

Beginner's Luck: Visual longform storytelling and documentation from the Brooks Glacier

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The vast majority of storytelling is done through one medium at a time: a news story made of text, a documentary film, a single printed photo. But today's world is a recorded one, producing unlimited media in numerous different formats. Almost everything that happens, every experience is documented and shared, and with not just one medium, but multiple simultaneously. A routine vacation is recorded by the text of Facebook posts, cell phone video, still images, map locations and more. True exploratory endeavours take that concept even further. When dealing with something that is rarely or never experienced, we've become obsessed with recording and sharing every aspect of it.

When this much information is available to accurately tell a story, it exponentially increases the potential accuracy, depth and richness of the experience for the reader (or viewer, etc.). When, along with just reading a compelling story, they can see photos and videos in time with the relevant text, when they can have the events they're reading about explained with a map or timeline, when they can seamlessly receive interjections and side notes about what they're reading and when they can have an abundance of information thoroughly arranged in valuable, common sense way, then a story becomes an full, enveloping experience, rather than a two-dimensional one.

In 2012, the New York Times launched a groundbreaking new type of online journalism that would revolutionize the way we share and ingest stories and media online. "Snowfall," the story of an avalanche in Washington state, blends a collection of text, photos, videos and interactive elements around a central longform feature, to help give readers a more thorough understanding of it. Furthermore, it allows readers to take in information from different mediums without it seeming contrived or jumpy. They succeeded in producing one continuous story, with easy flow, from various different elements.

In a similar vein, "Rotors" is a visual longform product using the information my team and I gathered in Alaska during our expedition to comprehensively and accurately document a relatively unknown region of the Alaska Range as a resource for the climbing community, as well as create an entertaining and compelling story for the general public to enjoy. Using a rich, thorough and captivating blend of multimedia elements, it succeeds in immersing readers in the experience of climbing in the Alaska Range and adequately captures the location through a feature story, multiple added text excerpts, photography, video, a feature documentary short film, maps and more, creating a product that is a model of the best way to tell stories and document events for the web.

<http://www.adirondacksherpa.net/beginnersluck>