Visualizing Objects, Places, and Spaces: A Digital Project Handbook •

Right Place, Right Time, by Ted Spiegel

Joshua Korenblat

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Team

Project Co-Lead & Designer: [Joshua Korenblat](#), Assistant Professor of Graphic Design, State University of New York at New Paltz

Project Co-Lead: [Ted Spiegel](#), Photographer and Writer

Design Assistant: [Nina Guido](#)

Project URL

<https://indd.adobe.com/view/34699830-6a12-49bb-84c6-83964335bd9f>

Project Abstract

Right Place, Right Time: Photojournalist Ted Spiegel's Search for Storytelling Photographs is a 300-page ebook that anthologizes the work of [National Geographic Magazine](#) photographer Ted Spiegel from the 1960s to his present work in the Hudson River Valley. The ebook includes a pictorial table of contents and stories about how Spiegel gained access to his vivid photographs. The book is intended for use as a college textbook or resource that can be viewed on-screen, or on-demand via print. We will be testing this platform and book in spring 2021 at [SUNY New Paltz](#) in courses taught by the author (Joshua Korenblat, Assistant Professor of Graphic Design, SUNY New Paltz) and Nicola Wilson Clasby (Lecturer, English Composition, SUNY New Paltz) as well as in a course at the [University of Missouri](#).

Right Place, Right Time is a memoir by Ted Spiegel about a lifetime in photojournalism. Through photography and writing, Spiegel taps into sensations from life to share how he conducted 'pre-search' for his storytelling pictures. For Spiegel, "every good photograph has in its presentation the yield of pre-search."

My photograph of President John F. Kennedy was destined to become an official White House signing portrait as well as the United States Information Agency overseas portrait.

This image would eventually provide the basis for a dozen commemorative stamps worldwide, including the U.S. 2017 stamp honoring his 100th birthday. It was taken on September 6, 1960. Candidate Kennedy was in Seattle, Washington, to inaugurate his campaign.

Freshly tanned after a brief vacation at Hyannisport, Massachusetts, the young senator was the focus of the top photographers in the Washington Press Corps. Taking leave from Army Reserve duty, I was credentialled as the freelance photographer representing the State of Washington's Department of Commerce and Economic Development.

I had equal access to scramble onto the speaker's platform with 'the White House pack.' Once inside the police lines, agility, adroit elbows, and flexible knees augmented my press pass. My yield conferred confidence that I could shoot in a pack effectively. I also came away with a deep feeling that shooting in a controlled-access 'photo-op' world was not where I wanted to be years down the pike.

Looking back six decades later, I see that the year I had just spent as Washington State's photographer had encouraged me to seek out freelance feature story assignments from

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magazines rather than spot-news responsibilities.

The twenty minutes surrounding dawn and sunset offer 'sweet light' for photographers. There are some who will do most of their imaging when contrast is reduced, shadow detail is revealed and landscapes and people are bathed in golden light. But there is a lot more to photojournalism than how subjects look—my continual question is, "what story can this subject tell visually?"

Turning concepts into images, discovering situations that would yield unexpectedly interesting photo stories were the skills I wanted to build on, not the ability to push and shove to 'get the picture.'

These three images—which enjoy continual publication from my stock photographic collection—still evoke John Kennedy's arrival into our lives, his presence, and his unique immortality. Close-up access points within the unfolding event enabled my effort to still the flow of time. The same imperative—get up close, physically and emotionally—is an essential for me to this day. **S**

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Ted Spiegel began his career with an iconic photo series of a young Presidential candidate.

To offer *National Geographic* readers a participant's sense of Boston's St. Patrick's Day Parade, I joined it. Frustrated by the same sameness of eye-level views of the passing parade, I flashed my biggest smile and shouted a request above the festive din. Grasping outstretched hands, I clambered aboard the truck-mounted Boston College float. The result is a view of South Boston narrowing down to the 'the wearing of the green' just to themselves. In the process of photographically portraying a city, one has to identify significant locations and visually describe them during interesting moments.

St. Patrick's Day is an interesting moment in Boston, but every day offers visual opportunities. 'Photo-graph' literally means an image written with light. Stalking the ephemeral on a Boston brick sidewalk may seem a bit strange, but photographers know that springing off after a lovely shadow-caster, grabbing the highlights and silhouette defining her stride before they slip into time past, is a proper professional activity. The St. Patrick's Day Parade opened the story with a rousing march of an image, the home-bound worker closed it with a lullaby.

In all of my overseas travels, I have set out to find that viewpoint from where I could visually convey a unique sense of place. Like many of my colleagues, I peruse postcard racks to become aware of the classic viewpoints—the 'photo-op' spots that have beckoned thousands of tourists. But I augment such a survey with my own standard question to the locals I meet: "When you are away from home and get homesick, what view do you see?"

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Spiegel describes the people and places he encounters in Boston, and explains how pre-search led him to be where something special could happen.

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the photographer's constant encounter with Murphy's law—"If anything can go wrong, it will go wrong." My colleagues in photojournalism are on constant alert for Murphy's appearance.

When I learned about Nature's thirtieth anniversary gathering to honor this landmark moment in genetic research, I visualized a portrait of Watson and Crick, with a thousand genetic scientists who were following in their footsteps serving as the background.

After obtaining permission from Nature to intrude on their event by lighting the ballroom of Boston's Copley Plaza Hotel, I enlisted the support of National Geographic's "big lighting job" expert, Larry Kinsey, through my Picture Editor Rob Hernandez. Kinsey and I arrived two days before the conference to position and electrically connect ten very large stroboscopic light units.

This task was informed by my lighting of this very same ballroom ten years earlier for my article about Boston—then the topic was actually ballroom dancing. The rigging of both hardware and radio-controlled firing systems provided redundancy. Exposure tests were made of filtering Polaroid film. All we needed was that choir of scientists and "The Principals"—Watson and Crick.

The taking of the photograph was not so simple. Though they would each address the assembled scientists who were following along the pathway they had pioneered, they would do so independently, and they would only be together at a fifteen-minute press conference in a small side room. Nature's

editor was aware that the duo had gone solo scientifically and socially and would not appear publicly as the team they had once been.

He had not shared this information with me even though he knew that was why I had come to Boston and lit the whole ballroom. Perhaps Watson and Crick's non-relationship was a last-minute reality that he hadn't anticipated. But the good sport allowed me the opportunity to negotiate with my intended subjects. Let me say that my task was a bit like recruiting the Beatles.

Before approaching them I had asked to see the Nature article that was the focus of the event. What ensued was a bit like searching for that forgotten wallet when the giant restaurant tab was presented. Nobody had the article they were honoring. Teddy's "Plan B" (thank God Boston was one of my city stories) was initiated as I turned to National Geographic Researcher Ian Holderness who was attending the event in support of the article.

"PLEASE go down to the Boston Athenaeum's library and make a photocopy of the article with the cover, then make it up so that I can hand it to them as I get the shot."

Ian did a great job and I was prepared to know Dr. Watson and Crick negotiations. Luckily I had gotten to know Dr. Watson through visiting his laboratory at Cold Spring Harbor, New York—he had actually informed me about the Boston event. Watson undertook the task of inviting Dr. Crick to participate. They agreed, and the Nature editor agreed too. I was informed that in an hour when the scientists were due back

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In the Environment section of the book, Spiegel writes about how he portrays environmental impacts on people and new developments in science to improve life. The girl featured here is one of the first recipients of the human growth hormone.

Cyber warlord (left).
On the playing field (right).

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Right Place, Right Time is a memoir by Ted Spiegel about a lifetime in photojournalism. Through photography and writing, Spiegel taps into sensations from life to share how he conducted 'pre-search' for his storytelling pictures. For Spiegel, "every good photograph has in its presentation the yield of pre-search."

We are posting the ebook online as an open educational resource, using a password-protected website that students get access to once they enroll in the course.

We will also be creating an accompanying website, through which we will be adding a data visualization approach to some of the more conventional modes of storytelling in the book. Our current plans include locator maps for all of the photojournalism travels by Ted Spiegel, a timeline, and storymaps. This work will be accomplished over winter break 2020 with a student, Nina Guido, with counsel by Ted Spiegel.

At the end of the spring 2021 semester, we will gather feedback from instructors about the ebook and its accompanying resources and use that information to continue improving the website for future classroom use. We intend to make these materials as transparent as possible so that students can learn from our creation process.

Time Needed

When did you begin this project? When did you complete this project?

Time Span: June 1, 2016 - December 2020

Length: 4 years

Outcomes

What is the outcome of the project?

The outcome of this project is a 300-page illustrated ebook, which can also be printed on-demand, as well as an accompanying website with materials to support teaching and learning. I also intend to share what I learned working on this project in collaboration with Ted Spiegel in graphic design, digital media, and journalism, and visual anthropology communities.

Resources

What tools, resources, programs, or equipment did you use for this project?

We used film and digital photography, the [National Geographic Image Collection](#), and [Adobe Creative Suite](#) (Indesign and Photoshop) on a Mac tower. For the publishing platform, we are using [Bookbaby](#), which allows for the creation of ebooks and print-on-demand. Ted Spiegel is a co-copyright holder on all of the photographs from National

Geographic Magazine, so we were able to freely use these photographs in the book. We are finding that Adobe Indesign can handle the high-resolution photographs well, and a smallest file size PDF is high quality on screens and only takes up about 13 MB of space. The print quality PDF, however, is over 300 MB.

For the web version and accompanying resources, I have explored platforms such as [Scalar](#) and [Pressbooks](#) that would re-imagine the book format, in excerpts, for web use. As of the end of 2020, we decided to create the website as a bespoke [WordPress](#) site to allow for flexibility. We are investigating the use of the [Aesop Story Engine](#) plug-in along with free tools to produce exploratory graphics, including [DataWrapper](#), [Tableau](#), and the [Knight Lab product line](#), and possibly [Esri](#). These are all tools that are well-known in journalism, and through our work we aim to demonstrate to students how they may use these tools in their own work.

Funding

Please describe any costs incurred for this project, and (if relevant) how you secured funding for these costs.

The only expenses that we have incurred to date are for printing copies of the ebook for copy editing and gift copies for Ted's family. Our design assistant receives academic credit for her contributions.

We are considering purchasing the [Aesop Story Engine Wordpress plug-in](#) to enhance the immersive, photojournalist quality of the web site. This plug-in emulates practices from *New York Times* online photojournalism stories.

Workflow

Please give an overview of the workflow or process you followed to execute this project, including time estimates where possible.

The photographs comprise fifty years of Ted Spiegel's work, primarily on assignment with *National Geographic Magazine*. In one-to-one collaboration with Spiegel, I have helped to assemble, arrange, and edit his photography and written recollections and stories, organized by publication date and theme. This process has been ongoing from June 2016 until December 2020, when version 1.0 was completed. We will begin work on a version 2.0 in February 2021.

I am a former *National Geographic Magazine* Staff member, in the Art Department (2000—2006), and I met Ted when he was donating his old *National Geographic Magazines* to our university library. A librarian friend of mine introduced us. When we met, we quickly became friends, and we were also neighbors in the Hudson Valley, enabling one-to-one, in-person weekly sessions to make the book before the pandemic.

The rugby photo in the postscript section is a good metaphor for the emergent process we undertook here. It's also a metaphor development teams use for complex digital products: the rugby scrum. The idea is rather than have one plan, the team works together in small sprints to advance toward the goal, leaving room for conditions to emerge that suggest new possibilities.

Ted and I decided to complete this educational anthology and memoir, which he had composed about his work, and to make this book available to the public as a way of giving back insight and knowledge to students. Ted wrote all of the text and curated the photographs, securing the rights for them. I transformed an initial draft, alongside Ted, into a more cohesive design using Adobe InDesign. We opted for a conservative design approach and called this a 1.0 design. Our constraints were to just use the fonts that come with InDesign, so Ted didn't have to worry about installing new fonts, and to eliminate extra design features that detract from the text. There are no full-bleed photos, though in a 2.0 design, we intend to include more moments of immersion using this technique.

We are also planning on user testing the project in Spring 2021 with students in the photojournalism classes, so we will be soliciting feedback that we can use to improve the learning experience and learn more about how this project can integrate into a learning module.

Challenges & Opportunities

What, if anything, changed between beginning your project and its current/final form?

The 1.0 design will evolve with a 2.0 design, which will have improved typography and two-column text for readers who have reading disabilities. On the website, we also plan to leverage digital media to offer more pathways into the story through maps and timelines that the user can interact with online. In the end, we aim to achieve a balance between classic storytelling about how every photograph in journalism is the yield of pre-search, and new techniques for engaging readers afforded by digital

media. We are making room in traditional photojournalism for complementary new tools and techniques. By using tools students can easily apply too, they can see how the reading experience changes with the new media. We plan to make the web platform a learning experience, not just a host for the reading of the print book. This is an inclusive design approach, allowing more personalization of the experience.

Is there anything specific you wish you had known when beginning your project that might help other people to know?

It can be challenging to manage 5 GB of high-resolution photography: working on large file-sizes at an archival volume is a topic of concern.

One advantage of the ebook format as opposed to print: it's not more expensive to include more pages. This allows for a more all-encompassing approach to curating an archive. Readers are used to searching and scrolling information-rich 'landscapes' online. Also, the tools to produce these archives are becoming easier to use, and they can process large file sizes in a nimble way and allow for web publishing at the click of a button.

That said, it is important to make precise decisions about type size, leading, and margins when designing an ebook. These details are key components when creating a successful reading experience for students and should be considered early on in the design process. It is also imperative to consider how users and readers will be interacting with the content on a web based platform. For instance, the decision to have the option to download the ebook as a PDF allows students to highlight and make notes. The PDF option also allows students to print sections of the document for handwritten notes when preferred. Thinking about these details in the beginning of the process are crucial because it allows time for trial and error until a quality layout design is achieved.

While the book can be read in a non-linear way, I would also like to experiment more with leveraging the possibilities afforded by an ebook experience, including interactive experiences. While the stories are chronological, organized into themes of People & Places, History, and the Environment, the lessons are unmoored from time—timeless—and do not need to be delivered according to the book's sequencing. The lessons are about this idea of 'pre-search.' In contrast to research, pre-search is about how to discover how to be in the situation where something meaningful will happen. 'Every photo has in its presentation the yield of pre-search,' as Ted likes to say. To encourage non-chronological readings, at the beginning of the book, we have a gallery—a

juxtaposition of photos that tell contrasting stories— that encourages readers to see a photo, and then skip ahead to read about how the photo came to be.

Another lesson is to look for open systems, which can work across platforms. This is for equity purposes, giving more students the ability to access the book. This is one reason we opted to not make a book using Apple's iBooks platform, which does help with producing more interactivity in the book itself. Also, most ebooks have flexible layouts, allowing the reader to customize the number of columns and type size. This is a positive attribute of ebooks, but it presents a tension for archival photographic books because the text can reflow depending on readers' screen size, text size, and other preferences without regard to the accompanying photos. We designed the book so that the reader focuses on the text and the photos—it is intended on being a reading experience. That's one reason we often do not include captions with the photos, which would encourage readers to overlook the text. Data Ted gathered from *National Geographic Magazine* stories show this:

- 100% of pictures are viewed
- 93% of captions are read
- 10% will read the text

Next Steps

Do you have any plans to follow up on this project or work on something similar in the future?

I plan on experimenting with ways to diffuse this project to college classrooms and possibly the public, in coordination with Ted Spiegel, as a legacy of his journey as a photographer, visual ethnographer, and storyteller.

We're intending to allow the instructors to integrate the book and platform in a way that makes sense for their curricula in spring 2021. We are going to observe how they implement *Right Place, Right Time* and look, listen, and learn from their experience. This research is participatory, even action-based, in helping us to codesign the ultimate learning experience based on reader goals, tasks, and feedback.

Along with learning from Ted's insights into pre-search, another goal of this project is to show how the full sensory experience of photojournalism can be evoked by being attentive to image-making and writing. Students can be prompted to write narratives about their photographs, encouraging the type of long-form essay writing,

accompanied by photography, that has been revived in recent years by organizations like the New York Times.

For future projects, Ted and I are also discussing the possibility of making an ebook about the Italian Renaissance. Along with working with a

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the photograph's content, such as the likelihood of anything at all going wrong? My colleagues in photobiology are on constant alert for Murphy's appearance.

I was alerted about Nature's third-century anniversary gathering to honor this landmark moment in my research. I consulted a portrait of Watson and Crick, with a dozen great scientists who were following in the footsteps of the two men.

After obtaining permission from Nature to introduce them by lighting the balloons of Boston's Copple Hall, I invited the support of National Geographic's Science Explorer magazine. I was joined by the photographer, who was lighting all aspects and I arrived at the conference to expect and electrically connect them very fine stroboscopic light units.

This task was reinforced by my article about this very subject, which was published by my article about this, about the topic was actually balloons during. The rigging of the hardware and actually lighting systems provided industrial Engineers team were mostly willing to do this. I was joined by the support of National Geographic's Science Explorer magazine and I arrived at the conference to expect and electrically connect them very fine stroboscopic light units.

The taking of the photograph was not so simple. Though they would reach address the assembled scientists that they were not going to be a simple task. They would be going to do so independently, and they would only be together at the 100th anniversary conference in a small-scale room.

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collection of photographs and texts, for example, I can imagine including interactive maps and 3D models of the Duomo to create an integrative learning experience.