Best practices for creating a Storify

First, what is a Storify? In the company’s own words:

*Storify lets you curate social networks to build social stories, bringing together media scattered across the Web into a coherent narrative. We are building the story layer above social networks, to amplify the voices that matter and create a new media format that is interactive, dynamic and social.*

So in a nutshell, a Storify lets you gather social media nuggets – many of which will disappear quickly – and use them to tell a story. It’s that last word – story – that’s most important.

Just like the stories you have written for your other journalism classes, the one you choose to create for your Storify should have a point. It also should have a title, a summary, a lead, transitions and an ending. In fact, the best way to create a good Storify is to start by putting together an outline of what you want to say. Then you can go and find the pieces to support your point. Along the way, you might run into contradictory information or additional ideas you hadn’t thought of. That’s fine – just as in reporting any story, you have to be flexible to deal with new information you discover.

Before you get to that stage, however, be sure to visit the Storify.com home page and check out the featured examples. You will see a range of different types of stories there, and you should get some ideas about how to structure yours. This is also a good time to review “Here’s How Storify Looks Telling the Story of Storify” (<http://www.niemanlab.org/2010/09/meta-heres-how-storify-looks-telling-the-story-of-storify/>).

Now it’s time to create your Storify.

1. Write a headline that demonstrates good SEO. Here is a good example from Mother Jones magazine: **Hacking For The FBI: A Timeline Of How An Informant Sold Out Anonymous**
2. Write a summary of 50 to 100 words to give the reader a fuller idea of what your Storify is about. Here’s an example from Purdue University: **Hundreds of people in the Purdue community gathered at McCutcheon Hall to march to Hovde Hall in memory of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed Florida teen that was shot and killed last month.**
3. Write a lead. Sometimes, the summary is sufficient without a lead. But in many cases a strong lead will help get your reader interested in your Storify. Here’s an example of the headline, summary and lead working together, from Jake Nelson:

**Social Media Keeps Tornado-Stricken Town Connected**

*Residents of a Michigan town hit by a tornado were able to keep in touch and disseminate information via social networks on Thursday.*

When a tornado with wind speeds over 135 mph touched down in the village of Dexter, Michigan, on March 15, 2012, those in the affected area were able to communicate and exchange information about the storm using Twitter and Facebook.

1. Use Storify to find and embed at least 10 pieces of social media (of at least three different types) to tell your story, interspersing your own narrative and hyperlinks along the way. *A Storify is NOT just a collection of social media tidbits – it needs to be your own story.*
2. When you get to the end, take a moment to wrap up your story. The ending does not have to be a huge production, just something that lets the reader know you’re done. Here’s the ending from the tornado Storify: **The storm destroyed more than 100 homes, but thanks to effective tornado warnings, nobody was killed.**
3. Review your Storify (checking for spelling, style, etc.), then you can save it and embed it into one of your web pages.