

STORYTELLING HANDBOOK



Getting Started



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This handbook will guide you in your initial decisions on how to tell the stories of your community. What topic should you tackle? And how should you tell it? Whether you decide to create a video or audio project, we've got you covered with handbooks that go over the basic steps for any storytelling project. Be sure to check them out once you've chosen a topic and medium.

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The topic of your project should be linked to the theme of the traveling exhibition coming to your community. First, make sure you understand the exhibition's themes. Check MoMS website for complete details on the exhibition content: <http://www.museumonmainstreet.org>. Now it's time to choose a topic.

1 Find your interest. What interests you about this theme? It's important for you to be interested in the topic. Your enthusiasm for the topic will help you convey the story to your intended audience in an engaging way.

2 Brainstorm. Taking as much time as you need, write down the themes in the exhibition that interest you. Which ones have the strongest connection to your community? How do they connect to a larger national topic or history?

3 Determine your audience. Who is your intended audience? Identifying your audience will help narrow down which themes will work best for that audience, determine how you should frame your story and what medium might be best to convey the story.

4 Ensure you have the access to the elements you need. Once you have a theme that works with your interests and audience, do a quick preliminary search for research sources, images, interviewees, archival video, old newspapers, and more, to ensure you will have enough content to complete your project.

5 Narrow your topic. Now that you have an idea of what assets are available, make sure your topic is narrow enough to do it justice. For instance, the topic of sports in your community is too large. Instead, narrow it down to one sport, or even better, one team. Having a narrow focus allows you to fully understand and convey the story of that topic.

6 Decide your medium. Should your story be told in audio format with images or should you use video? Can you weave your narrative with only words and sounds, or do you need b-roll footage and other moving images? Think about your audience, your resources, and your interests as you decide.

Choosing which medium to use for your finished product could be one of the hardest choices you will make for this project. Below are a few things to consider while you are debating between an audio project or a video project.

Usability

Audio is one of the most easily consumed media in various environments. You can listen to audio while doing almost any activity. You don't have to be staring at a screen. Watching video requires a lot more attention than audio. You need to have access to a screen and dedicate your time solely to watching the video.

Cost

Because you need less equipment, it is less expensive to record audio than video.

Time

You only need to be concerned with sound elements for your final project, not visual elements, so it takes less time to record and edit the final project. When shooting for a video project, you are dealing with more equipment and have to worry about the visual as well as the audio elements of your project. Therefore it takes more time to record and edit a video project.

Complexity

Recording and editing video is a more complicated than audio with color correction, composition, video codecs, resolutions, frame rates, and more.

Data Management

Video files are large. Video projects are more challenging for data management than audio because they require more storage space than audio files.

Visuals

When done well, audio-only content can be dynamic and engaging, but it can't *show* users the story the way video can. Instead of spending time describing something in order to discuss it, video allows you to simply "show and tell." A person, concept, place, or thing can be brought more clearly to life as the audience can see those things. If you plan to do a lot of interviews, perhaps video would be best as video interviews can be more engaging than sound alone, and can convey other information like body language and expressions.

Flexibility

When you are recording for a video project, you are also recording high quality audio. You can always use that audio to create an audio-only project, but you can't do the same if you are only recording audio.

Purpose of the Content

Ultimately, the biggest question to ask yourself as you plan this project, is what is the goal of the project? Which medium will help you meet that goal?

Special Consideration

If you intend to create a mobile tour for your community, then think about the fact that people will be walking around looking at their surroundings. You won't need video since the visual will be right in front of them.

According to Pew Research Center, nearly two-thirds of Americans are now smartphone owners. When visitors come to your town, they will likely use their phones to navigate – finding places to stay, to eat, and things to do. Think about turning your project into a mobile tour that visitors and local alike can use to explore and learn about your town.

A tour is a group of 10-15 stories connected by a common theme. A typical stop on a tour is between 1-3 minutes. Using the free mobile app, izi.TRAVEL, you can create and publish geolocated content (content placed virtually in real life locations). The audio and video stories or tour stops can include walking and driving directions as well as text and images. As the user moves around the town, stories are triggered to automatically play at their relevant locations.

Things to think about when considering a tour:

- Are there physical locations connected to the historic and cultural stories you intend to create?
- Will you have more than one story or several story segments, so you can create several connected stops?
- Will your content be an appropriate length for a walking or driving tour? typical tour stops are between 1-3 minutes. Shorter is better.
- Will your content be in an appropriate format for a walking or driving tour? Audio is best for a mobile tour, though you can also use videos.

If you decide to create a tour, your completed stories will be location based. Keep those locations in mind as you plan and create your story projects. Also, remember that people will be likely be standing when listening to your stories - be kind to their feet and keep the stories short.

Tours consist of:

Tourist attractions or locations. The stops or stories on the tour. They contain any or all of the following:

- Geographic coordinates
- A text description
- Audio story about the location
- One or more photographs
- Video about the location (optional)
- Quiz question (optional)

Tour route. The best path to take in order to view each of the attractions on the tour. The users see this route via their mobile application and follow it.

Navigational information. The audio hints designed to give the user directions at confusing points on the journey to different stops. It, like the locations, have a trigger-zone to cause it to automatically start playing at the point it's needed.

What if I only have one story?

If you only have one story, but you still want people to be able to hear it as they explore your town, you can add it to the izi.TRAVEL app as a stand-alone stop. The app has a “free walking mode” that users can turn on, so they can run into all the geolocated content in the town without having to follow a specific tour. This includes any stand-alone stops that you create.

Check out examples on the izi.TRAVEL app or website, like “Eubie Blake’s Ragtime Riffs” or “Station North Arts & Entertainment District” from Baltimore.

