

Technical Requirements & Ascetics Advanced Information

Overview

Technical Requirements

- Sound
- Length
- Format
- Copyright
- Permissions
- Credits
- Branding & Marketing

Ascetics

- Topics
- Structure
- Shot Composition
- Editing
- Use of Creative Elements

Technical Requirements:

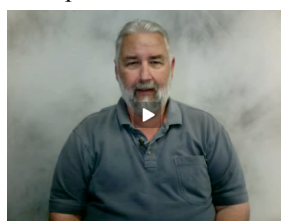
Lighting: All shots should be properly lit, meaning adequate light on faces and clearly discernable backgrounds. Take special care when lighting people wearing glasses to minimize glare.

Example 1



Well lit, well composed

Example 2



Well lit, composition static

Example 3



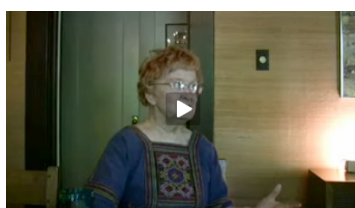
Well lit, well composed

Example 4



Poor Composition

Example 5



Distracting background

Example 6



Poorly lit

In an attempt to unify the statewide collection of stories, we request that you use the grey backdrop as often as possible. Please keep in mind the lighting behind the screen before you shoot to make sure that the screen doesn't become see-through because of windows or light fixtures positioned behind your set up.

Sound: Be sure to test levels before recording to assure the correct volume. One of the most common mistakes is to forget to test the sound levels before recording. You do not want to discover that your sound is unacceptable when you get to the editing phase. Pay attention to sound levels to be sure that sound is not distorting. -12dB is usually an appropriate level for sound.

Always use the lavalier microphone instead of the computer or camcorder built-in microphones. The clip on lavalier microphone will give your digital story superior sound. When outdoors, use the wind cap that comes with the lavalier microphone to help reduce distracting noises.

Also, be sure the person speaking is enunciating words clearly. This may take some direction on your part, so pay special attention to what is being said. If a person is difficult to understand or speaks a language other than English, consider adding subtitles.

Length: Stories should be 2-3 minutes in length, not including titles and credits. The short stories will help to keep storytellers focused as well as create a vivid collection that will keep an audience's attention. California of the Past stories are not meant to be full fledged documentaries. They are meant to be personal antidotes, experiences and recollections that create a cultural tapestry that represents California's diversity.

Format: Once you are finished with your story, it should be saved in two separate Quicktime formats.

1. Web Format Settings

H.264, 44.1 kHz, Stereo, 480X360, Key Frame Rate: 24

2. Archival Format Settings

DV/DVCPRO – NTSC, Interlaced, 4:3, 720X480, 44.1 kHz, Stereo

At the end of the contract, all participating libraries will be required to send a copy of both versions of each story to MEDIA ARTS CENTER SAN DIEGO and the State Library.

Copyright: It is your responsibility to be aware of the materials you are using. Use of copyrighted material is not permitted. This includes pictures, video footage, music, interviews and sound. Make sure to review the Read Me PDF to get a basic understanding of Creative Commons, use of Royalty Free elements, Copyright and Fair Use.

Permissions: You need written permission from ALL storytellers. Please use the forms that the California of the Past project provides or the revised form from the libraries legal staff. Each digital story station contains three forms: individual storyteller permission forms, group forms and copyright permission forms.

Credits: In order to build a cohesive collection for California of the Past, we require all stories to carry the I AM ... California of the Past introduction and end credits. The final credits include a simple legal notice to protect the library and our partners in the program.

You are welcome to add additional titles and credits to your stories. For the sake of time, please keep them simple, as seen below. All credits should be created using the font Verdana.



Branding: In all stories, please use a standard Verdana font for all titles, credits, subtitles, names, etc. Below are marketing guidelines that apply to your digital story as well as E-mail Campaigns, Flyers, Postcards, Website Banners, Newspaper and Advertisements.

- ALWAYS use the term [Digital Story Station](#)
- ALWAYS include the project name [California of the Past](#)
- ALWAYS include the link www.DigitalStoryStation.com
- Include your local partner's logos
- Press Releases should include the following blurb:

California of the Past is supported in whole or in part by a California State Library grant supported by the U.S. Institute of Museum & Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian with services provided by Califa and **MEDIA ARTS CENTER SAN DIEGO**.

You may want to also incorporate a statement about your partners:

California of the Past is locally brought to you by your local library in “City” with our partners: “partnerships.”

For example, **California of the Past** is locally brought to you by your local library *downtown San Diego* with our partners: *Rotary International, Lion's Club, San Diego Historical Society and the Pinnacle Seniors Center.*

You may want to include the following disclaimer:

The opinions expressed in **California of the Past** digital stories do not necessarily reflect the position or policies of U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services, California State Library, **MEDIA ARTS CENTER SAN DIEGO**, Califa or their partners and no official endorsement should be inferred.

Note: The program is **California of the Past**, not *The California of the Past*. When writing press releases, consider the title as a proper name and do not include the word THE before the program title.

Aesthetics

Story Topics: Most libraries initially develop California of the Past programs where the stories celebrate a specific topic or theme. These collections make for a powerful statement when presented together. For example, some libraries have tied their stories into their city's centennial events with a focus on the men, women, places and events that shaped their town's history. Other libraries have focused on immigration stories about coming to California, World War II memories, advancements of women and minorities within their community, recollections from their eldest community members, and revisiting almost forgotten city traditions such as town fairs and pageants.

Even when focused on a specific topic, don't forget to be creative and celebrate diversity. The more diversity you are able to explore in your stories, the more successful the collection will be.

Also, please make sure your stories are appropriate for a general, all ages audience. This means you will need to edit for language and content. It is up to you to use your best judgment in these cases.

Quotes: Another way to create a sense of unity in the videos is to incorporate a quotation directly from the interviewee at the beginning of the video. This quotation should encompass the tone of the video. Often it highlights the main point that the storyteller is sharing in his or her digital story. This will help to underscore the important message being shared with the public.

Quotes should be on a black background with white lettering. Verdana font should be used. Text should be formatted like the following:

“It’s really just about inviting someone else to see the world the way you saw it – if only for a moment.”

- Jeff Caffarel

Story Structure: All stories should have a discernable beginning, middle, and end. As these stories are very short, your storytellers should be direct and to the point. If editing down a free form interview, be selective when editing the final story.

A basic story structure includes:

1. 30 second intro
2. 1-2 minute portrait of your subject
3. 30 second ending

Introduction:

A quick 30 second introduction can be done in many ways. Here are three examples that you can consider when writing your story:

1. Start with a simple thought, a question or even a joke that relates to the core story or outcome
*I always wondered who lived in this house I now called home...
How did I ever find myself living in California? ...*
2. Often stories provide a little background to help ease the listener into the story
Struggling through long Minnesota winters, I spent my childhood dreaming of exotic places...
3. Catch the listener with a hook - a statement that catches their attention
I heard the door slam and the rushing of feet ...

Core Story:

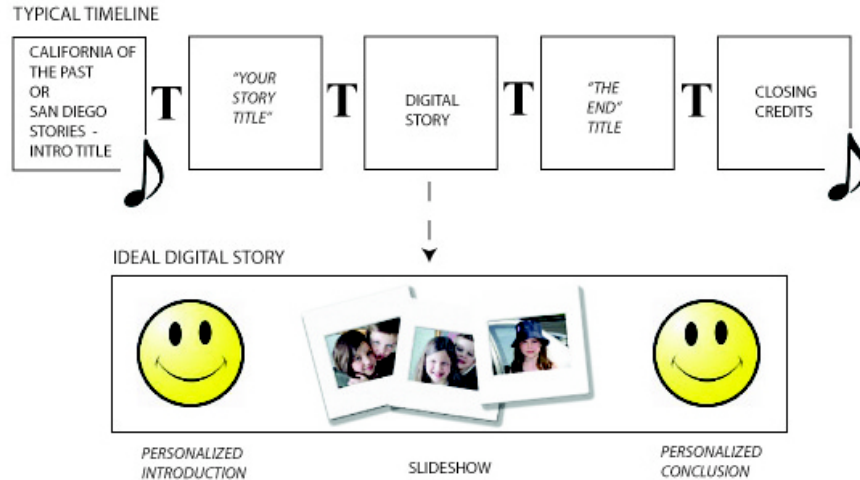
There are no hard rules to the creativity of storytelling but we have a few pointers that may help you write or edit your story. Story starter forms have been created to help you with write your story. The explain how you can consider what is the focus of the story, what is your ‘emotional point of view’ and who you are talking too. The forms are a great source to brainstorm as you write your story or to use as a guide to help you as an interviewer to find someone else’s story.

Keep in mind that the least interesting story is one that is a ‘laundry list.’ Those stories miss out on the human aspect but simply listing dates, people and activities. (*My name is John Smith, I was born on January 1st in Sacramento, at 10 years old I attended private music school,...*). The most captivating stories are those that keep it personal (*I come from a long line of musicians - Jazz musicians! I’m John Smith and during a surprise winter storm I surprised my parents by insisting on being born in a Jazz Club in the heart of downtown Sacramento. I suppose it foreshadowed a lifelong musical career. A career that truly started when I first entered Sacramento’s School of Music at the age of 10 years old ...*).

Ending:

A quick 30 second wrap up will help the listener feel that they have come full circle with you and give closure to your story.

1. Reflect upon the original thought
*Well, now I know who lived in this house and I’m proud to carry on the legacy of...
And that’s how I came to California!*
2. Explain how your experience changed you or those around you
Now I watch my own children dream of exotic places and they dream about snow!
3. Underscore the point of your story
That was when I first really learned that its important to be prepared for anything.



Shot Composition: The better you compose your shots, the better your overall story will be. Shots should be clear and in focus and properly lit. Good shots will also be evocative of the story and help it to move forward logically. When using video, the use of a tripod is recommended wherever possible, as shaky shots will compromise the overall impression the story gives. Photographs are also encouraged, but make sure you aren't using copyrighted material. Take the photos yourself whenever possible or get permission.

Example 1



Clear subject, dynamic shot

Example 2



Well lit, interesting composition

Editing Choices: Be aware of how your piece will be edited together as you create it. This will help editing go faster. Do not simply get as much as possible and then try to figure it out. It might help to make an outline of what you would like to show. This will ensure that you don't spend time on things that you aren't going to use. While editing, please refrain from using distracting transitions. Jump cuts are acceptable, as are cross dissolves. Most other transitions are too flashy and distracting, so please steer clear of them. Also be aware of rhythm when editing your story together, and make sure the story flows easily and logically from one thing to the next.

Use of Creative Elements: It is perfectly acceptable to create a simple, uncomplicated style through direct interviews and slide shows. In fact we encourage libraries to keep it simple when they are first time digital story station creators. Simple interviews and slideshows will help you to put the emphasis on storytelling while building your technical editing skills. Both styles create their own storytelling emphasis. A direct interview, with the storyteller in front of the camera, builds a strong connection between the storyteller and the listener. A slideshow with a voice over removes that person to person connection and places the emphasis on the story itself.

Mini-movies are a format similar to the style we are most accustomed to through television and the Internet. This style combines a variety of creative elements to bring your story together: video, photographs, interview, voice over, and music.

If you are just starting out, create simple digital stories. Once your skills build then throw in one or two additional creative elements. Remember the more creative elements you use, the more complicated the editing process may become and the more time that you will need to put into the production of your video. Sometimes, the motto 'less is more' is a good axiom.