Patching up paradise:

What started as a lofty dream in the West Virginia hills is now a crumbling memory.

But to the Hare Krishna followers who remain, it's almost heaven.

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by

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Acknowledgements

Introduction:

This thesis consists of a combination of two pieces with the first being a professional project in the form of an immersive photographic documentary entitled "Patching up paradise." The second part is a literature review of applicable topics and a reflection on how those topics affected work on the project.

The photographing of the professional project took place from October 2007 through March 2008. The raw images were then processed and edited down to the final selects (which appear in the final project) from February 2008 to May 2008. The author spent a total of eight days living with and documenting the daily life of the New Vrindaban, Hare Krishna religious community near Moundsville, West Virginia

In addition to this photographic documentary a long form written narrative was created by Eric Marshall Hornbeck during the same time period. This narrative was included in a multimedia website which is packaged as a part of this thesis and marked Appendix B. The author's own work is included on a DVD marked Appendix A. For those interested in viewing the website from a computer connected to the Internet the web address is www.patchingparadise.com.

For more information on Eric's work and experiences completing this project please see Eric Hornbeck's thesis, "Patching up paradise: What started as a lofty dream in the West Virginia hills is now a crumbling memory. But to the Hare Krishna followers who remain, it's almost heaven."

Appendix A: Project Images

Appendix B: Multimedia Website

Appendix C: Literature Review

Since the invention of photography, the aesthetic values and user consumption of the photographic product have been heavily driven by the different types of technology used to produce it from the early days of daguerreotypes that were one of a kind and could not be reproduced to the advent of photojournalism and the black and white negative. Black and white eventually gave way to color film, which has since given birth to the digital era of photojournalism. Along with the advent of digital photography, the interactive nature of the Internet has completely altered the way in which images are both consumed and distributed. Images are now incorporated and packaged into delivery systems that include still photographic images, text, graphic elements, and even video components. This digital packaging is known as convergence and has created its own special mix of ethical and aesthetic issues, along with new issues regarding viewer use and consumption. This literature review will show the advantages, disadvantages, and new developments that the digital era and multimedia convergence are bringing to the world of journalism and more specifically photojournalism.

Digital technology was introduced to the world of photojournalism long before the arrival of the digital camera. In the early 1980s *National Geographic* was able to alter the alignment of the Egyptian pyramids in a cover photograph electronically (Russial and Wanta 593). The first camera designed for digital capture and for use by photojournalists was the AP/Kodak NC2000, which debuted in 1994. It was not widely accepted because of its poor image quality and the five-figure price tag that

made if unaffordable for the majority of photographers (Russial and Wanta 593). In

today's modern world of photojournalism, however, the reality is something quite

different. For example by the year 2000 all of the images being produced by the

Reuters Agency (a news agency supplying vast quantities of both domestic and

foreign journalistic images) were being produced by digital means (Tirohl 337). With

the presence of relatively inexpensive digital cameras that can produce high quality

images the majority of the images taken by photojournalists and published by news

outlets are captured digitally, processed, and stored digitally. In fact a survey of

newspaper picture editors found that the most important skills for a potential

photojournalist to have were still the ability to correctly compose and capture

professional photographs and provide accurate caption information to help inform the

consumer. After these basic skills, however, picture editors placed their emphasis

when hiring new recruits on their understanding of and ability to use digital

technology. The vast majority of these editors preferred that job seekers know how to

use Adobe Photoshop on a Macintosh computer to handle the processing and

management of digital images (Russial and Wanta 600).

One interesting side effect of this shift away from traditional film-based

images to digital technology is the issue of convergence within the newsroom. The

convergence of the responsibilities of individual journalists is more pronounced at

small- and mid-sized papers where budgetary constraints put pressure on individual

employees to be responsible for photography, writing, and graphic design. Ironically

enough even as picture editors are emphasizing the benefits of digital technology for

their staves, digital technology has also made it possible and even encouraged

convergence of jobs within the newsroom (Russial and Wanta 596). It is questionable

though as to whether or not this convergence is desirable as it could place decision

making in regards to photographs in the hands of people who do not possess formal

visual training (Russial and Wanta 596). Some editors and photographers have

expressed concern that as digital technology and job-convergence continue to affect

the photojournalism industry photographers maybe be expected to turn over raw

images (lacking any kind processing or preparation for reproduction in print or online)

for "illustrative images." These "illustrative images" would be highly altered without

any label/identification to make the viewer aware of such alteration, which in turn

could cast doubt on the authenticity of the image and the reliability of a

photojournalist's work. That being said this trend seems to be most pronounced at

tabloid style papers, while the more respected broadsheet publications appear to be

resisting the move to "illustrative images" and leaving the onus for truth and veracity

in the image on the individual photojournalist (Tirohl 336). Making sure that the

public can trust a journalistic image is of the utmost importance since it has been

found that most consumers of news inherently trust that which they see more than

what they read (Tirohl 337). Video skills are a prime example of media or cross-

platform convergence but currently picture editors do not consider these skills to be

truly indicative of an individual's ability to do the job of a photojournalist (Russial and

Wanta 596-597).

Even as digital photography and its acceptance have swept through newsrooms across America bringing its practice to almost universal levels among newspapers with a daily circulation of 7,500 or more, digital photography has also created its own special set of ethical quandaries (Huang 149). The biggest concern of these is the believability of the image. A photograph was once viewed in the context of the philosophy that "the camera does not lie." This idea of the truthfulness of photography stems from the fact that it is the only visual medium (along with its offspring film and video), which shows viewers what was in front of the camera. It is the idea that the camera captures exactly what is placed in front of it without opinion, deceit, or manipulation and thus photojournalism and press images derive their credibility from this inherent objectivity (Tirohl 335-336). In the modern world, however, savvy media consumers are all too aware of the ease with which media professionals can alter the content of images using digital technology (Huang 149). An industry standard has slowly been evolving over the last 20 years as digital photography has matured as well, but a solid universal standard of what is and is not acceptable in terms of digital alteration/manipulation of an image within the photojournalism industry itself is still lacking. Instead there are general guidelines, which are then supplemented or more clearly defined concerning what is and is not considered acceptable alteration at individual publications. These general guidelines tend to follow and even use the same language of what photographers were capable of doing in a traditional wet/chemical darkroom. This includes alterations known as dodging, burning, cropping, and enhancing contrast. While traditional darkrooms

have become a thing of the past these alterations have remained the mainstay of what

is acceptable as they only lighten, darken, or help to color balance an image so that it

will reproduce properly, they in no way, shape or form alter the content that the

camera has captured in the image (Tirohl 338). A further understanding of this can be

found when reviewing the National Press Photographers Association (NPPA)'s code

of ethics. Point number six in the code of ethics states:

> "Editing should maintain the integrity of the photographic images' content and
> context. Do not manipulate images or add or alter sound in any way that can
> mislead viewers or misrepresent subjects."

While this clearly forbids photojournalists from adding or subtracting content to an

image it is not binding or specific in it address of digital techniques. The NPPA also

has an official stance on digital manipulation labeled its "Digital Manipulation Code

of Ethics" which was adopted in 1991. It also forbids tampering with the sanctity of

the information conveyed in a news photograph, but as can be seen below does not list

specific alterations that are forbidden.

> "As journalists we believe the guiding principle of our profession is accuracy;
> therefore, we believe it is wrong to alter the content of a photograph in any
> way that deceives the public.
>
> As photojournalists, we have the responsibility to document society and to
> preserve its images as a matter of historical record. It is clear that the emerging
> electronic technologies provide new challenges to the integrity of photographic
> images ... in light of this, we the National Press Photographers Association,
> reaffirm the basis of our ethics: Accurate representation is the benchmark of
> our profession. We believe photojournalistic guidelines for fair and accurate
> reporting should be the criteria for judging what may be done electronically to
> a photograph. Altering the editorial content ... is a breach of the ethical
> standards recognized by the NPPA."

It is no wonder that individual photographers feel pressure when attempting to determine what is an acceptable alteration and what is not when the preeminent professional organization in the field has not clearly defined acceptable vs. non-acceptable alterations.

What has not been done until recently was question consumers about their perception and trust of digital images. This is an interesting and somewhat challenging task as there is no common educational system to educate consumers of visual media, even though most modern members of society encounter far more visual messages than text on a daily basis (Tirhol 339). However, in 2001 Edgar Shaohua Huang published an article entitled "Readers' Perception of Digital Alteration in Photojournalism" that addresses the issue of readers' perceptions of digital photography that could and should be instrumental in developing a code of acceptable conduct in terms of digital alteration. One obvious concern when attempting to determine how consumers feel about digital alteration is the fact that approximately one-third of the US population cannot tell the difference between different types of photographs and what types may carry the greatest probability of alteration. As surprising as the above statistic might be of equal importance is the idea that 60 percent of media consumers are aware that most of the images they see in newspapers and magazines are produced digitally and have the potential to be, although they are not necessarily, altered. It is also of some interest to note that 40 percent of these same consumers were unaware of the fact that the news media have been using digital technology to produce/process images for the last 20 years (Huang 155). Obviously

consumers are aware that digital creation techniques are prevalent, but it would appear that it may not always be understood to what extent these media are used and have been used historically as well.

These same survey respondents did indicate that they would willingly accept digital alteration of different types of images on a different scale. For hard news and documentary photographs zero alteration was deemed acceptable as these types of images were supposed to be an unbiased visual record of events. Feature photographs were expected to have some moderate level of manipulation and photographic illustrations were generally believed and accepted to have a great of alteration even to the point of being a composite image, an image that is constructed from the combination of two or more photographs in whole or in part (Huang 156). Since different types of digital alterations are viewed differently, it is interesting to note that very subtle changes/alterations within an image can greatly alter the meaning or story that an image tells (Tirohl 336). Changing the tonality (color balance, saturation, contrast, etc.) of an image in order to improve the reproduction quality of that image is viewed as having no negative side effect as long as it did not alter the original content of the image. Techniques such as airbrushing and adding or deleting photographic content were found to have no place in news photographs as they altered the content from the "truth" that the camera originally captured (Huang 158-162). A current matter of debate is whether or not altered images would be more acceptable if publications developed a system by which they could clearly label those images that have been altered and there by distinguish them from more straight forward

documentary type images (Tirohl 339-340). Regardless of whether or not a labeling system is created these findings/concerns make it is necessary for photojournalists to keep in mind that alterations must be kept to a minimum and that when they are used they need to be used judiciously so as not to harm their personal credibility or that of the industry.

Not only has digital technology changed the way in which photojournalists create and process images and created a new kind of visual media consumer, it is also changing the way in which newspapers deliver their content and the direction in which newspapers the world over are designing their products. The first and most obvious development that digital technology has brought to whole newspapers is the Internet, which was heralded as bringing about the end newspapers almost from the moment of its debut (Nerone and Barnhurst 468). In fact, Jon Katz wrote in *Wired* magazine in 1994 that the Internet would have killed off newspapers completely within 10 years of his writing. Rather than go the way of the dodo as so many predicted newspapers are still here today, however, they are using the Internet as an outlet through which to distribute content, in addition to the regular newsprint editions. The doom and gloom predictions may have sparked some of the change that has come about in the industry as newspapers began using the Internet at almost the same that the predictions of their demise were being made (Nerone and Barnhurst 468). The change, however, has been slow and reluctant with newspapers making the jump to including electronic editions only when they absolutely have to (Nerone and Barnhurst 468). One benefit of the use of electronic editions is that they allow newspapers to include far more visual content,

which helps to attract viewers whose minds have become increasingly visual oriented in recent history. Despite this fact newspapers have also not fully capitalized on all the features that the Internet has to offer at this point in time. Instead newspapers tend to treat their online editions as "surrogate print editions." This does, however, allow for the use of "virtual refrigerator clippings" of articles of interest and the ability of consumers to instantly email stories of interest to friends and family rather than clipping them and then mailing them in the traditional sense (Nerone and Barnhurst 469). Another interesting fact about online papers is the fact that they do not have the standard newspaper form of headers and columns or different sized headlines, etc. instead the standard "index" idea (information laid out top to bottom with dominance of one story over another clearly defined) of the Internet is most prevalent. Headlines link to stories and small thumbnailed photographs link to larger versions and/or collections of photographs centered on a certain story line. Much of this is still a product of the early Internet culture which was simply a stripped down and simplified print medium controlled by the programmers with the technical know how to create and update web pages. As they have evolved these webpages have grown to have their own dominant elements in the form of advertisements. These advertisements present themselves as banner ads across the top of the page, columns down the side, and even footer messages at the bottom of the page (Nerone and Barnhurst 470). The overabundance of these ads could serve to explain how newspapers are handling the issue of decreasing ad revenue in their print editions. With the parent publications floundering and searching for a financial foothold at the start of the 21st century

perhaps it will be the debut of the new electronic editions that will help to save newspapers.

One interesting note in regards to the hierarchy of all these online elements, however, is the fact that the hierarchy of importance of elements on the web is no longer determined by editors and their decisions regarding the dominance of headlines and photographs (often based on the presentation size relative to the rest of the news page). Online, however, this is no longer a feasible way of determining dominance. Instead the dominance of a story is decided by the viewers themselves based on what they choose to click on and consume, making the experience user driven and removing the editors authority from the consumption process (Nerone and Barnhurst 471). Also with the increase in bandwidth websites can now feature instantly updated and tallied user polls and movies/multimedia content. This new media allow publications to branch out from that which they traditionally use and attract the attention of viewers who may be interested in more entertainment style news pieces than hard hitting content (Nerone and Barnhurst 471). This desire for constantly updated news and the means by which to speed the distribution process have also caused some problems for journalists in the sense that they are now expected to spend more time updating and turning in constant reports and images which can decrease the amount of time they are able to spend in the field and decrease the amount of time that journalists have to make sense of their own notes or the images/footage that they have captured. This makes accuracy of reporting more difficult even as the constant updates and 24-hour

coverage of events leaves far less room for errors when content is being constantly scrutinized (Tirohl 342-343).

The new media that journalists are now able to branch out into is most often referred as "multimedia journalism," but this does raise the question of what exactly multimedia journalism is (Deuze 139). There are actually two different ways of defining multimedia: 1) a news story being told via multiple means (i.e. a news package online that uses two or more media formats to tell the story); 2) the integrated presentation of the same story across different media (although the presentation need not be simultaneous) such as presentation of the same story in a newspaper and online and a local broadcast station (Deuze 140). What currently appears to be the most prevalent form of convergence is the first one with newspapers using their websites to put together photo galleries, audio/visual slideshows, and moving graphs or animations to tell a single story in one place (Deuze 142-143). The increasing use of different types of media to tell a story also lends itself to the idea of convergence yet again although there are two main views of convergence (Deuze 140). The first is driven by the idea that digital content allows multiple forms of media to converge into one package and be delivered together such as in an audio/visual slideshow online that includes photos, audio, and text. The second is seen as a collaboration of people/jobs within the newsroom or even across formerly separate and distinct newsrooms across media platforms (Deuze 140-141).

Another concept that has been brought into the spotlight by digital technology is the idea of interactivity. Interactivity has two key ideas: 1) it allows for the

consumption of content to be user driven, controlled, and selected; 2) it allows for the

lines of the traditional structure and role of the newsroom to blur and for the

newsroom and community to converge into an open community that shares

information back and forth outside of the traditional framework of a story and story

consumption (Chung 45). Some researchers view the human interactivity as more

interactive than medium-based interactivity since human interactivity functions like a

face-to-face conversation (Chung 45). All of the issues and features of interactivity

are coming to fruition now as the Internet has reached its "critical mass" point that has

cemented its place in society and the global economy (Chung 46). It is also worth

noting that journalism and production of the journalistic product have slowly and

steadily migrated online but have changed very little. The way in which the product is

created and presented, the medium, has expanded and changed to include more media

platforms but the idea of who is telling the story has remained unchanged. In other

words the journalist's role as gatekeeper of the information has remained constant and

the audience does not have the opportunity to participate in the storytelling process.

This is a prime example of great potential for human-to-human interactivity that is not

being utilized to its fullest potential by newspapers and broadcast news outlets. In fact

a survey of award-nominated news websites showed that human interactivity was the

least utilized form of interactivity (Chung 46-47). This of course raises the question of

why interpersonal interactivity features are put to such little use among news websites.

A survey of website producers across the country revealed that while most of the

producers recognized the importance of interactivity on their websites there were

producers who viewed interpersonal interactivity as being unnecessary to their

publications (Chung 48). This, however, was not the only reason for not incorporating

interactivity into a news website, another reason for limiting the use of interpersonal

communications such as message boards and the means to contact staff members via

email was because of the extra demands that it places on publications in terms of both

staff and equipment (Chung 55-56). One of the major reasons for this extra demand

on staff was so that comments and posts to the website could be reviewed and checked

for appropriate content. This concern is especially valid in light of the fact that

USAToday.com's message boards have received two threats against the president in

the past. This has lead to the current situation where USAToday.com now makes very

limited use of any kind of message board (Chung56). Because of the fact that

interpersonal interactivity is not making a great deal of headway at the moment it

places even greater pressure on journalists to create compelling interactive media that

can tell a story through many different formats.

All of which brings the issues back to the world of the photojournalist and the

issue of digital creation and delivery. Will photojournalists be the ones at their

newspapers responsible for supplying the extra whiz bang and pow that online users

are craving or will newsrooms need to hire a whole new group of employees

responsible for producing such content so that the photojournalist can continue to

provide the most telling still images that they can? Regardless of what ends up

happening to the photojournalist's duties they will be shaped largely in part by the

very technology that is helping them to do their jobs in the modern world: digital

capture, processing, and delivery.

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Appendix D: Reflections

The project that I undertook was one of a joint thesis with Eric Hornbeck that intended to combine my visual storytelling as a photojournalist with his written story in the form of a multimedia website. In order to produce this content Eric and I needed to procure subjects that would allow us to use the practice of "immersion journalism." The immersion reporting technique allows for journalists to become a part of their subjects daily lives and allows for days of interviews, photographic opportunities, and interaction with the subjects in their normal daily routine and environment.

To accomplish finding such a subject we first needed to determine what theme would unite the narrative structure of our thesis. We eventually settled on the idea of intentional rural communities within Appalachia. At the start of the project we approached several communities including New Vrindaban, a Hare Krishna community just outside of Moundsville, West Virginia; the Susan B. Anthony Land Trust, a women-only community within Athens County, Ohio; Far Valley Farm, an aging and loosely agrarian community in rural Athens County, Ohio; and finally the Valley View Mennonite Church, a conservative Mennonite community/congregation in Gallia County, Ohio.

We were eventually forced to abandon our story ideas within all of the communities other than New Vrindaban. This occurred for a variety of reasons, each unique to the individual community but resulting in our being unable to gain the immersion level access that we required to complete this project. One of the first

communities to be cut loose from out reporting was the Susan B. Anthony Land Trust. The problem that we encountered following initial contact and an interview/portrait session with a couple of the community members was one of gender. The women of the community were more than willing to meet us offsite but we were prohibited from entering and spending time at the community itself, as men are not allowed on the property. (In fact if a woman has a son he is required to move away from the community by the time of his sixth birthday.) We next approached the Valley View Mennonite Church, which provided us with open access to their worship services and congregation members' homes. The members were even open to extensive interviews with Eric but refused to allow themselves to be photographed or to allow us to capture audio for our multimedia packages. The biggest concerns they expressed were centered on photographs being an example of personal vanity and about having images of themselves, their families, and their community being placed on the Internet where there was no control over who might see the images. Upon contacting Far Valley Farm we found a source that was open to providing both interviews and access for photographs. Scheduling interviews and visits soon proved problematic, however, as they were often cancelled or pushed back by the subject. We were eventually forced to abandon this community as well when it became apparent that we would not be able to gain the access we needed while working within the time constraints of the thesis project.

We decided to concentrate out efforts on the Hare Krishna community of New Vrindaban. This decision was based on the fact that they welcomed us to the

community and willingly provided us with the full immersion that we needed over an extended period of time. The community members also had no problem providing us with the necessary photographic access, in-depth interviews, and chance to capture audio content that we had been looking for from the start.

Thanks to this open and free access Eric and I were able to spend eight days over the course of three weekends living within the temple compound among the community members. These weekends occurred during October 2007, February 2008, and March 2008. During these visits we were able attend religious services and also observe and photograph almost all aspects of the community members daily lives.

As great an asset as the openness of the community was it also posed its own unique issue. The members of the community were very eager to encourage both Eric and me to join them in their worship and daily activities. However, we kept our distance and functioned exclusively as observers in an effort to maintain our objectivity, which allowed us to tell the community's story without bias.

The initial trip to New Vrindaban occurred in October 2007. We traveled to the community along with a group of Ohio University's Global Leadership Center (GLC) students. The students were visiting the community as a part of a class within their certificate program. While there we focused primarily upon the interaction between these students and the members of the community. Even though the Hare Krishna devotees were not our primary focus on this trip we did interact with them and begin to lay the foundation of a working relationship. When we contacted the community again in mid-to-late November they were open to allowing us a return visit

and to giving us the kind of immersive reporting atmosphere that we desired. The smoothness and ease with which we obtained this permission was most likely due, in large part, to the earlier contact we had made with the community. We had already proven to them that we were not a threat or a source of judgment regarding them or their beliefs. I believe their sense of security regarding our presence was further strengthened by a short piece we published in *The Post* about the trip and their community. Many of the community members looked very highly upon their own portrayal within the article, going so far as to link to the article from the community's website and to request a PDF copy of the newspaper from Eric and me. The impression we left with this initial piece was very important as the community has gone through scandals in the past and been portrayed in a less than positive light by other members of the media.

All of these factors worked to our advantage when we made a second trip to New Vrindaban in February 2008. It is also interesting to note that in the winter months there were fewer community members present at the community, which also worked to our advantage. With fewer people present we were able to spend more time listening to the individual story of each member there and this seemed to remove any doubt in their minds about our intentions. This seemed to raise us to the level of a friend of the community in the minds of the devotees and we were welcomed warmly by the community and given free access to whatever we deemed necessary to complete our work. This access included very personal and quiet moments that told us a great deal about the community and the people that comprised it. One such moment

occurred while I was photographing a 5 a.m. worship service in the temple.

Approximately one week before our visitor an untended stick of burning incense had

started a fire and activated the temple's sprinkler system. The water that had poured

from the sprinklers had eventually pooled in the temple and damaged/warped the

small wooden slats that made up the floor. During this particular service I watched

followers prostrated themselves before one of their deities but was touched to watch

one lone monk stop and carefully tuck and then press several of the slats that had

come loose back into place before placing his forehead on the floor. This act could

have been completed to prevent the monk from injuring his forehead on the loose slats

but since he also could have moved to another spot it demonstrated first hand the deep

loyalty and love the followers felt not only for their religion and community, but also

for the physical structure, which housed their deities and ceremonies. The immersive

access we gained allowed us to also notice other quirks of the community such as duct

tape holding the sprinkler system up in several parts of the temple along with flecking

paint and chipped wooden columns in the temple. All of which attested to the fact that

the aging the community had survived and as well as the fact that maintenance and

upkeep are done by devoted individuals rather than by professional contractors.

Following these two initial trips I had already captured approximately 1,853

images. There was some down time between Eric's and my February and March trips

and we took this time to begin synthesizing some of our raw information. We

compared stories and notes we had taken from the residents, discussed the direction of

our piece and how we were going to go about combining our two distinct elements

into the most arresting final product that we could. Eric also wrote a draft of his

feature article on the community and I began to edit my photos down to those selects

that best told the story of the community. The editing process allowed me to develop

a "grocery list" of sorts. This was a list of photographs that upon our final visit I put

extra effort in searching out and photographing as means of completing my

photographic reportage and doing so in a way that depicted the community as fully as

I could.

During this editing process I encountered the issue of digital

manipulation/alteration of images that was discussed within my literature review. One

technical difficulty was how dimly lit the main temple was. Since this area was a

central hub of the community a great number of images had been captured there,

however, it was so dark that even though I was using the digital equivalent of 1600

ISO (an incredibly light sensitive type of film designed for low light shooting) speed

film to capture my images many of them were still dark or possessed very strong

orange, yellow, and red tints due to the color balance of the lights in the temple. In

order to correct this I was used what is known colloquially as "toning." This involves

adjusting the color balance so that the images appear as they would to a human eye

present at a worship service. This was accomplished by adding complimentary colors

and sometimes by removing intensity from specific colors that had altered the look of

the image. It was also necessary on some of the images to adjust their contrast so that

they would reproduce in a more easily understood fashion by the viewer. This

sometimes meant increasing contrast so to give subjects a slightly "harder" or

"sharper" edge that would more effectively separate them from their surroundings. On other images where the high film speed had resulted in a grainy look that sometimes distracted from the image it was then necessary to reduce the contrast in order to ensure the ability of the viewer to understand the image. Naturally, I also made use of cropping the images to remove distracting elements or focus viewer attention more specifically one section of the frame. While doing all of this, however, I held myself to the photojournalism standard of not altering anything that would change the content or meaning of the original image. This means that none of my images have been airbrushed or had any kind of content added or removed from the frame.

Come March 2008 Eric and I made our third and final visit to the New Vrindaban community. This trip served more as a means of wrapping up the reporting phase of the project as I captured the images on my "grocery list" that were still missing from my overall take. It is worth noting that our previous visits had opened up such a level of immersive access to us, that upon this third and final visit I was able to easily request and gain access to those occurrences and practices that I needed access to in order to complete my photo reportage. Upon completion of this final trip I had amassed a total collection of approximately 2,674 images.

There were times during our stay in New Vrindadan where everything was not always easy. Feeling like I was on the job every moment I was awake was a new and different experience for me when compared to my previous experiences where once you complete a specific assignment for a publication you are done. There were also times were I felt as if I was running out of new and original material to shoot.

However, I learned a lesson about patience in my shooting in that it became apparent that if I kept looking and asking questions new and interesting visual opportunities would present themselves. I was also pushed to shoot all my content in as many different ways as I could possibly imagine. This was in order to increase the visual variety of my images so that they did not all begin to look the same. It is this variety that allows for the viewer to look through all of the images without them becoming redundant despite the fact that they are all of the same community/group of people.

After this final trip Eric and I continued the editing, revising, and toning processes. Once we had each completed our individual side of the project it was time for use to come together and begin to combine our content for the final package. As part of this I created multiple photo essays. One large essay consisting of 38 images, far larger than the standard size of 4 to 6 images, served to portray a self-contained depiction of a day in the life of the community. I then also created essays surrounding the Palace of Gold, the major tourist attraction that lies near the community (it was originally intended to be a dwelling for the movements founder). A second photo essay centered on the lives of the monks in regards to their religion and the daily activities that they participate in as a result of their devotion. In addition to these three essays Eric and I then collaborated on two audio/visual slideshows. These slideshows combined my photos with audio that Eric had captured and edited, as well as captions that we collaborated on. I then put these slideshows together using SoundSlides software which generated flash movie/slide show files out of all the data. One of these slideshows centered on the issue of the community's cows. Even though they

consider cows to be sacred the majority of the community members lack the experience and knowledge to care for the cows, this slideshow centered on Jay Prabhupada Das who moved from Brazil to be the primary caretaker for the cows. The second slideshow took the viewer inside a traditional Hare Krishna worship service so that they could witness the sights and sounds that occur through out the service. Eric and I then picked photos to incorporate into the design of our website and a group of photos to be embedded with the text of the article.

Once all of this was complete it was time to determine how to construct our website and here the issues of interactivity came into play. For the website we chose to use purely medium interactivity. There are hyperlinks throughout the story that take the viewer to photo-essays, slideshows, to other sections of Eric's feature article or back to the beginning of the website. We incorporated a navigation bar across the top for another fast, easy means by which viewers could access the content of the site. We chose not include human-to-human interactivity within the site as we do not intend to update the site once it goes live. It will remain a static project as we do not anticipate being able to continue the reporting process in the immediate future. Therefore, we did not feel we would be able to invest the time or resources necessary to create and maintain any kind of public discussion/interaction on the website.

I was also responsible for purchasing our original domain name and procuring website hosting and setting up the ftp protocol that would allow us to upload and adjust any content that we might need to fix or tweak.

Having completed all these different aspects of the project while working with Eric taught me a great deal. I had already developed a strong understanding of how to tell a story visually but was not as familiar with what it would take to produce a long form written narrative to tell a story. Being able to collaborate with Eric and discuss the progression of the project all along the way with Eric gave me a great understanding of the idea of convergence and how to think across different media platforms. I also learned a great deal about the kind of details or notes that it would be beneficial for me to bring back and share with Eric in order to enhance both our narratives while we were working with separate individuals. I'm glad I had the opportunity to learn these skills as I believe they will make me more employable in the future as well as helping to communicate with non-visual coworkers. It is my belief that Eric also benefited from this exchange and will be able to communicate effectively and intelligently with visual storytellers wherever his career may take him.

When taking all of these factors into account it is my belief that this project has been successful. I have successfully complete a long-term immersive project unlike anything else I have ever attempted and I have also established a presence on the Internet that will allow the story to be communicated to the largest possible audience.

This thesis has been approved by

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