remain relevant to and sensitive toward audiences in different cultural contexts. As I’ve worked on this proj-

ect over time, it's filled me with excitement about new possibilities for connection and activism on the Web and in the barrios alike.

There is a pressing need to figure out new economic sustainability models for documentary photojournalism. But my students should feel encouraged. The paradigm shift we're experiencing means that all of us, simultaneously and together, are teachers and learners. And there is no finer classroom than the Web, which presents photojournalists with a multitude of ways to

pursue purposeful collaborative work. Sometimes paths offered can seem daunting to head down. But as I discovered in my project, while the journey might be long, much is learned along the way and the destination can be both personally rewarding and broadly worthwhile. ■

Donna De Cesare teaches photojournalism at the University of Texas at Austin. Her photo essay "Forming Connection, Finding Comfort" appeared in the Winter 2009 issue of Nieman Reports.

'Destiny's Children': A Legacy of War and Gangs

The recent launch of the Web site "Destiny's Children" ends one phase of a two-decade project on youth gangs while it begins another. I began working on "Destiny's Children" in 2003, in collaboration with Fred Ritchin and graphic artist and Web designer Zohar Nir-Amitin at PixelPress. Our goal: to employ the visual histories of war's aftermath that my photographs convey in ways that unsettle and inspire viewers. In using photographs I had taken of gang members, I hope to connect minds and hearts with activism.

In the beginning one of our challenges was to create a bilingual project that would work on slow modems in Latin America as well as the new broadband connections beginning to replace dial-up Internet service in New York City and across the United States. Ritchin's PixelPress solved that problem but the demands of my teaching and new assignments conspired against my ability to advance the project.

When I was ready to resume, much had changed, not only in the



Carlos Perez, who grew up in Guatemala amid poverty, left the environment of gangs and graduated from an art school in Vienna, Austria where he now lives. Photo by Donna De Cesare.

digital landscape but also in the gang world. I traveled back to El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras this past summer to update my reporting and to take more photographs for the Web project. I needed to do this to place the stories I had followed over a decade—including the tragedy that befell Edgar Bolaños and the triumph that Carlos Perez wrought from adversity—in a historical context and to provide an overview of current efforts to engage with the social and policy issues the stories raise. A former student, Jose Castillo, helped adapt the original design into Flash and WordPress, and he worked with me to find ways to make it accessible for different audiences.

In the next phase I will be partnering with regional and community-based organizations in the United States and Central America to develop educational and activist strategies that will open the Web site to participation by young people. ■

— Donna De Cesare

Learn more about the project at www.destinyschildren.org.

Taking Time to Rethink, Adjust and Move Forward

‘Today, how we divide our time and do our work and get paid for it has virtually no connection to how things worked for those who started out a decade or two before us.’

By **JUSTIN MOTT**

When I left San Francisco State University’s journalism department to move to Vietnam to begin working as a photojournalist, I carried with me a romantic notion of what my life would be. I envisioned myself as a full-time, scarf-wearing documentary photographer chasing down news stories wherever they happened—and making a living doing so.

From almost the moment I hit the ground, my vision was transformed by reality. Soon I had the good fortune of attending a weeklong workshop in Cambodia led by Gary Knight, a cofounder of the VII Photo Agency. That experience dramatically changed how I think about the work I want to do. Young and untested, I was by far the least experienced—and yes, I’d say the worst—photographer at this workshop. In the short time we had together, I neither developed

my style nor figured out how to show emotion in my images. What I did learn is that I needed to do both.

As a student at San Francisco State, I had explored the work of great photographers—but all of them worked in a different era in journalism. They were paid handsomely for weeks or months of work and flown all over the world by publications in whose pages their pictures would appear. Even though some of our professors cautioned us that we’d be dealing with a changed and more competitive market, the true dimensions of what this meant were never made clear.

In 2007 when I leaped into photojournalism, I did so as a freelancer, just as most of my peers were doing. I decided to base myself in Vietnam, figuring that Southeast Asia would be a good place to launch my career. After settling in I experienced a harsh

first year as the assignments arrived from time to time. Suffice it to say that my entry into the profession was not at all as I imagined it would be.

After making a few trips back to New York City in 2008 and doing some workshops and self-promotion, work started to trickle in. I had quite a few assignments for The New York Times, and on some stories they sent me out of Vietnam. That year I traveled to Australia, China, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. The writers I worked with were on staff, many of them with decades of reporting experience, and they expressed surprise when I told them I was based in Vietnam. It was rare these days, they told me, for a photographer to be flown in on a story; typically they found someone based locally.

For a number of assignments, I shot stills and video on the same story which in some ways helped to justify the expense of bringing me there. And even though my workload increased, I had the sense that I was living at the tail end of the time we had studied about in graduate school—when photojournalists hopped from country to country, their journeys paid for by the publication that wanted their work. To call my feelings melancholy doesn't quite do them justice, but I

did feel sad that I had worked hard to get these opportunities and to reach this goal, only to realize that it was about to vanish.

Sure enough, by the next year news organizations' budgets dried up; no longer was I traveling for the Times or for anyone else. I was still getting the occasional assignment but always closer to home, which for me is Hanoi, and the days were always capped to just a few. To complicate my situation, more and more photographers were entering the market. All of this led to my shrinking workload. I was barely working even though I was getting more assignments than a majority of my friends.

Versatility Is Key

To survive meant changing how I was approaching my career. It was time to readjust my plans as a photographer and to market myself as a business. If I wanted to shoot a six-month project, for example, then I would need to do it on my own time. And I would need to bankroll it myself. The odds of a long-term story project being paid for—or even being commissioned for publication—were slim. So I created a commercial photography and video company, Mott Visuals, specializing in hotels and

resorts. This means that I do commercial shoots for hotels and resorts that use my images to attract customers. As I end the first year after the launch of my business, I couldn't be happier and my work is more fruitful than ever.

At the same time, I'm experiencing a comeback in journalism with the last four months being the busiest stretch I've ever had. I'm writing this piece from Cambodia where I am on a weeklong assignment for The New York Times. This on-again, off-again relationship is so different from what we heard about in school. Back then I had the sense that once you are in with a publication, you're in and you would get a steady influx of assignments. But that hasn't been my experience; with the Times, a lot of work in 2008 didn't do anything to ensure me steady work in 2009.

A lot of young photographers ask me about being represented by an agency. I sense that the impression many of them have is that a photo agency will act as an employer—and provide something resembling a steady income. While years ago that might have been the case, it's rare now. Many agencies have folded, others are struggling to adjust to new market demands, and while I enjoy being with my agency, Redux, I find

that for the most part I've acted as my own agent.

These days the work comes from all kinds of different clients—journalistic and otherwise. This requires that I constantly remind people about me and where I'm based so this means hours are added to my workday as I update my commercial and editorial blogs. Then there are the trips to New York City to meet with editors, conference calls for commercial shoots, and e-mails to my agency along with Facebook and Twitter updates. I carve out time to apply for grants and to enter my work in contests. I attend events hosted by nongovernmental organizations; often they are looking to pay photographers to produce images that they can use to get their messages out. And I plan exhibitions to showcase my photographs. Oh, yes, I can't forget the time I carve out to pursue personal photography projects—the stories that hold great meaning to me. In fact, as I remind myself, these projects were why I wanted to be a photojournalist way back when.

Versatility is the key. In the past two months I've shot for the German Red Cross, the United Nations, Forbes, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, three 5-star resorts, Microsoft, the World Health

Organization, and the Smithsonian. I shot a wedding and I have been involved with a commissioned book project about Chabad communities in Beijing and Shanghai. I'm also working on my own book along with shooting a few personal projects. Two of those assignments came from my agency; the rest came from connections I've made though the years. Oh yes, I've also shot a few video assignments and I'm heading back to Vietnam tomorrow to shoot another one. Along the way I founded a collective group with four documentary photographers called Razon. Similar collectives are popping up everywhere as a great way for those of us working on our own to motivate one another

and market each other's photographs.

Today, how we divide our time and do our work and get paid for it has virtually no connection to how things worked for those who started out a decade or two before us. Only our mission remains the same and perhaps our contentment with the opportunity our cameras give us to transmit visual journalism about what's happening in our world. While I'm still searching to find the right balance of assignments and meaningful personal projects, it's been an awesome ride so far. ■

Justin Mott is a freelance photojournalist based in Hanoi, Vietnam.

A Personal Project: Third-Generation Victims of Agent Orange

Severely disabled and abandoned at birth, 124 children live at the Ba Vi Orphanage and Elderly Home near Hanoi, Vietnam. They are believed to be third-generation victims of Agent Orange, a defoliant used by the U.S. military during the Vietnam War.

Nothing is known about these children's family histories and the center lacks the resources to conduct medical tests to prove such a link. To care for them, there is one doctor, two nurses, and six caretakers. Funding from the national government provides just \$15 a month for each child. Eighty percent of them are mentally disabled. Most of the children who live here have no recreation, education or physical ther-

apy; they spend the majority of their days in wooden chairs or in mass beds. Some children are prone to wandering off at night or harming the other children so they are locked in iron cages overnight and during afternoon naps. For the majority of these children, this is the only home they will ever know.

The Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange is campaigning against American chemical companies that were involved in producing dioxin during the Vietnam War and seeking compensation for all victims. These children's lives were a story I believed needed to be told—and it's been gratifying to see the reach my photographs have had.

I funded this project on my own and posted my photographs on my Web site. From that beginning, the story has spread wide. Newsweek posted my photographs on its Web site along with audio I had from my visits to the orphanage. I donated pictures to several nongovernmental organizations working on issues involving Agent Orange and some of my photographs have been exhibited in various countries.

I've entered some of them in photography contests, which I have found is a good way to get word about stories to the broader journalism community. In one instance I received a fellowship in humanistic photography from Parsons the New School for Design and Photo District News. By using social media, I am in touch with photographers and reporters, and I find out that some of them are working on the same story as I am. Together we spread word to different audiences about what we are doing and why. ■

— Justin Mott



A child living in an orphanage near Hanoi, Vietnam is locked in a cage so he cannot wander off or harm other children.

Photo by Justin Mott/Redux.

Carving New Pathways With Photojournalism Students

‘I ask myself what I should be teaching my students. How can I prepare them so they can find good jobs? Figuring this out is my daily challenge.’

BY JOSH MELTZER

In August 2008, I had a year to step away from the scene at American newspapers. After receiving a year-long Fulbright grant, I left my job as a photographer and multimedia storyteller at The Roanoke (Va.) Times and headed to Guadalajara, Mexico. Once there, I dove into a project about migration within Mexico and worked as a teacher with Listen to My Pictures, a nonprofit organization that enables children whose lives involve daily struggle to tell their stories through photography.

Just about this time, I started thinking about and searching for places I'd want to work—and would be able to find a job—when I returned home the next August. The Roanoke Times was packed with talented and highly driven coworkers, but I felt it was time for me to move away from newspaper work and use my multimedia skills in another me-

dium, maybe radio. I was thinking about teaching, too.

As things worked out, I'm now in my first year of teaching photojournalism and multimedia storytelling at Western Kentucky University. While I am thrilled to have this opportunity, the responsibility of how best to prepare my students for the realities of today's marketplace for photojournalism keeps me awake at night. I ask myself what I should be teaching my students. How can I prepare them so they can find good jobs? Figuring this out is my daily challenge.

For decades, Western Kentucky University's journalism department has prepared its students to be able to walk into newsrooms of any size and caliber and perform well. That pathway no longer leads to many jobs so it's our job to carve out viable ones. I tell my students constantly that now is a great time to

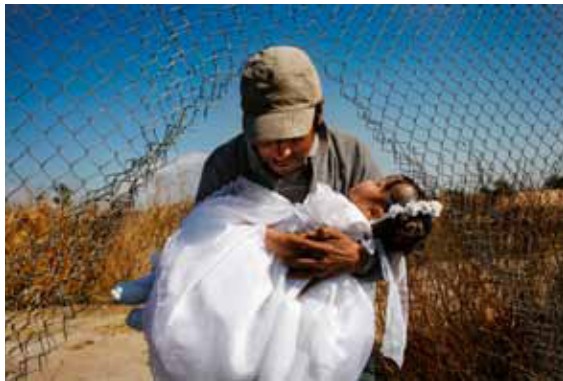
be a budding visual storyteller, even though nothing about it will be easy nor will the career path be well trod. The word for them to keep in mind is “entrepreneur,” since they’re going to have to blaze the trail.

There are, however, two things they can count on. The Internet is a highly visual place, becoming more

so each day, and those who travel to Web sites love to see and hear a good story told well through powerful pictures. Look at the coverage of the earthquake in Haiti. Newspapers like the Los Angeles Times and The Boston Globe (in its Big Picture: News Stories in Photographs page) used their Web sites to display

The Untold Story of Mexican Migration

My Fulbright project in Mexico centered on migration within the country. It perhaps has had a larger impact on Mexicans than the better publicized story of immigration to the U.S. Just as America rapidly became urbanized in the early 20th century, Mexicans are moving from rural regions to large Mexican cities at increasing rates. Though much of what the cities offer—electricity, running water and education—is good, families often discover that moving to urban areas can be difficult and dangerous, especially for children. ■ — Josh Meltzer



Antonio Hernandez carries his daughter Angela to her baptism ceremony through a broken fence on land outside of Guadalajara, Mexico where they have been living rent free in partial exchange for making bricks. Photo by Josh Meltzer.

extensive galleries of excruciatingly powerful images. TV and radio stations published still images, too, which turned out to be among their strongest content.

Of course I pass on to my students valuable lessons I learned during my nine years in the Times's newsroom—adjusted a bit to meet changing circumstances. Here are a few:

- **Collaborate.** You can't do it all on your own. Make friends along the way and across the aisle and find ways to partner with them. Value those who know more than you do and figure out creative ways to work together.
- **Have no fear.** It's a hard pill for some to swallow, but accept the fact that every few months—sometimes every few weeks—some new technological tool comes out. Figure out which ones you'll need to use and learn how. Don't feel you need to master every one, but it's good to at least learn what emerging tools can do.
- **Keep ethics in mind.** Regardless of what tool you use, keep in mind the ethical dimensions and principles that go into telling a great story. While visual and multimedia storytelling is what we do, slick design absent a great story

will not hold viewers' attention. Use tools at the right time and for the right reasons.

Aside from teaching about tools, I offer advice about temperament as I encourage my students to approach their work as caring, responsible and curious visual journalists. The next step is to give them experiences to test their technical and temperamental capacities. This requires that we set up situations in which they collaborate with others.

Streams of Knowledge and Experience

In our attempt to do this, several colleagues and I are planning to team-teach courses with faculty from other disciplines, such as information technology and business. Now that publications and news organizations are hiring fewer photojournalists, our graduates will need to rely on different kinds of business partnerships. Although blogging and social networks offer easy ways to distribute images, producing high-quality multimedia packages of content—including interactive maps, visualized data, video and user interactivity—can be quite challenging for photojournalists working on their own. The skills

and tasks and time to do this require photojournalists to collaborate with online specialists.

I offer as an example my former colleague at the Times, Tracy Boyer, a multimedia producer who publishes the blog, Innovative Interactivity. She left the newspaper to pursue a master's degree in interactive science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, was recently accepted into its MBA program, and now is on the university's dual degree track. She's doing this because she needs this combination of knowledge to launch a sustainable multimedia business.

I also encourage many of my students to tap into other commercial markets. Several of them already shoot weddings, which is an approach that helps many photojournalists supplement their work or replace their newspaper jobs.

Others are exploring ways to tap into profitable partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) — connecting their abilities as visual storytellers with the desire of these organizations to build support for what they do by telling their story.

I've been working with Christopher Tyree and Stephen Katz, co-founders of Wéyo who direct Truth With a Camera, a workshop where photojournalists learn how to docu-

ment the work of NGOs internationally. The workshop is based on two core principles that I want my students to know about:

Adapt through learning. Since it now looks as though their careers have the potential for a rapid succession of experiences, adaptation is critical. Doing so requires finding places like Truth With a Camera to continue their education.

Step outside traditional boundaries. Workshops such as this expose photojournalists to moneymaking possibilities outside the traditional boundaries of journalism. In working with NGOs, for example, they can engage with causes they feel passionate about and advocate for support through their storytelling.

Finding Partners

While at The Roanoke Times, I felt most successful when I collaborated—in what I'd call a “full partnership”—with a writer as we brought print as well as visual and multimedia stories to readers. I formed such a relationship with Beth Macy, who reported on child and family issues. Like me, she has a boundless curiosity and brings that to her beat. She also had the confidence of editors who enlisted her—and me—to

work on long-term projects. Working alongside Boyer and Seth Gitner, who is now an assistant professor at Syracuse University, also taught me new ways to tell stories using video, audio, data visualization, and mapping. These relationships—I remind my students—are the keys that unlock possibilities.

While I was in Mexico, I befriended several photographers, mostly older men, who have worked in the city plazas in Guadalajara for nearly 30 years with their Polaroid cameras, taking photos of tourists for \$3 a picture. During the 1980's, they'd often take 100 to 200 portraits a day. Today, each averages about three photos a day. A few of them now carry digital cameras along with four-by-six-inch digital printers and a car battery to power their printer. Most continue to operate as they did in 1981. They told me that they despise point-and-shoot digital cameras and abhor cell phones with built-in cameras.

Their business model doesn't work today. Back then few Mexicans owned cameras. Today they are bitter and frustrated because no one needs their service anymore. Wandering through the plazas, they ask "Una foto?" thousands of times a day—with little response. Their failure to adapt coupled with their unwilling-

ness to reeducate themselves or collaborate with others has rendered their service obsolete.

For photojournalists, the ubiquity of digital cameras poses a threat to our careers. The Internet is filled with images. Everyone is a photographer and, for that matter, a videographer, too. For us to find a place for our work—and have it recognized for its value—amid the onslaught of images requires that we educate ourselves, experiment and develop a business model to support high-quality storytelling. To do this, we'll need to be equal parts proactive and adaptive—characteristics that haven't been our strongest attributes in the past.

To be teaching a new generation at this transitional time is a great place to be. Not only can I pass on to them our foundational principles and lessons from the field, but I can educate them about the digital tools, techniques and temperament they'll need in the years ahead. ■

Josh Meltzer teaches photojournalism and multimedia at Western Kentucky University. His work can be found at www.joshmeltzer.com. Photographs of and by 18 teenagers in Mexico whom Josh taught are at www.joshmeltzer.com/ltmp/ltmp.html.

Preparing the Next Generation Of Photojournalists

Exposure, a photojournalism, documentary studies, and human rights program, ‘prepares students for immersive experiences and guides them in their efforts to document through photography what they observe.’

BY SHERMAN TEICHMAN

At Tufts University’s Institute for Global Leadership (IGL), students are exposed to the ambiguities and complexities of the world. We encourage them to challenge assumptions and expand their understanding of how historical, cultural and ideological forces affect individuals and nations. And we help them to pursue careers in which they can act on what they’ve learned.

Such learning often involves absorbing the work of photojournalists whose images bear witness to events and actions for which there are no decisive answers or solutions that will prevent a reoccurrence. During the IGL’s 25 years, our students have been exposed to photojournalists’ images of terrorism, violence and genocide. Their pictures have told us about government corruption and

poverty; they’ve shown us the faces of greed and of fear and opened our eyes wider to what inequality, deprivation and environmental degradation really look like.

Photographs remind us to look at what too often we wish to ignore or deny or simply forget. But these responses are too often accompanied by cynicism and the paralytic excuse of “inevitability.” Our students come to understand that as global citizens of an increasingly interdependent world, we can ill afford this attitude.

In fall 2003, our connection with photojournalism became much more real for students when James Nachtwey, a cofounder of VII Photo Agency, inspired them to create Exposure. This became the IGL’s photojournalism, documentary studies, and human rights program. “I have a strong respect for the institute’s

decades of effort at understanding conflict, its causes and consequences, of the unflinching way it looks at famine, war, ethnic cleansing, and

complex humanitarian emergencies,” he wrote in a letter, explaining his reasons for collaborating with us.

Adhering to the IGL’s nonpolemi-

Taking Stock of the ‘Area Boys’ in Lagos, Nigeria

Samuel James, the winner of Exposure’s first Alexandra Boulat Award, will continue his photographic work on the lives of the “Area Boys,” youth gangs in the slums of Lagos, Nigeria. The award, named in honor of a cofounder of VII Photo Agency, carries a \$2,500 stipend to promote the creation of documentary work with a social purpose.

James, a senior at Tufts University and a participant in the university’s Institute

for Global Leadership’s Exposure program, has worked with the Social and Economic Rights Action Center in Nigeria. His research article, “Urbicide: Lagos and the Crisis of the Megacity,” appeared in the IGL publication, *Discourse*. Accompanying his words were his images in “Water Get No Enemy: A Photo Essay from Lagos, Nigeria.”

James explains that the amorphous and contentious term “Area Boys” is used to describe gangs of unemployed young men who control small areas of Lagos, Nigeria. As these gangs proliferate, with a population now estimated in the hundreds of thousands, they often morph into ethnic militias, vigilantes, mercenaries, trade unions, and political parties—groups that generally seek political spoils through various means of violence and coercion. ■



“Area Boys” (though there are a few females) is a term for youths and young adults in Lagos, Nigeria who engage in acts of violence and coercion. Photo by Samuel James.

cal pedagogy, Exposure prepares students for immersive experiences and guides them in their efforts to document through photography what they observe. One student photo essay focused on the destruction of Islamic culture in Bosnia used to prosecute accused war criminal Slobodan Milosevic at The Hague; another focused on the environmental crisis facing the island nation of Kiribati. Students have investigated the impact of Colombian death squads and the consequences of crude oil capitalism in Azerbaijan. They covered the first democratic election in Kyrgyzstan and the challenges that pastoralists confront in the Karamojong Cluster of Africa.

After graduating from Tufts, some of Exposure's alumni now work as photojournalists. One of them provided the first images that The New York Times published on Darfur and covered military offensives in Iraq and the insurgency in the oil rich Niger Delta. Another captured the aftermath of Benazir Bhutto's assassination in Pakistan and sent home images from the battle between Islamic militants in the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp and the Lebanese Army.

In January, the IGL named the winner of its first Alexandra Boulat

Award, created in memory of one of VII's cofounders, on the same evening that the VII Photo Agency's "Questions Without Answers" exhibition opened at the university's art gallery. The award recipient, Samuel James, was an early member of the Exposure program at IGL.

In his letter from 2004, Nachtwey observed that our Exposure endeavor "will help us all to understand photography as a valuable tool that can help us learn how to make sense of the violence, the destruction, the chaos of this world." Emphasizing the enduring value of the program, he wrote, "Most importantly, it can help to create a public awareness integral to the process of change."

With the mentoring of photojournalists, the support of benefactors, and the structure that Exposure provides, our emerging photojournalists are heading in the direction that Nachtwey envisioned several years ago. ■

Sherman Teichman is the founding director of the Institute for Global Leadership at Tufts University. He was instrumental in bringing to the university VII Photo Agency's exhibit, "Questions Without Answers," which will also be published as a book by Phaidon.

The Camera—It's Only the Starting Point to Change

‘So how does a global news organization such as The Associated Press get this technology working for us? In short, how do we train our photojournalists to use it?’

BY SANTIAGO LYON

Photojournalism is a remarkable mix of visual creativity and pictorial journalism—and, of course, technology. From the earliest efforts at permanent photography in the 1820's, major developments in technology have shaped—and then reshaped—the ways in which photojournalists tell stories.

Relatively portable Speed Graphic cameras with their large and noisy flashbulbs allowed press photographers to document breaking news and work outside the studio. With the advent of 35mm cameras in the 1930's, photographers could make images so quietly and quickly that they became “flies on the wall.” Advances in film sensitivity and “fast” lenses followed soon after and this meant that photographers could do their work in very low light and with no flash. Soon motor drives allowed multiple frames to be captured in se-



The Canon EOS 5D Mark II DSLR can take still images and high-definition video.

quence. Reliable autofocus began to appear for professional use around 1990—and was perfected a decade or so later—and negative scanners enabled film to be digitized and sent via modem across phone lines and finally via the Internet.

In the mid-1990's, digital photography emerged. Since then improvements in resolution have brought us

to the point at which major magazines now rely exclusively on digital images with no real deterioration in quality from what they achieved with film.

By the end of 2008 what photojournalists could do with a single camera took a quantum leap forward with the emergence of an easy-to-carry professional grade DSLR camera capable of shooting HD video. Now they can shoot video in high definition and gather audio with the same camera they use to shoot stills. And this changes everything. Photojournalists who not so long ago were limited to the powerful but mute still image can now explore an expansive range of storytelling possibilities. With the sound and movement of video, they are able to transport viewers into stories using these additional sensory lures. And video, well shot and edited, can convey context and emotion that are not always possible in the still image.

Yet the power and significance of still images remain in this transition to the multimedia presentation of stories. In this new form of storytelling, the element that often makes them work well is the skillful integration of—and sometimes the preponderance of—still images. They are effectively used either as the means of shaping the narrative arc or as vi-

sual punctuation marks. Given the visual expectations of today's multimedia audiences, the hybrid camera is putting precisely the right tool in photojournalists' hands—providing the perfect intersection of technology and sensibility.

Adding the How

So how does a global news organization such as The Associated Press (AP) get this technology working for us? In short, how do we train our photojournalists to use it?

It starts with a willingness to make a significant investment in the purchase of these new cameras. We spend \$2,500-\$4,000 per camera, depending on the model. Then we set up suitable in-house training to familiarize our photojournalists with the camera and some techniques to get them started. Our main objectives can be summarized as these: how to shoot video, how to edit video, and how to compress and deliver the stories to our clients.

Retraining photographers to shoot video can be more challenging than one imagines at first glance. New for them, for example, is the thought that now must go into sequencing and determining the length of the shot. We also teach

them the importance of gathering different types of video so they will have the visual building blocks they'll undoubtedly wish they had once they reach the editing process.

Despite their amazing capacity, these new cameras are small and inconspicuous—the same size as professional SLR cameras already on the market. This, we are finding, works to the advantage of photojournalists since they are already trained to get close to their subjects in an effort to become invisible. What we've discovered is that the subjects of these video efforts are relaxed and frank. The intimacy of the single camera—and the sensibilities that seem to come to those who use it—has prepared photojournalists well. They are able to garner better results than when subjects are confronted by a three-person crew with a large video camera.

Since many of our photographers have not done a lot of in-depth interviews with their subjects (often they only elicit information needed to put their subjects at ease or for captions), we devote time to teaching them how to ask questions to elicit fuller responses that just “yes” or “no.”

Learning how to edit is hugely important and highly difficult. The key to successful editing starts before the editing process even begins. A large

part of our training focuses on helping our photographers know the story they want to tell. This can require a whole new way of thinking—something they must have for reasons as simple as this: For every story they intend to tell, they will often be the one who must figure out and shoot what will become the video's opening and ending shots. We also teach about the value of cutaways as we explain—and demonstrate—how they are used to link elements of the story together.

Sound is vital—spoken and natural. So like radio journalists, for whom this skill resides at the top of their to-do list, our photojournalists will now be expected to give some thought to this element of their storytelling.

Compared to all of this learning about how they'll think about and do their jobs in the field, the technical requirements are easy to teach. Compressing video and delivering it to the newsroom require technical calculations to ensure a good balance between image quality and ease of transmission. And as they did with their photos, they send video via File Transfer Protocol.

Experiencing the What

We've trained upward of 50 photog-

raphers and they're now on assignment throughout the world. Usually their day job is to shoot stills and to shoot video when and where they can, but occasionally we ask them to concentrate exclusively on video.

When they shoot video—and create multimedia stories—for The AP, generally we use what they produce in three ways:

- As B-roll for inclusion in our broadcast television products where it will be mixed with other video from a variety of sources.
- As broadcast-style pieces for the Internet, usually one minute to one and a half minutes in length with an off-camera narrative voice. Still images are often included as visual punctuation in these stories.
- As long-form, protagonist-narrated stories, relying on natural sound when there is not a narrator's voice. Destined for the Web, these video essays sometimes work for broadcast use as well and they incorporate a lot of still images.

The video essays are the most time-consuming photographer-generated genre to produce but often can be the most effective. Because

they escape the TV conventions of the narrator telling you what you are looking at, they represent a fresh approach to news coverage and literally transport the viewer into the story. Stories by two of our photographers, Julie Jacobson and Evan Vucci, illustrate how this happens.

This new type of camera—and on-the-road editing software—is a significant game changer that will allow already excellent visual journalists to do their jobs even more effectively on select stories. It does not signify the end of still photography; this will remain a powerful medium. Rather it gives us the capacity to enhance and deepen viewers' understanding of the stories that we report on visually.

At a time when we are saturated with images—and when captions can easily be separated from the images they once accompanied, with the resulting confusion, it's reassuring to be able to use emerging technology to provide visual context. To know that we are doing this in innovative ways reminds us of the opportunity we have been given to create new paths to telling the stories that people have always wanted to be told. ■

Santiago Lyon, a 2004 Nieman Fellow, is the director of photography at The Associated Press.

Crossing the Line: From Still to Video—to Both At the Same Time

‘I realized the industry was changing, and if I was to remain viable as a visual journalist, I had to become familiar with this apparently favored format of the future.’

BY JULIE JACOBSON

‘V’ideo” was once a four-letter word to me. I’m a photographer, and the line in the sand was distinct: The still image was sacred to me, and I would never cross to the other side. But in 2005 I realized the industry was changing, and if I was to remain viable as a visual journalist, I had to become familiar with this apparently favored format of the future. With video training at The Associated Press (AP) and a Platypus Workshop, I discovered how much I enjoy being able to choose which format would best serve the story I was telling.

The line in the sand suddenly softened.

Since picking up a video camera three years ago for The AP, I have been fortunate enough to choose

to shoot just video or just stills, but never both at the same time. But when I traveled to Afghanistan last summer, the story I was doing on opium addiction compelled me to attempt using both. Last year’s introduction of the Canon EOS 5D Mark II DSLR with HD video capabilities gave me some hope of success. Yet the idea of using frame grabs from the video was not a good option; I find them unreliable, especially in low-light conditions.

In Afghanistan, the process of storytelling became daunting. As any photographer knows, shooting stills and video simultaneously—and doing it well—is next to impossible. Whether attempting stills and video with one hybrid camera or with two separate cameras, the layers needed to capture

the story are placed or pieced together differently. In a still photo, I am looking for the decisive moment, a suspended moment in time layered with the right light, composition and other contributing factors to tell the story in one frame. With video, one shoots these pieces separately as a sequence of actions and adds audio to carry the viewer from a beginning to an end. For a still photo there is no beginning or end. It's timeless. I may wait several minutes or hours for all the necessary elements to come together into one photo. When shooting video, I need those same minutes or hours to shoot multiple "images" or clips to string together into the same story.

So when trying to attempt both at the same time, I will compromise the quality of one or the other medium because I'm concentrating my efforts differently. If I stay and wait for the decisive moment for a single frame, then I end up neglecting to collect all the necessary clips for video. If I'm running around collecting clips for video, then I risk missing that specific moment for a strong still photo.

While I have yet to discover an ideal way to shoot stills and video simultaneously, this experience

convinced me that with this camera it is possible to do it to a good degree of satisfaction. Of course, some stories are easier to execute in this way than others. Going through this trial by fire in Afghanistan I adopted these guidelines:

- Some moments should be captured in photographs only. With those, be true to your photography and don't worry about video.
- Remain as true to your photography while capturing video imagery. Make good "pictures" in your video.
- Some moments and events clearly call for video. But it isn't possible to be everywhere and to get everything, so don't try.
- When shooting stills and video, anticipate moments carefully. If they're not there or time doesn't permit, then make sure to be complete in shooting only one or both will suffer.

Now I approach more stories with the intent of using both stills and video. The line in the sand has almost vanished, and I find myself a more complete journalist. ■

Julie Jacobson is a photographer with The Associated Press.

Gift of Training + Shift in Newsroom Thinking = Multimedia Storytelling

‘Aside from technical training, The AP recognized the importance of reengaging its photographers in the newsroom’s flow.’

BY EVAN VUCCI

The idea of photojournalists on assignment sending photos home now feels quaint. Instead we pitch story ideas, shoot stills and video, edit what we gather, and think about ways that our images can be used to tell stories across different platforms to reach different audiences. Success comes to those who actively engage with others in their newsrooms and embrace emerging technology in ways that enhance their storytelling abilities.

No surefire formula for doing this yet exists, and this means possibilities are limitless. Even for those of us employed by news organizations, embracing the entrepreneurial spirit is vital.

“Killer Blue: Baptized by Fire,” a multimedia project I worked on at The Associated Press (AP), blends video, audio and still photography in the service of telling in depth a poi-

gnant and powerful story. Those who come to this story hear the voices of soldiers from Blue Platoon who were among the last to serve a 15-month combat mission in Iraq when they returned home in 2009. Meshing photographs and video with these soldiers’ recollections and the raw expression of their feelings enabled us to dig deeply inside of this platoon’s life in Iraq and at home.

I worked for about a year with a team at The AP to produce this package. Our efforts began with photo shoots and then we gathered video, audio and more photographs. We produced a 22-minute documentary, created a gallery of still images, and told the story in words. After we published it, a number of newspapers picked up our print/photo package and brought it to their audiences in print and online. News organizations such as MSNBC

featured the documentary on their Web sites.

Publication of this project—online and in print—marked the first time at The AP that a small group of photographers had planned, shot and produced a piece of “visual impact” journalism created for multiple platforms. This happened because people there saw the possibilities existing at the intersection of digital technology and visual storytelling and set out to give photojournalists (and others) the necessary training. But aside from technical training, The AP recognized the importance of reengaging its photographers in

the newsroom’s flow. Newsroom leaders encouraged editorial staff, no matter what medium they most often worked in, to conceptualize stories with photographic, video and audio possibilities in mind.

Training in how to move what photojournalists do across all of the news organization’s platforms is critical. Now that we’ve been given this gift of technical know-how, it’s up to us to prove that the finest era of photojournalism lies ahead, awaiting our ingenuity and skill. ■

Evan Vucci is a photographer with The Associated Press.



U.S. Army soldiers celebrate their return from Iraq last year at a bar in Killeen, Texas. Photo by Evan Vucci/The Associated Press.

A New Focus: Adjusting to Viewers' Increasing Sophistication About Images

In an age when visual literacy is common, photojournalists may need to bring fresh sensibilities to their work.

BY JÖRG M. COLBERG

After more than 50 years of photojournalism—using mostly black and white images, sometimes blurry, sometimes crooked—it is time to realize that this visual tool has become blunt. Perhaps this is why those who judge news photography awards say things like “it feels like we’re seeing the same picture again and again.”

Last year Stephen Mayes, a judge during much of the last decade for the World Press Photo awards, observed that most of the more than 400,000 images he had seen in the annual contest during the past decade “reflect a form of photojournalism that is now more romantic than functional.” His overwhelming impression, he went on to say, is “that photojournalism—as a format for interpreting the world—is trying to be relevant by copying itself

rather than by observing the world.”

At a time when many photojournalists are remaking their lives to fit their work into changing business models, it is difficult to raise the topic of how much their visual language also needs to change. Yet, to my mind—as a critic and curator who deals mostly with fine art photography—these two challenges are intertwined. Success will probably not happen in one unless progress is made in the other. No longer can photojournalists afford to rely on clichés, exemplified by predictable poses of weeping mothers and of starving children staring off into the distance, of soldiers cradling their fallen companions, or the countless others each of us can bring to mind. It is important to realize that each of these stories is still in need of telling, but the hoped-for

connection between journalist and viewer is not likely to happen anymore in conventional ways.

In fine art photography, the pace of adaptation to a world dominated by images has been quicker, with boundaries being tested and expanded through ubiquitous experimentation. While I am under no illusion that fine art photography can be—or should be—a constructive model for photojournalism, its practitioners have firmly grasped the notion that those who view their work do so with heightened levels of visual literacy. Fashion photographers, for example, borrow from imagery outside of their realm. In doing so they often provoke attention—and garner their share of criticism—as they go for the taboo; some have gone so far as to stage waterboarding. Yet pushing at the edge, as they do, would not work if viewers were not already familiar with such images and with their embedded meta-narratives.

In our time the boundaries between the fine arts and photojournalism (or documentary photography) have become fuzzy. Increased visual literacy accounts for some of this, as fine art book publishers along with fine art museum and gallery directors seek out the work

of photojournalists, such as those who've been in the war zones of Iraq and Afghanistan, to bring their images to new audiences—or maybe to an audience not being reached by newspapers any longer. And a younger generation of photojournalists, including photographers such as Mikhael Subotzky, Peter van Agtmael, Jonathan Torgovnik, and Jonas Bendiksen, are using an imagery that does not look all that different from the work being produced by fine art photographers.

Added to all of this is the explosion in the number of images being sent and shared, tagged and touted. Clearly the Web is revolutionizing visual communication. Anyone with a mobile phone or computer has access to every kind of image imaginable. All of this demands new skills as people struggle to quickly absorb a deluge of images. Similarly, digital media require us to reassess the manipulative power of imagery, whether it's being used to sell us something or provoke us to act.

With the viewer's cultivation of a suspicious eye and digital media tools that make it easier to manipulate images comes an increasing number of questions. Sometimes the manipulation of an image is

clearly unethical; other instances merely underscore the realization that what images represent for us today is not the same as it was 50 years ago

In effect, the problem of image manipulation is not the central one, given that photographs have always been manipulated: Strictly speaking, making choices about how to take a photograph is a manipulation—as are various commonly accepted post-processing steps (adjusting contrasts, cropping, etc.). The real problem is that at a time when viewers are able to read images quickly and astutely, they are dealing with media whose credibility has eroded considerably. When trust in those who deliver news diminishes and knowledge about what can be done with photographs spreads—thanks to computers and digital cameras—the expectation that photos have been manipulated increases. Given these circumstances, viewers have plenty of reasons to question the photojournalism that they find in newspapers, magazines and on the Web.

Additionally, as frontline photojournalism reaches viewers, what seems familiar will simply be overlooked or ignored while what is unpredictable—what does not make

an obvious attempt to seduce us—will leap out to catch the eye and engage the mind. As viewers find images using an old formula to try to provoke an emotional response, their impulse is to block the attempt and move on. Unless photojournalists find fresh ways to convey what they are seeing, their work won't reach audiences.

This is where the intersection with changing business models happens. With fewer mainstream media publications able (or willing) to support the efforts of photojournalists, new ways to fund such work must be created. It would be disastrous to view this as only a business or aesthetic problem. What photojournalists do is critical in our democracy, which after all relies on an informed citizenry. Photojournalists have to adapt their visual sensibilities to the literacy level of their audience and they ignore this necessity at their peril. For our democracy, their failure to adjust will have a profound impact on our collective peril. ■

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What Crisis?

‘It’s not about finding new ways to do old things, but time to radically rethink our business models by redefining our products, our partners, and our clients.’

BY STEPHEN MAYES

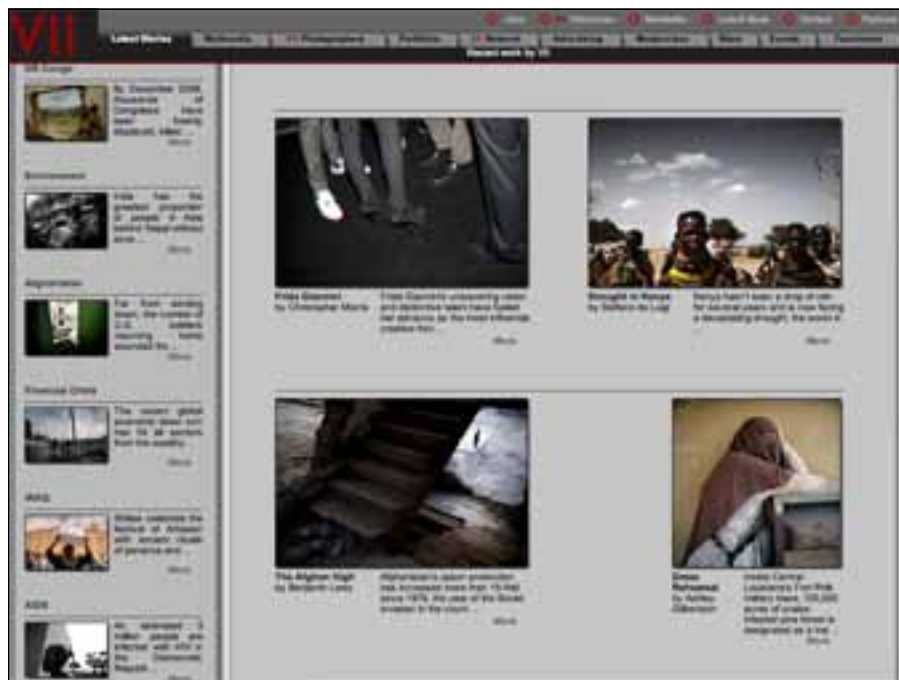
There is talk about a crisis in journalism, which generally takes the form of angst-ridden journalists, editors and news folk in general asking, “How do we maintain the commercial status quo without which journalism as we know it will be gone?” The question is sincere and extends beyond the fear of losing jobs; there is a genuine concern that the investigative and informative roles of the news media will be lost with a high cost to the civic health of our society.

Interestingly, it’s not a question that I have heard asked by many consumers of news who are finding all the information they want in the online environment—and more. For those of us in journalism, we’re asking it way too late, since a crisis of news communication has been with us for many years, if not decades. From where I sit—as director of VII Photo Agency, a small agency founded in 2001 by leading photojournal-

ists—this digital shakedown offers an opportunity to correct some of the deep problems that have bedeviled the business of print journalism—and gone unchallenged—for too long.

“We don’t know who discovered water, but we know it wasn’t the fish,” said Marshall McLuhan, and so it is with the media. Those who have been totally immersed in news for so long are among the last to discover the true attributes of our medium and it’s taking a major shock to force a reluctant review of what it is we think we’re doing. Far from a crisis, I see this as a major opportunity to redefine journalism with clarity and force as we move into the new millennium. New horizons are opening and rather than look backward in fear we should be looking forward with excitement.

At this point, most discussion accepts that the Internet expands the opportunities for distribution



VII uses its Web site to display photographers' stories at a time when the photo agency is "transitioning from being a mere supplier to being a producer and increasingly acting as its own publisher."

but frets that there is no commercial model to support it. Talk turns to advertising revenues and hope resides on pay walls or subscriptions to restore the balance of readers paying market value for the information they consume. This is, however, a misguided discussion because it overlooks the many fun-

damental changes in the economics of publishing that have demolished the old structures so completely that we need to think in different terms about our product, its value, and how to monetize it.

The digital revolution is a paradigm shift, not so different from the invention of the printing press,

which took exclusive hand-drawn parchments and made the information infinitely available. So it is in the 21st century that the finite resources of print distribution have been ripped apart in favor of the infinite distribution of the Web. It's missing the point to anguish about the market value of scribes; instead we should be questioning the nature of information and its relationship to those who consume it. We can take comfort in the historical precedent that more money has been made from print than was made from scribing, and so it will be with the Internet.

Once we understand the nature of our product in the digital environment, opportunities will open up as never before.

A Happy Goodbye

I have long had a problem with the old-style editorial market that has consistently underpaid its suppliers, overcharged its advertisers, and given short shrift to its consumers with its restricted content agenda and formulaic presentation styles. I don't miss the coercive practices and the hours of argument over rights-grabbing contracts offset by derisory day rates and nonexistent expenses.

Goodbye to all that.

Gone is our former dependence on the powerful elite who controlled the vast infrastructure of print production and distribution. The artificial economy of supply and demand not only kept fees unrealistically low but also restricted the information available to readers. Ideological and economic powers maintained a stranglehold on what was considered news and only those who bought into this agenda of controlled information were allowed access to the channels of communication. And all too often the credential for entry into this exclusive club was the endless rehashing of tired stories, lazy worldviews, and haughty perspectives.

Now is the time for reinvention.

With the newly emerging Internet tools and increasingly diverse and sophisticated online audiences the opportunities are multiplying as we seek to harness our skills to serve a richer communication mission and to generate more revenue. It's a moment of great optimism and opportunity for those with ambition and imagination to go beyond what we have known before. While I share the pain being felt by the many individuals and small organizations that are struggling, I don't have the

same sympathy for the organizations that have treated photo suppliers with disdain for so many years. And for those individuals and small organizations that find themselves out in the cold, if we think we have something to offer now is the time to prove it.

For the first time in many years, being small is an asset. We keep hearing that the tested revenue models no longer work for publishers, and that's true. The bigger you are, the greater your infrastructure and the more you have to sustain while at the same time your ability to adapt is limited. Fixed costs of staff, property and production are overwhelming and legacy contracts are stifling. Investors demand that the big grow bigger at a time when maybe there's greater profit in smaller operations. At a time when flexibility, adaptability and experimentation are the cornerstones of our business, the smaller we are the bigger our opportunities.

Now is the time to think different.

Consider the monkey trap in which a delicious nut is placed at the bottom of a jar waiting for a hungry monkey to grab it. But the monkey's clenched fist wrapped around the nut is trapped by the neck of the jar. And here we are, focused on short-

term solutions to yesterday's problems, fixated on the things that used to feed us, desperately trapped by our need to eat as we hang on to a tried and tested formula for survival. And so we starve.

Let go. Move on. All the things that we think will sustain us are killing us. And yet our work still has value, and maybe even greater value in the new environment than in the old. It's not about finding new ways to do old things, but time to radically rethink our business models by redefining our products, our partners, and our clients. We come from a world that was relatively simple where our product was easily defined—image licenses in various forms—and our relationship to clients was clearly understood as a humble supplier, financed in the largest part by one simple model of advertising-funded publishing.

Redefining What We Do

Fundamental to change is the redefinition of our product. Historically, intellectual property of all kinds has been sold in units to those who consume it or more often to intermediaries who have profited from packaging and distributing it. Those units have been fees for days

worked or licenses measured per use of existing material. Today we are experiencing the pain of oversupply in a saturated market—there is just too much information out there and adding another photograph to the ocean of content doesn't increase value, it further dilutes it.

Yet the value of intelligent photojournalism is still with us. Rather than struggle to survive on the diminishing prices of licensed units, I have recalibrated my mind to a new way of thinking. I no longer see VII as a traditional photo agency that supplies images in response to someone else's demand but rather as a powerhouse of integrity and believability; those attributes are what I see as our true product and our value.

In a world where so much information is of uncertain origin or is otherwise unbelievable, believability becomes a highly valuable asset. It's true that not everyone cares where their information comes from and many search merely to affirm their existing beliefs, but there are enough people in this big wide world who do care to make this a desirable product with real commercial value. And in redefining the product and the value system I find that there is already a market with cash to spend on some-

thing they want to believe in.

Just as it's necessary to redefine our product, it is also important to redefine our relationship to the marketplace when it is no longer relevant to think of us being in a simplistic two-way relationship as suppliers to clients.

One of the exciting aspects of business in the 21st century is the more complex mix of components with expanded opportunities for distribution and funding. Instead of clients I look for partners, often more than one. Instead of fees, I look for shared investment with open-ended (and hopefully extended) returns. Most importantly, in a world that is awash with too much information and too many images, I am moving away from licensing images with ever-diminishing fees. Instead, I am starting to monetize other attributes.

For VII Photo, our most valuable asset is integrity—the credibility of the photojournalists who own the agency, for which I find a growing list of interested partners. Certainly the magazines are still in the mix, but now they are seen more as print distribution partners than as exclusive clients, with additional distribution through TV and online partners. And this arrangement is

often cofunded by another party and supported separately by technology partners. The lineup shifts for each project, and as each new partner comes on board the opportunities to do interesting work and to generate income multiply.

Now is the time when VII is transitioning from being a mere supplier to being a producer and increasingly acting as its own publisher.

Fixating on the money photojournalists can generate from old-style transactions is a losing cause. It steals from us the energy that we can use getting busy reinventing the very nature of the product that we are handling. As we do this, the process will allow new values to emerge and a new economy to grow.

It is a huge challenge and a fantastic opportunity which embraces all areas of professional journalism as well as citizen journalism, blogging, tweeting and instant, infinite distribution. Some of the key words and concepts that demand interrogation as we act include information, editing, curation, integrity, believability, distribution, journalist, reader and indeed news.

How each of us meets these challenges becomes personal. We can no longer hide behind the failings of the top-down institutions that have controlled information. Now, the future rests in our hands. ■

Stephen Mayes is director of VII Photo Agency.

Too Many Similar Images, Too Much Left Unexplored

In May 2009, Stephen Mayes spoke at the World Press Photo awards ceremony in Amsterdam. He had served as secretary of the jury for the awards from 2004 to 2009, and his observations about photo judging led to much discussion among photojournalists. Here are some excerpts:

The overwhelming impression from the vast volume of images is that photojournalism (as a format for interpreting the world) is trying to be relevant by copying itself rather than by observing the world.

Nowhere is this more obvious than at World Press Photo where every year the winners stimulate a slew of copyists (in style and content). It's easy to understand why when we consider that the last 20 years has seen an explosion in the numbers of professional photojournalists and a collapse of the traditional markets. As more photographers compete for less page space, a lot of work ends up in competitions as the only outlet—and as the largest, World Press Photo gets more than its fair share.

Every year, the jury is astonished by the repetition of subjects and the lack of variety in the coverage. From the infinity of human experience the list of subjects covered by the entrants would fill a single page, and (excluding sports as a specialist area) could be reduced even to three lines:

- The dispossessed and the powerless
- The exotic
- Anywhere but home (the American election would be one of the exceptions to this rule).

This is the general view, the blurred impression of 470,214 images and of course there are many exceptions. But meanwhile hospitals and the sick (and especially mental hospitals), the afflicted, the poor, the injured are photographed way in excess of their actual numbers. And I have a feeling that there are as many photographers as drug users in Kabul's Russian House. As one juror said this year, "Ninety percent of the pictures are about 10 percent of the world."

Overrepresented: commercial sex, suffering black folk, Muslim women in veils, same sex couples kissing, holding hands.

Underrepresented: middle class, affluent drug users, real sex, personal sex, black culture and expanded vision of black life outside Africa. ■

Listen to the entire talk at <http://lensculture.com/stephen-mayes.html>.

Music Lessons Inform Photojournalism's Future

‘The record business died as the digital music business was born. Photojournalism finds itself at a similar juncture now.’

BY IAN GINSBERG

Photojournalism finds itself in a cauldron of change. Keep moving must be our mantra, for to stand still in this business today is to die.

I worked in the music business for a decade—at Sony Music, its Columbia and Epic record labels, and as an artist manager with such clients as Lenny Kravitz—before joining the business side of VII Photo Agency last September. As the music industry underwent a major upheaval, executives tried to hang on to the old business model, managing to alienate customers, artists and distributors all at once. Some in the industry realized that they either had to adapt to the digital business environment or die.

Record company executives realized too late that they had been in the plastics business all along, producing the containers in which



Apple's iPod, shown on this July 26, 2004 Newsweek cover, helped to transition music sales to an online marketplace.

music had been sold: 45s, LPs, cassette tapes, CDs. Their product was actually little more than packaging and promotion. Now music didn't need their packaging—or their promotion. Art existed as art. Record labels were no longer the only game in town. Competition for what they packaged arose everywhere—from concert promoters like Live Nation to artists who no longer wanted to or needed to cede control of their work to anyone. The record business died as the digital music business was born.

Photojournalism finds itself at a similar juncture now. That's why I'm at VII—to bring to the table what I learned from the music industry's transition as we figure out how to meet the challenges—and seize the opportunities—of a rapidly changing environment. Here are a few hints I've already passed along:

- Grab opportunities to develop relationships with consumers.
- Embrace the business-to-consumer model.
- Interact with consumers. Ask them what they think and want.
- Give it to them.

Photojournalism has plenty it

can learn from the music industry's mistakes:

- Don't sue your consumers.
- Don't ignore what they're telling you.
- Don't underestimate their power and influence.
- Don't try to force an unwanted product down their throats.
- Don't lose sight of the value of people who care so much about your content that they spend energy finding it for free and sharing it with their friends.
- And don't wait too long!

The Value of Partnership

So what happens next to photojournalism? There is no panacea, only an amalgam of opportunities.

At VII, when a project idea surfaces—whether from one of our photographers, someone on staff, or a potential partner or former client—our wheels start turning. Our first thought is not necessarily about which magazine will publish the photographs; instead we are more likely to seek out partners, possibly a nongovernmental organization, maybe a corporation. We think about a range of media where the story might be told—from Web

sites to TV. Connections from my music industry days come in handy when we decide to reach out to theater companies, video game developers, and music entrepreneurs. Most gratifying has been the positive reception we're finding to collaborative ideas that don't have much of a track record.

The take-away lesson for me is this: There is a market; it's just not the same store.

Print publications are unlikely to disappear, given the devotion of those who enjoy the sensory experience—the feel of flipping a page, the smell and sound, or just the act of buying a magazine at the corner newsstand or hearing the thud of the morning newspaper as it arrives in their driveway. They will pay for this experience and advertisers will pay to market to them. Print publications have been our clients for a very long time and they will continue to be so.

It's also likely that we will be working with newspaper and magazine publishers in new ways. For example, VII is collaborating with

a Danish company, Revolt Communications, to develop a proprietary technology called VII Player. Once up and running, this player will enable our photojournalists to be publishers in their own right and work as true business partners with those who distribute their work. The VII Player will bring our agency revenue from affiliate deals and advertising.

The take-away lesson for me is this: There is a market; it's just not the same store.

Once VII's photographers create multimedia content—and this player will offer them easy-to-use editing tools while they are on assignment—our busi-

ness partners will work on distributing it to customers. And when customers then click on these images, they'll be taken to other related content and products, such as books and prints, which are sold by VII. With this player—which is really “a site within a site” offering connections to the business world—VII can explore ways of establishing corporate sponsorships and affiliate marketing packages as well as selling advertising space.

Marketing Visual Media

For photojournalists to do what they do—often in faraway places, for long stretches of time, and with an abundance of danger—they need financial support. Yet the digital marketplace doesn't lend itself to this. Digital consumers expect and want to get news and information, including visual storytelling, for free. Is building pay walls a viable business strategy? The debate rages on. On places like YouTube and Facebook people (estimated at 400 million) are building their own distribution networks and becoming their own network executives. People publish photographs and direct traffic to them.

With what's already happening online, the pieces may be in place to create an early adopters program in which incentives and rewards are offered to users who share professional content.

Marketers are constantly looking for new ways to deliver messages and create brand awareness. In his keynote address at ad:tech in November, Sir Martin Sorrell, CEO of WPP, one of the world's largest communication services and advertising companies, spoke about the blurring of lines between edi-

torial and advertising. Given that it's advertisers who pay for pages to exist in newspapers and magazines, is it more of a conflict if photojournalists work with them directly? It could be if images get used in deceptive ways, for example, or are cropped in ways that don't consider the photographer's perspective and intent. But when the photographer is made a genuine partner, the likelihood of this lessens.

Key to our success will be remembering that our business is journalism—the stories and the photographs (accompanied now by audio and video) we produce—and not the newspapers and magazines in which much of our work once appeared. It's time to think creatively and deeply—perhaps together as an industry, more likely on our own—about ways to foster innovation, continue what is worth keeping, and marry the two in fresh forms on new platforms. Along the way we hope we find business strategies to support our ambitions. ■

Ian Ginsberg is the director of projects and partnerships at VII Photo Agency.