

# New writing for new media

information to accompany the prezi by Rod Satterthwaite

## **Stuff you may or may not care about:**

Much of this information is based on my MJE abstract originally submitted in October of 2011. Also, I did receive permission to use the work featured in the prezi from either the individual who created the work or their adviser.

## **Note to instructors:**

As student journalism changes forms to match what professional journalists are doing, what we teach our students needs to change too. As I've looked at the professional media and student journalism on the cutting edge, I've noticed a few trends which I've tried to summarize here. This is not meant to be an inclusive list of ways the 21st century high school journalist can or should cover events. Rather it's meant to help create a spark in students and advisers to rethink how and why they are covering the things they do and consider whether or not they could serve their readers better.

## **Among the topics covered:**

- trends in writing/coverage
- feature writing: focus on people not data
- coaching writing: shorter and smarter
- maestro packaging/planning
- 300-word feature stories
- alternative copy/writing for the non-reader
- using humor/satire
- using social networking
- meshing web and print

## **Additional details for the slides:**

*Slide 4:* 300-word feature stories were popularized by Brady Dennis when he was a writer for The St. Petersburg Times. In various interviews Dennis has spoken of his desire to cover the everyday person whom the media often ignores. He also has discussed how short writing is often harder but has more impact than long writing. I've seen schools use this in many ways, but one of the best is to feature a student, randomly chosen, in every issue of the paper or as a yearbook sidebar or once a week on the web. Here's a link to Dennis discussing this project in more detail: <http://bit.ly/sSAX4y>. The student example comes from The North Pointe, Grosse Pointe North HS, Grosse Pointe Woods, Mich.

*Slide 7:* The Q and A format is not a new one, but the Hi Lite from Carmel High School in Carmel, Ind. does it the best of any high school publication I've seen. The use of an environmental portrait of the subject and a QR Code to link to further information create an interactive, entertaining way to break out of the typical Q and A rut.

*Slides 10, 11 and 12:* What I like about these three alts is the way they incorporate a light-hearted attitude and humor as they tell stories. Let's face it. These are not earth-shattering topics. But a student audience (any audience, really) appreciates a well-told (and designed) alt as much as an in-

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depth investigation into the latest cafeteria health inspection report. The key is to surprise your readers at least once in every issue, either through the way you tell a story, the topic of the story or both. Slide 10 is from my students' publication, *The Squall*, Dexter High School, Dexter, Mich.; 11 is from *RedEye*, a publication from *The Chicago Tribune* geared toward a young, hip audience from which my students have mooched many ideas ([redeyechicago.com](http://redeyechicago.com)); 12 is a great example of taking a complex budget story and breaking it down to its most basic element: a concrete representation of what these numbers mean.

*Slide 14:* This is one of my favorite Rick Reilly columns. I think it's a wonderful example of humor combined with research to make a point. Too often student humor columns come across as mean-spirited, cruel or pointless. A student audience appreciates humor. It's our job to make sure the writers do it well.

*Slide 16, 17 and 18:* These are all examples from *The Edge*, a sidebar that ran in *The Portland Oregonian* when Tim Harrower worked there and are archived at [www.timharrower.com](http://www.timharrower.com). While some of these may be a little edgy, they show a way you could meet a stated goal of many student publications: to entertain. These are irreverent, silly and perhaps shocking. Just

the kind of thing an audience of students likes to see in its publication once in awhile. Again, work to surprise your reader in every issue.

*Slide 21:* This also comes from Carmel's *The Hi-Lite* which does a great job of converging its print and online media. By featuring someone who tweets for various school organizations in every issue, they not only expand the coverage of their student body, they also incorporate their digital presence into their print version.

*Slide 23:* Another way to converge your coverage is through storify. There are lots of other examples on [storify.com](http://storify.com) your students can learn from. Once you create a storify, your students can easily use its embed code to get the storify up and running on their web site.

*Slide 27, 28 and 29:* It's important to encourage your designers to look to the Internet for inspiration since this is where many of your readers spend a great deal of time. These slides all illustrate that concept. Note the use of chunking of information, bulleted lists, multiple entry points etc. This type of design helps focus today's readers on the content important to them. Content should always drive design, but design should help enhance content like it does in these three examples. For more about how people read, see this link: <http://slate.me/xL82uh>