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The New Media: Multimedia

In days gone by, the word "Multimedia" typically meant slides and film projected on the same screen. Today, Multimedia means a mixture of text, photos, graphics, audio, video and animation on the computer screen. That mix may be projected on to a large screen for group presentations. A veritable information smorgasbord, the Multimedia presentation allows the user to pick and choose portions to be "read," "viewed" or "listened to." There is no traditional beginning, middle or end of the story. This communications tool is the engine around which most of the other new media are built.

Advantages

- Interactive — the audience participates in how much of the story is told and in what order.
- Eye, ear and hand work together, making the message more effective ("I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand").
- There is no "rewinding" or reindexing such as with videotape.
- Length of message is seldom a constraint, because a Multimedia document tends to be a modular structure of "short takes" and total overall length is virtually unlimited.

- Existing material created for traditional media (e.g. artwork, copy, ad slicks, radio and TV spots, long-form video, printed samples, tearsheets, etc.) can be readily imported into a Multimedia document.
- With the mouse, a Multimedia presentation is very handy, but the "touchscreen" technique makes it even more user-friendly.

Disadvantages

- Computer hardware limitations can put a damper on the "show."
- Often relies on laser disc read-write capability which is not yet common.
- Structure of Multimedia thought process is non-linear (whereas some messages need to be linear).

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