Towards a taxonomy of news video

Beginnings

In 2015, my employer, the then-Fairfax-owned Sydney Morning Herald (SMH), made a major change to its video strategy. Along with a new set of benchmarks and objectives around publications and engagement minutes, we in the video team were asked to shift from producing short news packages with a voiceover, to short news packages where the narrative was conveyed by onscreen text.

The move was in response to growing research that indicated that an ever-larger portion of the audience was consuming our video content on mobile devices (Kalogeropoulos et al., 2016; Kalogeropoulos & Kleis Nelson, 2018; S. Morris, personal communication, 20 May 2019; Newman et al., 2016). Facebook's newly minted video capabilities delivered video with the sound off by default (Schäfer, 2020), and this was seen to be a major driver in the need to publish video content that could be understood without audio. Resourcing and the technological limitations of the day made it more expedient to create a whole new genre of video with text slates telling the story, than to subtitle audio-narrated video. We would still apply the latter technique to our higher-quality videos, but for the daily 'churnalism' as we fondly called our breakneck daily news packages, we moved almost overnight to producing montage-style videos with short onscreen text statements explaining the key points.

To an audience in 2022, these videos are de rigour, but in 2015, a series of production decisions needed to shift to accommodate the new style. This is not to say that we pioneered this style at the SMH, but as it was the first time we'd done it, we had a steep learning curve to undertake. We looked to our friends at the New York Times, Vox Media, the BBC online – and conducted our own in-house research to establish the new grammar rules of the genre. The new knowledge we gained formed the basis of an emerging video style guide – similar in intention to the print style guides that have long presided over newsrooms. In addition to the newsroom norms of active voice and present tense, a series of technical,

syntactic, and grammatical rules were born. Onscreen time for each word was dictated by the rule that audiences could read three words pers second (Phillips et al., 2013). We were allowed no more than 20 words per screen. A dark box of at least 60% opacity would contain the text to make it more legible. Fonts must not be serifed. Quotation marks must be singular. No full stops after abbreviated titles. The style guide ballooned as we considered the innumerable scenarios that arise from adding words to moving images.

Our shooting style changed in lockstep with the new editorial practices. We began looking for shots where the point of interest was not centre-frame – allowing room on one side of the subject for a swathe of text to be added in post production. Shots of longer duration were favoured, to allow time for that text to be read. We began to seek more 'wallpaper' style shots to augment our work, allowing for flexibility in the edit. We attempted to capture or source footage that communicated ideas simple enough to be augmented by a short sentence – or less. Our work took on a photographic quality – not in the sense that it became more concerned with composition or beauty – but in the sense that it conveyed more meaning, more concisely, than in previous years. We borrowed from other genres of video, from the documentary film to the narrative feature, to create a collection of heuristics that best served our new purposes.

Ultimately, what emerged was a new genre of news video communication, created explicitly for use on the Web. There are many consistencies across different publishing houses in the rules of this genre – although that is hardly surprising, given the consistencies in news formats of all types across the world.

For students in 2022, these consistencies – and the differences between, say, this new type of online news video and the old mode of broadcast news video – are an important distinction. It is a distinction that invites a certain style of production, the use of particular equipment, and the affordances of certain postproduction tools and techniques.

Upon arriving in higher education classrooms a few years hence, I realised that the distinction between broadcast style video and online style video was not well articulated in the literature. Everyone agreed that there was a difference, but there were multiple versions of what the differences were (Damásio, 2015; Kobre, 2012; Phillips et al., 2013). Some approached scholarship in this field from a focus on form, some from a production standpoint, and others from an ethic or even aesthetic set of principles. For undergraduate students, these are all valid and interesting approaches, but they are often steeped in complex academic language, built on expansive theories of semiotics or ethics, and they are substantially overlapping. Much of the most interesting work in defining different types of video has been done by Bill Nichols' excellent writing on documentary types, but his work is difficult to access for undergraduate journalism students whose primary training is not in film theory.

Just as we created a new genre of news video in the newsroom, here I argue for a new taxonomy of news video. This taxonomy delivers key distinctions between the obvious genres of broadcast news video and online news video, but it also addresses the burgeoning practice of short documentary filmmaking, and draws key delineations between fundamentally different approaches like voicing versus text-on-screen. The below table summarises the key types in this taxonomy:

SEE TABLE ONE.

Scripted and unscripted videos

The distinctions drawn in this table are principally designed as teaching devices. They are based on the observable characteristics of the video and will involve teachers and students taking an educated guess as to the production methodology. In that sense, they steer students towards a critical approach to the video that goes beyond content: in deciding which category the video fits into, the student is making an assertion about the style of the production, and in some cases, the origins of the vision. This demands

and instructs a deeper understanding of production techniques, furthering a student's knowledge of the intentions and resourcing behind any piece of video content.

The first, and most obvious distinction to draw is that between videos that are scripted and those that are unscripted. Unscripted videos encompass the favoured newsroom term 'actuality', but they are not limited to videos classed as actuality alone. 'Actuality' in video refers to vision shot on the scene of a news event, usually played with the captured sound from the same scene (*The News Manual - Glossary*, n.d.). Grabs or soundbites (edited chunks) of interviews, for instance, fall into this category of video. The key distinction here is that the unscripted video does not deliver an end-to-end narrative; it is fragmentary in terms of narrative, or illustrative, in the case of satellite or time-lapse videos.

From this fundamental distinction, we are able to tease out further points of differentiation in the precise modes of storytelling, editing and even sourcing of footage. I will begin with the broadcast styles as both a familiar point of reference from legacy video formats, and as an origin point for further developments in the practices of video storytelling.

Part One: Scripted Videos

SEE DIAGRAM ONE

Broadcast styles of news video

The presenter-led broadcast news package

Evolving during the TV news era, news packages have come to have a largely consistent structure. They typically begin with an upsot – a grab with natural audio – and it is usually the most compelling piece of vision in the story (S. Morris, personal communication, 20 May 2019). Although this is an editorial technique that every craft editor would recognise, it is not well represented in the literature, with notable scholars still arguing that video packages are essentially just radio documentaries with pictures (Kobre, 2012, p. 192). This line of argument fundamentally misunderstands the power of video. Kobre is

correct to assert that the story must hang together with the audio alone, but he fails to appreciate that the narrative is only part of a video's story. News video is also fundamentally an emotive form: that is, its power lies in more than just its plot. The 'powerful vision first' mantra of news video editors like Morris is a testament to the fact that successful news videos must not neglect their visual roots.

After an upsot has run, the story is typically introduced by a presenter, either with voiceover, or a piece to camera (PTC or 'stand-up') – or a combination of both. Like all news packages, broadcast news packages are built around actuality and interviews (Phillips et al., 2013). Interview grabs (also called 'soundbites') are selected on the basis of narrative relevance, conspicuousness, and extractability (Clayman, 1995), and in the case of some broadcasters, a commitment to impartiality (*Editorial Policies: Impartiality*, 2021). In the case of big or breaking news stories, vox pops (short grabs of people on the street giving their opinions) are commonly added.

A key feature of TV news packages is that they are introduced by the newsreader (also called an 'anchor') , so the audience typically has a very brief overview of the story before the package rolls. For example, the newsreader might say, "A fire in the city centre this afternoon caused hundreds to evacuate, clogging streets and hindering access for emergency vehicles." The package might then roll with an upsot of traffic chaos. This is distinct from the way an audience is introduced to a package in an online environment.

Another key convention of the broadcast form is the use of terms like 'today' and 'this morning'. Online videos, on the other hand, follow the newspaper convention of naming the day of the week in which the event took place – and as we will see in the section on online news packages, this convention arises from more than just the newspaper legacy of online news sites.

Live voice-overs or reader voice-over packages are broadly similar in structure to the presenter-led news package, and they are also introduced by the newsreader, but there is a key difference: the reporter is heard, but not seen.

The live voice-over / reader voice-over (LVO / RVO)

The LVO / RVO (hereafter, RVO) is a mainstay of the broadcast bulletin (or newscast), being both faster and less resource-intensive to create. It is often comprised entirely of wires vision, and is very useful in the event of late breaking stories.

An important consideration for educators and students alike is that the voice-led nature of the RVO confers a more polished, but less immediate energy to the story. Without a PTC recorded at the location where the events took (or are taking) place, the RVO rarely has enough news value to be placed at the top of a bulletin. Broadcasters typically favour presenter-led packages, and an analysis of any given bulletin is likely to turn up many more presenter-led packages than RVOs.

Students benefit from observing who is providing the voice for the RVO, and speculating on the conditions in which the voice track– or voicer – was recorded. In the case of the LVO, the voicer is presented live during the broadcast, and is most often done by the newsreader. In the RVO, the voicer may still be performed by the newsreader, but it may also be performed by a journalist outside of the organisation – for instance, a freelancer working for a wires service. Wires services, including the likes of Reuters and Associated Press, provide material from locations that newsrooms often have difficulty placing journalists, like war-zones, sites of natural disasters, and remote locations that are prohibitively distant or expensive to send journalists to as news breaks. Understanding the relationship between a public-facing news publisher and a wires service can greatly increase a student's appreciation of the overall news ecosystem, so it is important to point out wires material to students. Some wires services,

like Al Jazeera, also provide public-facing news publications, so it is possible to see the same vision in a broadcaster's LVO that one might see in a competitor broadcaster's coverage of the same story.

As compared to the LVO, RVOs can be pre-recorded.

Educators with access to a wires service can demonstrate to students the way in which wires packages are often compiled with a pre-recorded voicer – a practice mimicked by some NGOs (*UNHCR Media Centre*, n.d.). The practice of using voicers provided by outside sources serves two functions here. First, it allows newsrooms to minimise the resources dedicated to a given story, because it can be produced by a craft editor alone. No local scripting or reporting is required. The second key function is that the use of voicers supplied by wires services increases the diversity of reporters in a given bulletin. Emphasising this distinction can assist students to develop a robust conceptualisation of the newsroom, its personnel, and its distribution of resources as represented by the artifact of the bulletin itself.

From an audience's perspective, the RVO could be seen as the precursor of the voice-led online news package. As with the voice-led online package, the presenter is heard but not seen, and the vision comprises only actuality and interview material, with no PTC.

Online styles of news video

The launch of YouTube in 2005 incited a new appetite for online video among pioneering producers who saw the potential of the medium on the Web. (Hernandez & Rue, 2016). As the new production pipeline emerged, video journalists argued that producing video for online news was an essential development that would provide newsrooms with significant audio and still image collateral to be used in publications beyond the online news story (Hernandez & Rue, 2016, p. 66). A key difference between online and broadcast news videos is their longevity. Whereas a broadcast package might run in its original and unedited form several times in a single day, online videos can live for weeks or even years. In my newsroom, we referred to videos with an anticipated lifespan measured in years as 'evergreen' videos.

The lasting nature of online videos gives rise to one notable difference in approach that spans the whole category of online news videos: the day of a news event is rarely referred to as 'today' and is usually given its name – for instance, Monday, or Wednesday (S. Morris, personal communication, 20 May 2019). This allows an online news video to be placed on future stories without it needing to be re-edited: a significant advantage for resources.

The voice-led online news package

As Internet speeds started to support a range and depth of video content, news sites began producing video to go with their text and images. The draw of video to an online audience was clear as early as the mid-nineties with projects like Mark Bowden's *Black Hawk Down* (Rue, 2018), and Australia was not far behind, with the the SMH publishing its first video content to the newspaper's website in 1996 (Devlin, 2005). Although scholars have categorised the news media's approach to video in the first decade of the 2000s as 'defensive' (Kalogeropoulos & Kleis Nelson, 2018), and driven by technology rather than consumer demand (Deuze, 1999), a distinct genre of packaged news video has emerged in the online space.

By 2014, a thriving industry of Australian video journalists were producing material destined for the Web. At all the biggest local news events that year, from the infamous Lindt Café siege that marked Australia's biggest news event of the year, to press conferences and red-carpet awards shows, journalists attended from all the major TV stations – and the online outfits like AAP and News.com.au. Even in the event that a news website had a syndication deal with a broadcaster – as Fairfax did at the time with Ten – it was common for the website to send someone to get original video.

A major pragmatic difference between the broadcasters and the online news services was the size of the team. Where the TVs (as we affectionately called them) would send trucks and teams, the online services would send one, perhaps two people. In the case where the journalist was working solo, the

difficulty of shooting and simultaneously delivering a PTC became problematic both for the pace of production, and for the quality. It is normal practice when shooting a PTC to have a camera operator paying attention to two particularly fiddly aspects of the shot's quality: its focus, and the audio levels. Despite an operator's best efforts, it's easy for auto-focus to 'miss' the subject of the shot, and for hazards like barking dogs or passing traffic to render the audio unusable. The only way for a solo operator to ensure the production quality of both of these elements is to either watch them during the recording, or to review the shot prior to leaving the location, and re-shoot if necessary.

A much faster solution was to focus on gathering actuality in the field, and return to the newsroom to record the story's narration. Making this recording in the edit suite, as audio only, sped up the process even further. The audience would lose the immediacy of seeing the journalist on the location, but quality and speed could be assured, and these were acceptable compromises. In Australia, in 2014 and 2015, voiced packages were a standard feature of online news publishers, with presenter-led packages being reserved for more newsworthy stories.

These packages typically appeared some way down a text story, and they were captioned with a write-off, or woff, that replaced the newsreader intro seen in broadcast packages. The woff served the same function as the newsreader intro, orienting the audience with the broad brush strokes of the story, without giving away so much detail that the reader would scroll on without playing the video.

However, as the online audience grew, it became less interested in news packages that required its complete, uninterrupted attention. The consumer, who had been only lukewarm about online video in the first place (Deuze, 1999; Kalogeropoulos et al., 2016), had discerning tastes. They wanted to 'snack' on the news in settings like their daily commute (Molyneux, 2018; Schäfer, 2020; Struckmann & Karnowski, 2016), and they wanted it to be comprehensible with the sound turned off. Presenter-led

and voice-led packages lost their power in this new setting. The combination of mobile screens and the preference for sound-off video viewing drove new developments in the online package.

The text-led online news package

In response to the move to mobile, online news sites created a new genre of news video: the text-led news package. This is a package with many of the features of traditional broadcast packages, except that it's designed to be played with the sound off. An unexpected advantage of this style of reporting is that the presentation of images with text in news packages improves audience recall (Brosius, et al, 1996).

Interviews are typically subtitled, and instead of a reporter speaking to camera or microphone to tell the story, the audience reads a series of text slates – short onscreen sentences that tell the story. Text-led packages take longer to make than voiced packages because subtitling is a time-consuming process – although advances in technology are closing the gap. In 2015, when my team began captioning every video we produced, the labour of producing the subtitles was so intense that we hired a dedicated junior to do this work. As a rule of thumb, we observed that it took about an hour to caption a minute of video. The 2021 release by Adobe of a new speech-to-text engine embedded in Premiere Pro's captioning tool will no doubt revolutionise the backend process of captioning interviews in newsrooms where Premiere Pro is the preferred software.

Text-led packages are also more time-consuming to proof, with typographical errors being a constant problem that is difficult to overcome in the hectic modern video newsroom – especially if there is no video subeditor, which was the case in my newsroom. The work of subbing videos fell to any senior person who was available, and the lack of dedicated subbing skills in these people led to an increase in the number of errors that found their way onto the news site.

Structurally, text-led packages follow some of the conventions of broadcast packages. The opening vision may be a powerful upsot, but if the story is lacking any visually compelling footage, the producer might save this upsot for the moment after an opening text slate, as in (Duff & Weller, 2015).

Music is a feature of text-led packages but it is important to note that natsot (natural sound on tape) is still a powerful tool and is not neglected in this genre. Producers of text-led packages quickly realised that videos 'wallpapered' with music lost much of their dramatic impact. Instead, the practice has evolved toward mixing music and natsot in and out – or at least dropping the music levels during sequences with important or emotionally compelling audio.

The reporterless online news package

Reporterless packages are a very contemporary development in online news. They are essentially what it says on the box: a package which features no piece to camera, voicer or text slate to explain the story. Instead, the story is edited in such a way that the interviewees tell the narrative.

The precursor to this style of news video is the documentary (Bock, 2012), and specifically the 'observational' mode (Nichols, 1991). Reporterless stories are frequently more time-consuming to create, as interviews rarely convey a narrative neatly without the assistance of narration or significant editing (Bock, 2012). They depend heavily on the rapport between the video journalist and the subject of the story, which is best developed over time and multiple interviews. Reporterless stories also rely on interviewees to be good narrative storytellers. Finally, the editing of this kind of story tends to be iterative, with the journalist returning to the edit over many sessions, in order to extract and hone the narrative from wide-ranging interviews – as I did in producing the feature-length video for my 2016 story on Nepal's Annapurna region (Weller, 2016).

This style was at first associated with the higher 'cultural value' of documentary and filmmaking, as compared to the 'less valuable' breaking news reports (Bock, 2012). The subjects were serious, the

music sombre, and the pace considered. But reporterless packages have become more common in shorter form stories, especially in stories that have a comical or observational quality. The CNN offshoot, *GreatBigStory.com* produced excellent shorter reporterless pieces between 2015 and 2020. This genre is also widely used by NGOs to promote their work in war zones and other difficult locations where the vision and characters tell a rich story without embellishment from a reporter (see *UNHCR Media Centre*, n.d.).

The explainer video

Explainers became my particular focus in 2016 when I began to lead a team of producers and motion graphics artists dedicated to producing this genre of video. In many respects, the explainer genre rolled all of the lessons of the online video styles into one. They were all subtitled, in order to play well on mobiles and in sound-off settings. They were designed to be evergreen, to sit on as many stories as possible. They made use of beautiful animations produced by a talented group of artists, enhancing their production values and visual appeal. And they were *fast* to produce. During my time in this role, my team created a new explainer every week, responding to events in the news cycle like Trump's election, the same sex marriage plebiscite, the devastating NSW storms, Zika virus, the Australian Open tennis tournament and many more.

Unlike many of the online styles discussed here, the central pillar of most explainer videos is a piece to camera. Some explainers rely on a voicer instead, and comparatively fewer still use text slates to convey the video's content. It is critical to recognise that the genre is an informational one: it lacks the drama of daily news and rarely has exciting vision to compliment the script. Explainer videos can struggle to keep an audience's interest due to the lack of emotional satisfaction they engender. They can also become mired in the catch-22 of timing: the longer the video, the harder to keep an audience engaged – but the shorter the video, the harder to say anything that goes meaningfully beyond general knowledge.

In order to combat the various challenges of the genre, successful explainer producers tend to fall back on a series of techniques that enhance engagement. The producer will often seek out a charismatic presenter for the PTC. They will favour topics that are controversial. They will allocate sufficient resources to enhance the video with beautiful animation, carefully produced vision and a high-end sound mix. These techniques lead to an overall production value that often exceeds daily news videos.

Part Two: Unscripted videos

SEE DIAGRAM 2.

Unscripted videos are key elements in multimedia storytelling, serving different functions depending on the type of unscripted video used. An early application of the interview grab, for example, was used in the ground-breaking *Snow Fall* from the New York Times (Branch, 2012). Grab, in this instance, refers to an edited section or 'chunk' of an interview. In this story, which arguably the launched the new generation digital feature story (Rue, 2018), a moment from an interview with avalanche victim Elyse Saugstad is used to punctuate the life and death stakes of the story. Another example comes in the form of the BBC's The Beach Nobody Can Touch (Asher et al., 2019), where a time-lapse before/after video shows the return of wildlife to a beach 12 months after it is protected by sweeping environmental laws. This example serves to enhance the visual impact of the story – a wholly different function than the interview grab, but one equally well suited to the video medium.

Unscripted, in this context, is not to say 'unplanned' – but it describes a video that is delivered without onscreen text, voiceover or a presenter's piece to camera (PTC). Both of the above examples would have demanded significant planning. The grab from Snow Fall, for instance, shows an artificially-lit, two-camera interview – not the sort of 'running and gunning' production methodology we would associate with actuality. The BBC video, to take things even further, places a camera in the exact same location twice, twelve months apart – a substantially planned piece of video. Here are two examples of the

rationale for replacing 'actuality' as a category of video production with a more granular definition that seeks to describe the video's function in the story, as well as its production implications, to students who might be considering using video in their own productions.

The looping single shot or looping montage

The looping single shot would remind everyone of a certain generation of the menu screen on a DVD. A loop is a short clip that plays over and over again, in an endless replay or 'loop'. Loops can be comprised of a single shot that repeats, or a montage of several shots. Loops gained popularity in the later DVD era, where menus were commonly backgrounded by looping footage from the film or its promotional material. The single shot is often an establishing or super-wide shot showing a whole scene – although a very tight close-up can be employed too, as in TIME Magazine's *Heln's First Year* (Baker et al., 2016).

Generally, producers choose a shot that is beautifully composed, and that has a minimum of fuss or action. Sometimes, as in the Sydney Morning Herald's Standing Tall (Fyfe et al., n.d.), the looping single shot is played with audio. In the final image of this story, video producer Eddie Jim creates a perfectly symmetrical wide shot featuring the subject of the story practicing basketball after a life-saving operation. The shot is punctuated by the slow slap of the basketball on asphalt – a poignant sound that evokes the full emotion of the story. Looping single shots can also work without audio, as the opening shot of Snow Fall (Branch, 2012), and the final shot from BBC's The Beach Nobody Can Touch (Asher et al., 2019) demonstrate.

The aerial shot has also become a common choice for loops, having earned huge popularity with the advent of cheap drones in the mid 2010s. Before drones, the only way to achieve an aerial shot was to hire a helicopter – an expense that was seldom justifiable in a resource-pressured online newsroom.

The time-lapse single shot or montage

Time-lapse shots are traditionally achieved by taking a series of many still photographs – usually hundreds, or thousands – at fixed, equal intervals, and playing them back at high speed. The effect is that of fast-forwarding reality, and it is extremely powerful when done well.

The time-lapse shot is used primarily to communicate change in a single location. It can be a sunset shot, or a six-month time-lapse of a building being constructed, or even a shot compiled over years, like the extraordinary shots James Balog took of years of glacier retreat, as featured in the documentary, Chasing Ice (Cornfield & Cornfield, 2013).

Time-lapse shots look relatively simple, but they are in fact quite tricky to execute (Goode, 2014). Any motion in the shot is vastly exaggerated by the speeding-up of the final shot, so special attention needs to be paid to objects like trees that can move in the wind and introduce an unpleasant, staccato or even frantic sensation to the shot. Camera motion is also a serious problem. Time-lapse shots that include tracking motion or panning motion from the camera are usually executed on a robotic slider that is calibrated to move the camera a very slight, and specific, distance between shots.

Despite the fact that they can be difficult to achieve, time-lapse shots remain popular because they add production value and can be extremely satisfying to watch. BBC's The Beach That Nobody Can Touch employs a tracking time-lapse which is in fact two shots cut together with a dissolve – showing the 'before' and 'after' of the closure of Thailand's famed Maya Bay. In just seven seconds, these shots convey the drastic change at the heart of the narrative. This is a very powerful use of this technique.

The interview grab or interview exchange

During some interviews, a short exchange will take place between the interviewer and interviewee that communicates a kernel of meaning that is central to the narrative. These moments are ideal material with which to create a short edit of the interview, usually in the range of 45 seconds or less. Sometimes

we will see a single answer as in the aforementioned grab in *Snow Fall* (Branch, 2012), and other times we might see a couple of exchanges.

Traffic cam, CCTV and other law enforcement videos

In the UK alone, the number of CCTV cameras has been estimated to be between two and five million (Thompson & Gerrard, 2011). Following a spate of police shootings, in 2014, the US embarked on a project to provide 500,000 body-worn cameras to police departments around the country (Mateescu et al., 2015). We live in the age of surveillance, and the ramifications for the video journalist are clear: we no longer need to get to a story with camera in hand, to have a reasonable shot at finding vision for the story.

Police media departments, which have a long tradition of releasing CCTV vision to news organisations when it is deemed to be in the public interest, began providing such a wealth of material to our team in the mid-2000s, that it was often more expedient to let our partner TV newsroom do the 'sifting' and use their grab from the evening bulletin, than to watch the many hours of footage and make our own cut. Law enforcement video can add drama and immediacy to a story, enhancing its emotional impact, even if the vision is such poor quality that its subject is obscured.

The 360 video

360 video records a 'spherical' format using special cameras with lenses that are able to capture a near-360-degree rendition of a scene. At the viewer's end, it makes use of a mobile phone's accelerometer to track the direction and angle the user points their phone when viewing a 360 video, and simulates changes in the camera angle. Viewers experience 'looking around' a scene with their phone, and are able to direct their attention towards whatever part of the scene they choose. Distinct from VR, 360 video is not an interactive format with controllers or wands for the user to hold, and it does not require

a headset: it was designed an optimised for viewing on mobile phones, in spaces where users could turn around to affect their field of view.

360 made a huge splash in newsrooms in 2016, with projects like the New York Times' *Daily 360* investing heavily in the new technology. With the assistance of 200 NYT journalists, the Times published a 360 video every day for a year, and charted the audience engagement throughout the year (Willens, 2017). 360 is wonderfully immersive, and the appeal to journalists is obvious: what better way to place an audience at the heart of a story than to show them an image that surrounds them on all sides?

While this project was hailed a success, 360 didn't enjoy the audience take-up that many publishers hoped it would. Scholars tracked a near-universal increase in mobile news consumption in the years after 360 arrived in the video news space (Kalogeropoulos et al., 2016; Kalogeropoulos & Kleis Nelson, 2018; Newman, n.d.), and mobile screens were freshly equipped with the affordances allowing users to 'move' around the image. However, the spaces in which mobile news consumers predominantly got their news snack – standing in queues and during their daily commute – were sub-optimal for this kind of viewing (Willens, 2017). VR headsets – the neatest solution to this problem – have failed to capture as much of the market as news producers hoped (Newman et al, 2019).

This trend may reverse as headsets become lighter and more comfortable to wear (R. K. Hernandez, personal communication, February 2020). But we may also be looking toward a future where users 'dip their toe' in multimedia elements like 360 videos during their commute, and come back to experience the really immersive content later. Increasingly, news producers are observing this kind of audience interaction with multimedia (ibid.) – and that should shape the way news producers think about including it.

This leads to an alternative to 360 video that might be more palatable to users but still offers some of the immersive qualities of 360.

The satellite video

When it first launched, Google Earth Pro was a paid service that allowed users to capture videos compiled of still satellite imagery captured by Google's mapping satellite array. In 2015, Google released the technology for free (Chowdhry, 2015), and provided news producers with exciting video opportunities. There are several Google Earth tools, but Google Earth Studio is the most powerful, allowing journalists to capture video from satellite flyovers.

Australia's ABC made use of the technology with the 2019 story, Conquering Mount Everest, which was designed by Alex Palmer. "Anything with terrain just looks great on Google Earth," he says. "It's just one of those things. The data they provide is very complex." As soon as he saw Everest on Google Earth, Alex knew that a GES visualisation could form part of the story. The team created a virtual route map that tracks the usual climbing route taken on the Nepalese side of the mountain, and as the user scrolls through the story, a pointer advances up the route. The effect is immediate and absorbing, and the team was able to achieve it from thousands of miles away, without deploying any resources in Nepal. (A. Palmer, personal communication, September 4th, 2019).

Unlike some other video technologies that are time intensive and expensive, Google Earth Studio offers freelance journalists and students an excellent opportunity to add video to their stories.

Conclusion

The proposed taxonomy does not resolve all of the possible categories of video into a neat bundle of concepts. Notably absent is a category dealing with animation. While other methodologies of video production do have their own category (time-lapse, for instance), animation as a category was considered too broad, and not sufficiently descriptive of the video's intention or function within a story. Where it is clear that an interview grab serves the specific purpose of highlighting a moment from an interview, an animation might serve an illustrative, or even impressionistic function in the narrative.

Therefore, animation has been excluded from the taxonomy. It is, in that regard, no different from other visual techniques like the use of black-and-white, or silhouetted footage. Animation is, at its core, a visual technique, and while the choice to use animation is sometimes indicative of story elements (for example, a producer might use animation in the instance where pictures of the story were not available). It is not a method of narrative delivery, and has no inherent rules or limitations of narrative, as do the other categories in the taxonomy.

The categories that have been included in the taxonomy are principally designed to encourage students to consider two points regarding the video's inclusion in the story. The first is the video's function. I hope that students will begin to ask themselves, 'why was this video included?' – and in asking that question, open a pathway for understanding the strengths, weaknesses and power of the medium. The second point I hope students will consider is around resourcing. The question to consider here is 'what would it take to get that video?' – and the answer should be broad enough to include factors like time, personnel, equipment and space on the digital page (or in the bulletin).

Finally, in considering these two questions as they begin to work with the taxonomy, I hope that students will start to consider the relative value of adding each kind of video to a story. If they have addressed the question of editorial merit, and the question of resources, then the student has measured the overall value proposition of the video with respect to the particular story under consideration. Students with this in-depth grasp of the nature of the medium will make stronger choices in their own work, as they come to decide whether video has a place in their original stories.

References:

Asher, S., Doksone, T., & Head, J. (2019, February 20). *The beach nobody can touch*. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/the_beach_nobody_can_touch

Baker, A., Addario, L., & Trianni, F. (2016). *Inside a Syrian Family's Search for a New Home*. Time. https://time.com/finding-home/

Bowden, M. (2019). *The Legacy of Black Hawk Down*. Smithsonian Magazine. https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/legacy-black-hawk-down-180971000/

Branch, J. (2012, December). Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/projects/2012/snow-fall/index.html#/?part=tunnel-creek

Chowdhry, A. (2015). *Google Earth Pro Is Now Available For Free*. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/amitchowdhry/2015/01/30/google-earth-pro-is-now-available-for-free/

Clayman, S. E. (1995). Defining Moments, Presidential Debates, and the Dynamics of Quotability. *Journal of Communication*, *45*(3), 118–147. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1995.tb00746.x

Cornfield, D. J., & Cornfield, L. A. (Directors). (2013). *Chasing Ice* [Documentary]. Cinedigm Entertainment.

Damásio, M. J. (2015). *Between Old Broadcast Media and New Networked Media: Materiality and Media Consumption Practices*. 26.

Deuze, M. (1999). Journalism and the Web: An Analysis of Skills and Standards in an Online Environment. *Gazette*, *61*(5), 373–390. https://doi.org/10.1177/0016549299061005002

Devlin, D. (2005, April 17). *How we built our home on the web*. The Sydney Morning Herald. https://www.smh.com.au/national/how-we-built-our-home-on-the-web-20050417-gdl314.html

Duff, E., & Weller, D. (2015, September 26). *The unique consumer complaints that leave Fair Trading staff speechless*. The Sydney Morning Herald. https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/revealed-the-unique-consumer-complaints-that-leave-fair-trading-staff-speechless-20150922-gjsbur.html

Editorial Policies: Impartiality. (2021, November 24). [Text]. ABC Australia; Australian Broadcasting Corporation. https://www.abc.net.au/edpols/impartiality/13645770

Fyfe, M., Jim, E., & Stehle, M. (n.d.). *Standing tall*. Retrieved 2 August 2021, from https://www.smh.com.au/interactive/2015/koko/

Hernandez, R. K. (2020, February). *Interview with Richard Koci Hernandez* [Phone].

Hernandez, R. K., & Rue, J. (2016). *The Principles of Multimedia Journalism – Packaging Digital News* (1st ed.). Routledge.

Kalogeropoulos, A., Cherubini, F., & Newman, N. (2016). *The Future of Online News Video* (SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 2882465). Social Science Research Network. https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2882465

Kalogeropoulos, A., & Kleis Nelson, R. (2018). Investing in Online Video News: A cross-national analysis of news organisations' enterprising approach to digital media. *Journalism Studies*, *19*(15), 2207–2224. https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2017.1331709

Kobre, K. (2012). *Video Journalism*. Focal Press. https://learning.oreilly.com/library/view/videojournalism/9780240814650/xhtml/ch01.xhtml

Mateescu, A., Rosenblat, A., & boyd, danah. (2015). Police body-worn cameras. *Data & Society*, *34*(7), 1–40.

Molyneux, L. (2018). Mobile News Consumption. *Digital Journalism*, *6*(5), 634–650. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2017.1334567

Morris, S. (2019, May 20). *Video journalism techniques* [Personal communication].

Newman, N. (n.d.). *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2020*. 112.

Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Levy, D., & Kleis Nelson, R. (2016). *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2016*. Reuters.

Nichols, B. (1991). *Representing Reality*. Indiana University Press.

Phillips, G., Lindgren, M., & Bishop, R. (2013). *Australian Broadcast Journalism eBook*. Oxford University Press. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/swin/detail.action?docID=5553618

Rue, J. (2018, August 21). *The 'Snow Fall' effect and dissecting the multimedia longform narrative | MultimediaShooter*. https://web.archive.org/web/20180821090330/http://multimediashooter.com/wp/2013/04/21/the-snow-fall-effect-and-dissecting-the-multimedia-longform-narrative/

Schäfer, S. (2020). Illusion of knowledge through Facebook news? Effects of snack news in a news feed on perceived knowledge, attitude strength, and willingness for discussions. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *103*, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.08.031

Struckmann, S., & Karnowski, V. (2016). News consumption in a changing media ecology: An MESM-study on mobile news. *Telematics and Informatics*, *33*(2), 309–319. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2015.08.012

The News Manual—Glossary. (n.d.). Retrieved 8 August 2022, from https://www.thenewsmanual.net/Resources/glossary.html

Thompson, R., & Gerrard, G. (2011). R., & Gerrard, G. (2011). Two million cameras in the UK. CCTV Image official publication of the CCTV user group, CCTV User Group and Security Media Publishing Ltd. *CCTV Image*.

UNHCR Media Centre. (n.d.). UNHCR. Retrieved 14 April 2022, from https://www.unhcr.org/media-centre.html

Weller, D. (2016). *Take a journey through Nepal's stunning Annapurna Circuit*. http://www.smh.com.au/interactive/2016/annapurna/

Willens, M. (2017, November 14). One year in: What The New York Times learned from its 360-degree video project, The Daily 360. *Digiday*. https://digiday.com/future-of-tv/one-year-new-york-times-learned-360-degree-video-project-daily-360/

Table One:

The taxonomy can be broken into two primary styles: scripted and unscripted videos. In the scripted category, two further distinctions are made between styles typical of broadcast newsrooms and those typical of online newsrooms. The final categorical distinction is made between readily-observable methodologies of storytelling, such as the presence or absence of a presenter, the mode of presentation (i.e., voice, or on-camera), and the subject or setting of the video (e.g., an interview, a CCTV shot, etc.).

Scripted videos	Broadcast styles	The presenter-led broadcast news package
		The live voice over or reader voice over (LVO or RVO)
	Online styles	The voice-led online news package
		The text-led online news package
		The reporterless online news package
		The explainer video
Unscripted videos		The looping single shot or looping montage
		The time-lapse single shot or montage
		The interview grab or interview exchange
		Traffic-cam, CCTV, dash-cam and other police videos
		The 360 video
		The satellite video

Diagram One:

Diagram one shows the categories of scripted videos in the taxonomy.

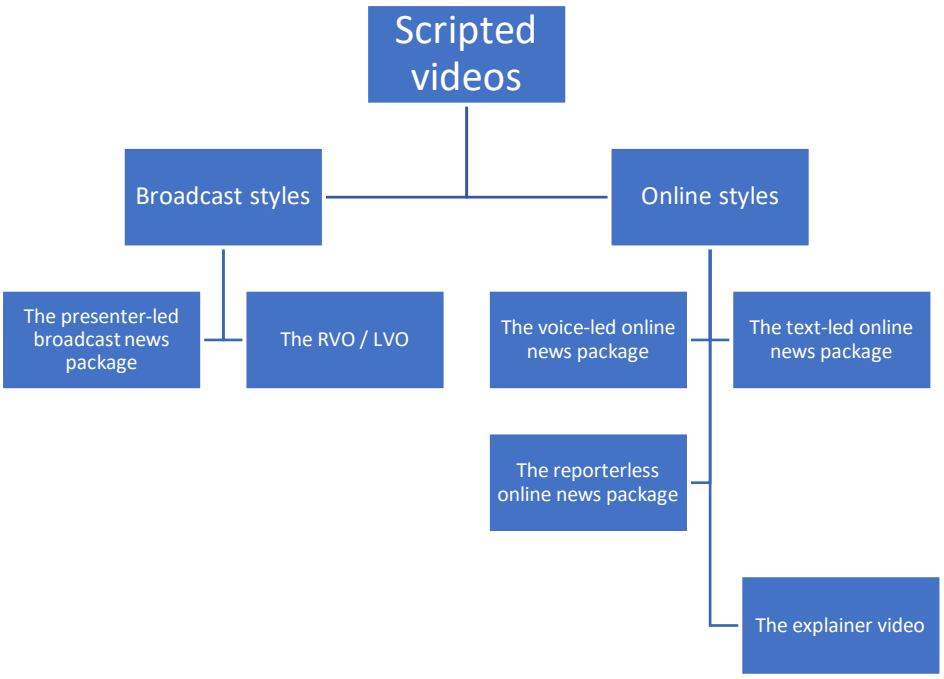

Diagram Two:

Diagram two shows the categories of unscripted videos in the taxonomy.