

Objectives

- To engage youth in personal storytelling through accessible media production – by shooting videos on mobile photos and editing the footage into a short film.
- To experiment with mobile video production as an accessible, ubiquitous and affordable means of documentation and personal expression.

Structure

Introductory meet-and-greet for project explanation and initial recruitment; follow up to confirm participation. Meet 1-3 times a month for duration of project, culminating in a final screening.

Suggested topics for training sessions

Introduction to filmmaking techniques [1]

Discuss lighting, sound and composition for videography. Have participants shoot a test video on the phones. Lead brainstorm around what and where to film. Hand out a summary tip sheet and schedule of meetings.

Introduction to editing: basics [2]

If editing on computers, introduce editing software or online application, basics of interface and concepts (importing, cutting, arranging, adding titles & music). If using mobile app to make edits, review features and editing process on the app. Designate half the session for editing of individual content.

Review of footage [3]

Have participants screen their favorite personal clips. Lead group discussion around technical issues (lighting, framing) and content themes in each video. Write up tips and/or shooting assignments per participant.

Individual editing + team project planning [4+5]

Covered over one or two sessions. Allow participants to finish editing their own footage, including titles, voiceover, music or effects. Begin dividing into several small teams (unless working as one large group) and plan out production for team projects (fiction or documentary). Map out team member roles, shooting locations, themes/scenes, and production goals for the coming week(s).

Team editing [6+7]

Covered in one or several sessions. Workflow depends on the editing platform. Small teams can edit in pairs on a computer; one larger group can discuss editing decisions which facilitator will implement in an editing system.

Final editing [8]

Add music, transitions, effects, titles (or make editing decisions as a group for facilitator to implement later).

Options

Recruit participants from known social networks, or via community outreach

Having a personal connection to a community or youth group (or at least experience with their cause) is easier than recruiting from an organization or community leader with whom you have no connection.

Edit on a mobile device or on a computer

New mobile apps (iMovie, Vimeo) are making it possible to edit video footage on one's handheld. While this wouldn't allow students to learn extensive editing techniques, it could be quite a good starting point, and give them autonomy to work with their own footage without using computers.

Edit on a computer using an online or offline application

The trouble with online editing systems (Kaltura, Stroome, Jaycut, YouTube Editor) is their relative newness, and therefore their lack of stability and speed, as well as limited features. The trouble with proprietary editing systems (Final Cut Pro, iMovie, Windows MovieMaker) is that these applications cost money, students must have access to computers to edit, and the interface is often quite complicated. One alternative is to have the group make editing/sequence decisions (and/or mobile edits on the device) and the facilitator (as editing expert) make the edits on a computer.

Edit individually, collectively, or both

"Collaborative editing" can take many forms. It can include filming as a team and editing as individuals, or group editing of individual footage. It's helpful to give students the opportunity to learn the platform and editing techniques first – perhaps editing their own initial footage on a computer, or just editing on the phone – before (or instead of) editing as a group.

Rather than combine footage from many different participants into one huge movie, students could also work in teams of two or three to plan, direct, shoot and then edit their own narrative.

Intergenerational teams vs. only teens

Adults are busy, and learning editing software can often seem like a steep or time-consuming learning curve. This becomes an issue when working in intergenerational teams. One solution is to have the adults film videos, but only the teens edit them (if making a group video). Here the focus would be on having teens learn about the lives of adults through reviewing and editing their footage.

Considerations

Organizing:

- ▶ One cannot successfully run a community project without sincere interest and respect for the community involved. This means relationship building with participants, and community engagement with the organization, school or church, including parents and community leaders.
- ▶ Getting buy-in from parents is essential. Make sure to lay out clear goals, expectations, deadlines, output and time commitment.
- ▶ As with any organizing initiative involving actual people, the facilitator must make phone calls and send emails and texts to regularly check in with participants before every session, and during the time participants are filming. Also, provide handouts of all schedules, assessments, assignments, deadlines, etc. as well as URLs where this information can be accessed online.

Facilitation:

- ▶ Giving structure, boundaries, and concrete shooting assignments is important: students need freedom to produce/create/edit their own content, but direction and regular feedback is helpful.
- ▶ Iterative assessment of participants' work is important. Make note of which participants seem more committed, and make changes to encourage less productive participants as well as enthusiastic ones, or those with higher skill levels.
- ▶ Hand out hard copies of everything: schedules, deadlines, production tips, individual reviews, etc.
- ▶ Give shooting assignments to all participants (i.e., film someone you care about; film yourself giving a personal introduction to who you are; film an activity you enjoy doing, with voiceover) with deadlines.
- ▶ Have participants shoot for a short period of time (~one week) and then screen some of their footage – perhaps a few of their favorite clips. Identify different shooting styles, issues with cinematography, lighting or sound, and discuss which clips seemed most effective or compelling, and why. This feedback, as well as inspiration from watching/discussing others' videos, will help motivate the student to film more.

Technical:

- ▶ Online editing systems offer free access and basic editing features (Jaycut being the best, at present) but load times are slow. YouTube's Editor, allowing cuts/titles/music, might be an easier (though limited) platform that students can access and experiment with from home.
- ▶ Participants can either stream or upload footage directly to the web (sometimes resulting in lags) or upload it from the mobile device to a computer during training sessions. The benefit with uploading content to Qik or YouTube is that it enables the participant and facilitator to keep track of content as it's shot.
- ▶ Keeping track of everyone's content can be very complicated. Figure out a system for organizing clips, or at the very least, copy each participant's clips to your computer or drive as a backup.
- ▶ Participants should be encouraged to first shoot, review and edit their own footage before embarking on a group editing project. This introduces them to editing systems, whether online, offline, or on the mobile device, and allows them the autonomy to experiment, make mistakes, and tell their own story.
- ▶ Make sure you test all editing software, phones and computers before using! There are often surprises you completely don't anticipate.
- ▶ It's ok, and perhaps even preferable, for the facilitator to edit a rough cut (with music/titles/sound improved) and then make changes as a group – rather than expect the group to edit everything from scratch.