

# AAJA VIDEO JOURNALISM WORKSHOP

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SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY

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**Benny Evangelista** is a Multimedia Producer for the San Francisco Chronicle and helped usher in the paper's groundbreaking foray into this new Internet medium when he posted The Chronicle's first podcast in February 2005. He's part of The Chronicle's Multimedia Department, which produces podcasts, audio slideshows, Google Map mashups, databases, interactive timelines and other multimedia projects for the paper's Web site, SFGate.com.

**Gary Reyes** has worked as a staff photojournalist at the San Jose Mercury News for the past 15 years. He has also worked at the Oakland Tribune and the Sacramento Bee. He is a graduate of California State University, Sacramento. His introduction into multimedia began with his use of audio narration during Hurricane Katrina coverage. He currently produces video segments on a daily basis for Mercurynews.com in conjunction with still photography for the print edition of the Mercury News.

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## **Audio:**

- Your audio is more important than your video.
- Get as close as possible to your subject to record the best sound.
- If possible, use an external mic such as a shotgun mic for cleaner sound.
- Use a lavalier mic for sit-down interviews if you can afford them.
- Always monitor your sound with a set of headphones.
- Pay attention to the ambient sounds that may ruin an interview. Change location if you must. Barking dogs, excessive traffic noise, and ringing cell phones will kill your audio.
- Always record at least thirty seconds of location sound before and after shooting for editing purposes to match sound if needed in post-production. This is called pre-roll and post-roll.

## **Video:**

- Hold the camera steady! Relax and keep the camera close to your body to maintain steadiness.
- Use a tripod when possible.
- Only use the zoom function to compose your shots. Don't make your viewers seasick.
- Use the rule of thirds when composing your shots.

- Hold your shots for at least 10 seconds.
- Hit the record button at least four seconds before recording so you won't cut off any audio. Cameras need time to power-up before they start recording. Don't switch the record button off for at least four seconds after your subjects speak.
- Do not move, pan or zoom. Let your subjects move in the frame, not you.
- Shoot wide, medium and close-up shots in every situation.
- Pre-roll and post-roll to avoid tape dropouts that usually happen at the beginning of the tape. It also assures that your camera is working.

### **Storytelling:**

Your video is your B-roll. They are the visual elements of your story that your subject talks about. Match the content of your video to your audio.

- Shoot wide establishing shots. Where are we?
- Shoot medium shots. The subjects doing what they do.
- Shoot tight close-ups. Let's see a close-up of what they are working on or a strong facial expression. This includes shooting details of the surroundings.
- Shoot reaction shots.
- Shoot to get sequences of your subjects in action.
- Be focused. Keep it short. Find one aspect of your story that shows the most emotion and go with that. Most web videos are between two to four minutes. Consider breaking the story into chapters if you need to go longer.
- Try to put your strongest material at the front of the video.
- Record "nat sounds". Think about the ambient sounds around you that will help tell the story and give the viewer a sense of place.

### **Interview:**

Your audio interview or narration is your A-roll. This is how your story will be told. Your B-roll video will run behind it.

- If at all possible, record the interviews in a quiet spot. Ask the subject to move to a quieter location away from crowds, if necessary.
- Move the camera as close as possible to the subject if you can't avoid a noisy environment. Use a shotgun mic or a lavalier mic for best results.
- Do not speak over the subject while he or she is talking. Nodding and keeping eye contact is enough. Saying "uh-huh" and not giving the subject a time gap between questions will kill your video.
- Ask the subject to answer your questions in complete sentences.
- Give focused questions so your subjects can give you the 25-words -or-less version.
- Use a tripod. Have the subject talk to you and not the camera.

**Techie Stuff:**

- Know how to operate your equipment before going out on the job. Practice and test out gear.
- Keep spare, charged camera batteries with you at all times.
- Have an extra mic cable handy, just in case.