

**2020 Vision:  
Photojournalism's Next Two Decades**

**by A. D. Coleman**

My thanks to the World Press Photo Foundation for this invitation to address you all on this auspicious occasion. Thanks also to Árpád Gerecsey, Marieke Wiegel, and the rest of the foundation's staff, with whom it's been a pleasure to work. And my thanks to Grazia Neri and Robert Pledge, who I believe first put my name into the hat as a candidate for the task of providing a keynote address that's appropriate for this moment — the last World Press Photo Awards ceremony of the twentieth century, and also the final one of the second millenium of the Common Era. I hope to justify Grazia's and Robert's confidence, and that of the others who approved this choice.

I should add that none of them made any suggestions regarding what I should speak about, and none of them have any idea of what I'm about to say. You could argue that this absolves them of any accountability for what's going to happen. But, at least since the middle 1970s, anyone who's invited me to speak has had good reason to believe that I'd most likely make trouble in one way or another on such an occasion and, tacitly or actively, has encouraged me to do so simply by providing me with a forum. So I take full responsibility for the consequences of what I'm going to say today; but, if I were you, I wouldn't let them off the hook entirely. They knew what they were doing, and don't let them tell you otherwise.

Just about everybody in this room spends their working lives, and much of their spare time, looking at photographs. And we're going to pass most of the next two days doing that together. So I'm declaring the next 45 minutes to be a mini-vacation for the eyes of all of us, a picture-free zone. My motives are partly selfish: you've just had lunch, and we all know what most of you will do if we turn out the lights. Aside from which, looking at pictures and thinking about imagery are in any case two different

activities, taking place on opposite sides of the brain. So I'll give your eyes a rest, in the hope of engaging your minds.

Less than nine months from now, we will begin to speak routinely of 21st-century photography, and to distinguish it from what preceded it. Those of you here who are working photographers — and working picture editors, publishers, and others in the field — will be instantly and effortlessly transformed into transitional figures when the odometer turns over on January 1st, 2001: you'll become picture professionals whose working lives straddle not just two centuries but two millenia. (Same goes for me, by the way; and much of what I'll present to you today pertains of course to everyone in all branches of the medium of photography.) I don't say this to make any of us feel old, though hearing yourself referred to by some whippersnapper as a leftover from the twentieth century will probably irritate you as much as it offends me to hear the Rolling Stones sneeringly described as a geezer band.

This points up a few elementary facts: Simply because we operate with a base-10 mathematics (which probably originates from counting on our fingers), the number 100 has a definite, deep resonance for us; centuries, and the moments of passage from one to another, are therefore milestones. Come next January 1st, the major figures from the field's not-so-distant past who are reference points and even former colleagues and personal acquaintances for some of you but who have died or at least largely finished their work at this point — W. Eugene Smith, Margaret Bourke-White, Stefan Lorant, Larry Burrows, Howard Chapnick, Don McCullin, Gisèle Freund, Henri Cartier-Bresson, to name just a few — will immediately and irrevocably fall into the history of twentieth-century photography. By the same token, those who began their work very recently, or who will first enter the field next New Year's Day or thereafter, will automatically and by definition be considered 21st-century figures.

And those of you who started your work anywhere further back during the past half-century — before the early '90s, let's say — and are still at it will find yourselves in a curious and probably uncomfortable situation. Conceivably you'll hold positions of

considerable authority and clout; quite possibly you'll be at the height of your powers, full of the experience and expertise drawn from watching these fields shape and reshape themselves. Yet you'll be viewed by 21st-century newcomers as historical figures who are, by their lights, old and in the way. In short, at the stroke of midnight next December 31st you'll turn into not pumpkins but rather the geezers of what, for convenience's sake, I'm going to call photojournalism, but which I think of more broadly as *informationally-oriented photography*: the related and often overlapping forms of documentary photography, photojournalism, and press photography. And you geezers will have to prove your relevance all over again, or else face the likelihood of living well into the next century while listening to others relegate your significance and vitality and influence to this one just now ending.

That's the way the turn of the century goes in western culture, at least if the early 1800s and 1900s serve as any model. You don't have to like it, but you'd better get used to it. And the best way of doing so, I propose, is to get a running start on this changeover by beginning to talk — right now, today, this very minute — about 21st-century photography, with the recognition that, whatever you may feel about the medium as you've known it so far, that was then, and this is now.

Imagine yourself fast-forwarded and plunked down — as you will shortly be, de facto — at the very beginning of 21st-century photography. Wave goodbye to the past; look at the present and toward the immediate future. What do you see between now and the year 2020 — a timeframe during which, I'd assume, most of those here this afternoon expect to continue to live active professional lives?

To start with, even if your work involves making pictures, you may no longer appropriately find yourself called a photographer. There are several reasons for this possible shift in nomenclature. One is that the tools of your trade have changed considerably. Twentieth-century photographers were people who exclusively used dedicated still cameras to make static images of their subjects. But the new digital technologies already provide you with cameras that offer you the option of switching

from still to kinetic imagery with the flick of a button, adding sound captions and text captions to your still imagery, recording live sound with your kinetic imagery. Whatever that is, it ain't exactly photography.

Some of you will continue to restrict yourselves to making still images; you may even opt to work exclusively with analog equipment, if your clients and employers are willing to put up with the increasing inconvenience of handling analog output. And, in that case, you may reasonably continue to call yourselves photographers. Others of you will accept, and possibly even embrace, the remarkable options offered by the new tools.

Some of you have already done so; the last time I saw the venerable Fred Baldwin, co-founder of Houston FotoFest and a photojournalist himself, he was using his still/video digicam to make stills and video clips from FotoFest 2000 to upload to the festival's website. If that savvy old dog can learn a new trick, so can you. The students coming out of media arts programs and photojournalism programs today — the first generation of picture-makers in 21st-century photography — already have hands-on experience with those tools, and will take their availability for granted. What new term best describes that broadened range of professional activity, which surely goes far beyond what we used to call photography and photojournalism?

On another level of nomenclature, you'll find yourselves now commonly referred to in other contexts as *content providers*, and as makers of something that's known as *intellectual property*. You'll also discover that these terms aren't restricted in usage to the field of photography; indeed, they apply to graphic artists, musicians, writers, and other people who work in entirely different media. And what you'll see when you look around is that independent contractors who provide content by producing intellectual property — which is what the free-lancers among you do for a living — are making common cause in all media.

In that regard, next January 1st, you'll have good reason to celebrate. Indeed, you can do so in advance, right here and now: earlier this very week, I'm pleased to inform you, the U.S. Court of Appeals unanimously upheld a lower court's landmark

ruling on electronic rights in a case brought by freelance writers, the precedent-setting lawsuit known as *Tasini et al v. the New York Times et al*, or more commonly as *Tasini v. the New York Times*. The three-judge panel's unequivocal decision, handed down last fall, specified that it is copyright infringement for a publisher to put any freelancer's work online or otherwise reuse or resell it without explicit written permission. With the appeal for a rehearing denied, that decision now stands as the law of the land.

It's retroactive, by the way, so the serial rights-infringers of U.S. publishing will now have to pay through the nose for their piracies over the last several decades. The legal systems of some other countries have already made comparable determinations, and many more will surely follow suit. As a founding member of the National Writers Union, which largely subsidized this suit, I take great pride in announcing this victory to you. By the way, the N.W.U. is an affiliate of the United Auto Workers, which also endorsed this lawsuit — as did other professional writers' organizations, and also the American Society of Media Photographers, which recognized its pertinence to the concerns of photographers. So there's no shortage of new allies in the struggle of content providers to curb the global corporate culture's attempts to steal the long-term benefits of our work out from under us.

That's the good news for those of us who function as content providers and makers of intellectual property, and who refuse to sell our birthright for a mess of pottage. The bad news is that this won't stop the predatory behavior of those who seek to profit unduly from our labors: publishers and their enforcers — the lawyers who draw up the contracts hostile to our survival, and the editors who attempt to wheedle or bully us into signing them. They're already busily working to circumvent the spirit of the copyright law, and of this new decision, by pressing us to endorse highly unfavorable contracts that define our content production as work made for hire, or otherwise insisting that we transfer to them copyright and all other rights to the intellectual property we generate and on which so many 21st-century growth industries depend.

Sniff the air and you can smell their fear and desperation. Their stranglehold on content providers is being loosened, finger by finger. Not only will the publishers and

online distribution systems now have to pony up fortunes to those whose rights they've violated for years, but content providers in the States and elsewhere — at least those who've been courageous and savvy enough to retain their rights to their work — now have formal protection for all those rights, including electronic usages. Not only do they have the courts explicitly on their side at last, but they also have increasingly good reason to hang on to all of their rights to their original work: there's gold in them thar hills, and the publishing industry knows it. Why else do you think they fought this ruling so long and hard? Why are they now bitterly whining in chorus about what a terrible blow this is to them?

After all, it's the job of CEOs, middle management, and highly paid corporate lawyers to smell potential windfall profits and do everything possible to grab up the sources thereof. And they don't have your best interests at heart, ever; you can be damn well sure that if they're after any of your rights it's because the scent of cash has made their nostrils twitch. So don't depend on your own noses, which you probably haven't educated to sniff out the big bucks; use the people who come asking for your rights as if they were trained pigs after truffles, and trust their noses instead. If they want something from you, it's a likely sign that it'll be worth plenty somewhere down the line.

Remember, above all, that it's not your job to make them happy — especially because, in the 21st century, the publishing industry, broadly defined, is facing the same hard truth that the television industry, the radio industry, and the music industry now confront: *You no longer need them.*

In music, bands now produce their own CDs and sell them from their websites, completely eliminating the middleman. Streaming audio and video make it possible for anyone to broadcast live concerts on the Web, free or with admission by subscription, completely eliminating the middleman. The MP3 technology allows musicians to offer digital files of recordings made in a professional studio or a garage directly to listeners over the Internet, free or for a price, completely eliminating the middleman.

Let me repeat those four words, which strike terror to the hearts of capital and

management everywhere: *completely eliminating the middleman*. Up until now, you've considered publishers and editors — and perhaps also those who run galleries, museums, bookstores and newspaper kiosks — as necessary evils: the unavoidable gatekeepers through whose portals your work had to pass, the only effective pipeline to your audiences and markets. That's no longer the case. As in the field of music, so in the fields of imagery and text. For all the multinational conglomeratization that's gone on over the past two decades, there are now more publishers of books and more publishers of magazines than ever before in history. Digital technologies have opened up major new approaches to publishing and many new forms of publication, bringing with them thousands of new publishers and outlets and distribution methods. And self-publishing has never been a more viable option — technically and economically — than it is today.

The concept of self-publishing for most work done in the three forms I'm considering here — documentary photography, photojournalism, and press photography — has served as a last resort in the case of all three; it has seemed until now only marginally viable for documentary projects, and simply unworkable in relation to photojournalism and press photography. PDF files, CD-ROMs, e-books, websites, print-on-demand systems: presently and imminently, these open doors for makers of informationally oriented imagery that have been closed and locked to all but the well-to-do since photography's invention. Via these forms and others soon to come, self-publishing — direct content-provider-to-audience marketing and distribution — will prove ever more tempting.

Steadily, over the past three decades, a variety of markets and presentational venues for all kinds of photography — including what I'm loosely defining as photojournalism — have opened up and/or expanded world-wide. More photography books than ever before are being published. New magazines — most of them addressed to targeted readerships — spring up continuously. The gallery-museum circuit displays (and sells) ever more photography, including photojournalism. Non-traditional venues, such as the now-widespread network of international photo festivals,

offer increased opportunities for photographic images to reach viewers and markets. And new distribution systems — online stock houses, non-profit image archives like the Center for Creative Photography in Arizona — function as repositories and licensing agents for photographers' bodies of work.

It seems clear that the conventional outlets and markets will not simply disappear, but instead will reconfigure themselves radically in the coming decades. It's equally obvious that new and unprecedented forms thereof — e-zines, e-books, websites, CD-ROMs — will offer new opportunities for picture-makers in all the branches of photography. The photographers who will benefit the most from this situation are those who recognize their power and their value as content providers, who study carefully and involve themselves early on with the new technologies, and who fight to retain copyright and subsidiary rights to their intellectual property.

What I'd like to do now is provide you with a model for the working life of the maker of informationally oriented imagery over the next two decades. For that purpose, allow me to reinvent you — yes, you, no matter what age you are or what job you have — as a young photojournalist, recently finished with your education and apprenticeship, just now embarked on your professional life, contemplating your future on next New Year's Day. I'm basing this projection entirely either on existing situations and technologies or on others that are imminent and already in the making. So this is a conservative sketch; I wouldn't be surprised if it seems archaic in 2020, the outer limit of this fantasy.

As a young 21st-century maker of informationally-oriented imagery, you're familiar with and knowledgeable about both print media and digital media. You can use analog cameras, perhaps even prefer them for some tasks, but increasingly your clients and your vehicles prefer digital systems. Therefore, much of your activity is digital from start to finish; but you're expert at converting digital files to analog forms, like ink-jet prints and magazine pages, and also about going in the other direction — taking analog images and digitizing them.



In school, you studied photojournalism and documentary photography in the context of a curriculum in "time-based arts." This means that you worked with computers as necessary extensions of your cameras. You learned web design, CD-ROM production, digital audio and video editing, even page layout, along with photography. You're experienced with computer programs like Director, Dreamweaver, PageMaker, PhotoShop, and others. Because you studied ways of multipurposing your output — for the printed page, for the web, for CD-ROM, for other media — you think and generate material differently than some of the twentieth-century dinosaurs still kicking around, people exclusively locked into making pictures for reproduction in ink. You produce both still and kinetic imagery, with and without sound components, with and without accompanying texts, according to the project or assignment on which you're working.<sup>1</sup>

You have four workplaces. Two of them are in your apartment — your darkroom (you still like to sit in the blackness with the water running sometimes) and your computer station, a Mac G4 loaded with software and a slew of peripherals. The third is your website. The fourth is the field — wherever your projects and assignments take you. You remember reading somewhere that the Hungarian emigré photographer Marion Palfi once said, "My studio is the world," and you feel that way yourself; in fact, you keep that quote tacked to your darkroom door and taped to the edge of your monitor.

In the field, you carry several analog cameras and several digital ones, including a still/video camera. You also carry a small, high-end, broadcast-quality digital audio recorder. You're adept at using them all. More and more of your clients want your material transmitted as digital files; with your digicams and audio recorder hooked up to

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<sup>1</sup> You may think this merely fanciful; but, if so, I'm not alone in envisioning it. As part of the 20th-anniversary bash that the magazine *Photo District News* threw for itself on May 16, 2000 — exactly one month after I gave this talk — a forum moderated by PBS's Charlie Rose took place at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York City: "Can a Photograph Still Change the World?: Visual Communication in the Digital Age." Unfortunately, only one panelist actually spoke to the issue embedded in its subtitle. That was Karen Mullarkey, formerly Picture Editor of *Newsweek* and now Editor-in-chief of Zing.com, a webzine. "Video, still, sound — all produced by one person. That's the future of the internet," she said in response to a question.

your PowerBook laptop and your cell phone, you're able to oblige, and happy to do so.

They appreciate the speed and efficiency with which you fulfill their assignments. You're delighted with the in-camera and on-laptop editing and captioning functions of the digital cameras and digital-photography programs you're using, since they empower you, as a photojournalist, to take control of the raw material you produce while you're still in the field, and let you decide what the picture editors will (and won't) get to choose from, and what textual information should accompany it. The one thing you regret is that you've lost the classic excuse you still hear from your gray-haired colleagues: the one about how the picture editor chose the wrong picture. You don't send back any "wrong pictures," only the ones you think tell the story, cropped and captioned to fit your own sense of the situation you're covering. (Secretly, you think a lot of your colleagues hang on to those analog cameras and films because that self-serving alibi comes bundled with them.)

Among the programs with which your laptop and G4 are loaded is one that automatically stamps your original digital-image files so that even the alteration of a single pixel sets off a signal. You save those files in a separate folder. That's as close as you can get with your digicams to the authentication that a negative file or slide file makes possible, and you think it's worth the effort — because you know that your work serves as a record of historical events. You also use a program that watermarks selected images that you license for digital publication, so that unauthorized electronic re-use of them can be tracked and verified.

Sometimes you simply send your clients just the raw materials they've asked for. Sometimes they commission more elaborate packages from you: layouts for print media, multimedia presentations for digital publication. You work those up in the relevant programs, whether it's html for the web, PageMaker for print, Director for multimedia, and send rough versions to them for suggestions, then fine-tune — even while still on the road, if the deadline demands that.

While out in the field you produce what your clients have commissioned from you, of course. But you also generate all kinds of material for yourself. With your voice-

recognition program, you input your field notes daily. You upload some of the work you're doing simultaneously on your personal projects to areas of your website that visitors can view, and you upload all the raw material you produce on your own initiative — still images, video, sound files, text files, outtakes from assignments — to folders at your website, for downloading and sorting and filing when you get home.

Short-term, you're filling the needs of your clients in order to earn your living. Long-term, you're putting the pieces of your own front-burner projects together, and, with an eye on the future, building two larger structures: your *inventory*, and your *archive*. Those concepts came out of the seminars you took in running a sole-proprietor business, plus your own observations of your profession, and the sage advice of a few mentors.

Because you're young and hungry, in a highly competitive profession that's still sorting itself out in a phase of massive technological paradigm shift, and because you had student loans to pay off, you've done a certain amount of work for hire, signing away most and sometimes all of your rights to some of your output. And you're tempted to do more, because the money is better. But you're not happy about that — you don't like greedy, grabby publishers and editors, you don't like selling so cheaply ( and forever) material that may prove to have a very long shelf life and market value, and you're uneasy about undercutting those in your profession who've fought valiantly against such demands. You also took seminars in copyright law as it pertains to your profession, and you keep up with those issues through the several professional organizations to which you belong. So you've decided to draw the line — on principle, but also for practical reasons. Over the Y2K Christmas holidays, you declared that, from now on, you don't *sell* any of your rights; instead, you *license usages*. You figured that was a good way to kick off the year 2001.

This worried your family and friends, of course. Some of your former teachers thought the idea was crazy; so did many of your older colleagues. Your fiancé claimed to have complete faith in you, the dear, but he had that here-she-goes-again look in his eye. Anyhow, you believe in yourself and your ideas, even when no one else does. So

here's your current set of guidelines:

\* No right to any aspect of your work — not copyright, not any subsidiary right — ever gets signed away in perpetuity, no matter how tight things get financially or how juicy the opportunity seems. To anyone who demands that, you follow Nancy Reagan's advice: you just say no. And no rights ever get bundled in your contracts; licenses to each and every one require separate negotiations and fees. So you work closely with your clients and outlets to identify exactly what usages they actually need, for what specific purposes, and you craft precisely worded, narrowly-defined agreements with them that assuage their concerns without emptying your cupboard. You find that, generally, they're amenable to limited-term usage rights and exclusivity restricted to specified territories. Occasionally, to pacify them when the deal's good otherwise and all else fails, you grant them exclusive ten-year licenses on the rights they're after; for some reason you can't figure, that number puts them at ease — maybe because none of them has a ten-year plan, as you have. You don't like doing that, but your deal with yourself is that every New Year's Day you'll raise the bar a notch: you'll bump up your prices and decrease the length and scope of those licenses. Within ten years, at the outside, you'll have your fees and licensing agreements just where you want them. But you've already got the basic premise down: from now on, all rights to all your work eventually revert to you.

Here's your start-up plan:

\* First of all, you're constantly digitizing, building up, organizing, improving and annotating your *inventory* — which, like any thoughtful small businessperson, is what you call your growing collection of images and related texts and other output. Why pay percentages to stock agencies for licensing usages of your work when you can start your own, online and on CD-ROMs? Why sell your accumulated images outright to Corbis or anyone else for a one-time fee when you can make money for the rest of your life licensing usage rights to them? Most of the pictures in this image bank are your own, but you buy and gather up other kinds of images wherever you find them cheap or free — yard sales, junk stores, dumpsters, your relatives' closets. You've taught your

uncle George to do the scanning of those, and your aunt Dottie handles the captioning and cataloguing. Your cousin Sarah wants to handle sales; online, no one knows she's a teenager. You're the webmaster of the website for this, for now. They'll get a piece of the action, of course, as soon as you launch, which will be when you have a 5000-image base. You expect that by next September.

\* That website — at which you have all the cyberspace you can eat, the ability to post as much material as you want — has a total running cost of \$400 per year, which includes as much dial-up time as you desire and the registration of your own domain name. You designed it with Dreamweaver. You used the same program to design your second website, which costs you a bit less (no additional dial-up charges), but also has its own registered domain name. So you're actually master of your own domains, plural. This second website is a showcase for a specific project, still in the production stage and under wraps. We can't reveal what it is, exactly; all we can say is that it's your in-depth investigative report on a situation that exemplifies an extremely hot-button issue — an exposé of a major public-health hazard and a potential ecological disaster. (You've been a Green activist since your teens.)

The way you're distributing and marketing this is genius, you think — certifiably so, since you got it from Charles Dickens, whose biography you read in college. You're going to produce and publish the work in installments, just as Dickens issued the chapters of his books. He used popular magazines to reach a novel's first audience; you'll use the project's website. It has a main page and introductory area that anyone can visit and browse for free, with enough samples to whet the surfer's appetite without giving away the store. Then there's a password-protected area, with entry by subscription only. You're asking ten dollars for the password, which will get the subscriber all ten installments of the project over the course of a year, plus the final edit, plus access to a chat room about the project and its topic, and periodic real-time discussions with you, transmitted through your computers and your webcam.

Each month you're going to post the results of that month's work: contact sheets, larger versions of the key images, voice and sound files, video clips, field notes, rough

drafts of your captions and texts. At the end of 2001 the finished and resolved project will be posted for all to see.

Of course, you wish that you were Chester Higgins, Jr., or Susan Meiselas, or Gilles Peress, or any photojournalist you can name whose work is widely recognized. If they did a website like that (and you can't figure out why they don't), they could charge \$25 a year easy — wouldn't all kinds of people pay that to see what Gene Richards or Mary Ellen Mark or Alex Webb was up to once a month? And those photographers could probably each pull three to four thousand subscribers worldwide, for an easy gross of \$100K. You're just a young working photojournalist, without any substantial following yet — but with a significant, controversial, and extremely topical story you're pursuing. You'd be delighted to pull a thousand subscribers at \$10 a pop, for a \$10K gross. But even half of that will keep the pot boiling and the project going to completion, and you're pretty sure you'll find that many. After all, the theme is in the headlines regularly. You set up your email launch for today, the first day of the new year; word's already out, the free section of the website with its trailers is up and running, you have thirty subscribers already — and you won't even post the first installment for another week.

\* Because you're producing this in web-ready multimedia format, you're also simultaneously generating components of your first CD-ROM. Well, not exactly your first; you've done several simple, self-promotional CD-ROMs as leave-behinds for clients, showcasing your images and your multimedia skills. But this is a substantial project that you've already worked on for two years, about an important subject that interests many people. Certainly a CD-ROM version of it has an audience, and a market — and will also serve as a permanent record of this story. And you've done some serious thinking about the CD-ROM as a form, so your project makes better use of that medium than most documentary projects do.

Repurposing the web version for the CD-ROM, or vice versa, is easy. You'll burn the master of the CD-ROM yourself, as well as all the copies; you'll design the accompanying booklet and jewel-case insert in PageMaker. And you'll sell it through the

website. Subscribers will get a discounted price; those who want the CD-ROM only will pay full price for it. You're using web searches to identify potential distributors and retail outlets for it too.

\* Of course, the project could also take the form of a book. You've already started laying it out in PageMaker — multipurposing the material, once again. Here you're not quite sure if you'll publish the book yourself or look for an outside publisher. The answer to that may depend on the audience response to the project in its web and CD-ROM forms; if it draws enough attention, a publisher may actually come to you. But you may just decide to take a flyer on it and test the waters by commissioning a low-risk, short-run edition of 400 copies or so, to sell through the website, or else set up a version through a print-on-demand system that would supply copies directly to individual customers as they ordered them. You'd still have complete control over layout and design, but you're not yet happy with the reproduction quality available that way; you're not sure that these new methods can deliver an end result that does justice to your imagery. Or you may just decide to post these layouts as PDF files in Adobe Acrobat — let people download them from the Web and, if they so choose, print them out themselves. In any case, that decision is a year down the line, so you'll just wait and see.

\* You're completely at ease with digital systems, as are most of your cohort. But you realize that there are lots of people who won't find the work online, and don't enjoy receiving their social commentary through CD-ROMs on computers. So you've got a hit list of potential print-media outlets for this story, as you unfold it — in different countries and regions, in different languages, reaching many different audiences. As soon as your website starts getting some attention and some traffic, you'll start pitching them. Your cousin Sarah wants to take that on too; she says it's way cooler than baby-sitting as a means of making spending money and building her college fund.

\* You'll offer signed original prints of the images for sale through the website, needless to say, but you don't expect that to be a significant market, at least not at this point: it's a painful story you're narrating, the pictures are tough, and you're unknown —

not the sort of stuff that draws the collecting crowd. By the same token, museums and commercial galleries won't likely come flocking around to ask about showing the work, at least not until you're established. But there are all kinds of other venues that might jump at it. There are thousands of alternative photo- and art-presentation spaces around the world — artist-run and municipally sponsored non-profit galleries; college, university, and art-institute galleries; and, of course, the international photo festival circuit.

Something like seven million people attend photo festivals every year, and those events are always looking for exciting new material to present. Some of them are even dedicated exclusively to your kind of work, photojournalism; but just about all of them include it as a component of their offerings. And you heard the critic A. D. Coleman say, during a lecture at your school, that the cutting edge of photography in all forms was no longer to be found in the offerings of galleries and museums, but at these festivals, which he thinks are five to ten years ahead of the gallery-museum circuit.

You've searched the web and the literature; you've made a list of three dozen of these festivals and several hundred of the school-based galleries and alternative spaces, and you've started to contact them. You're not unrealistic in your expectations. You know that, because you're not a big name, the festivals are not likely to be willing to spend much money on showing your work; and these other spaces don't have much to spend in any case. So you've decided to make it easy for them. You're producing a traveling show that fits in two small shipping cases, 30 inches long by 40 inches wide by 6 inches deep. Each holds fifteen 30x40 panels. Each panel is a sheet of four-ply mount board, on which you've dry-mounted a cluster of excellent laser-jet prints of images, along with captions and a text sheet. Each of these panels is laminated on the front, to protect the images, and numbered on the back. Along the top edge of each panel are metal grommets, so that it can hang from four strings, hooks, or nails. Once you decide how to organize the work in any given space, it takes about an hour to mount it and fifteen minutes to take it down and get it ready to travel on. You got this idea from a show by a couple of South African photographers that you helped to install in your



school's gallery, and from some World Press Photo shows you've seen.

Add to these image-text panels your CD-ROM, playing on a computer in the exhibition space, and/or an accompanying videotape that you're producing yourself and are multipurposing, and/or a slide projection version with a soundtrack, and you can deliver to any audience most of the ideas and information you want them to have efficiently and inexpensively. No, it's nowhere as slick as a fancy commercial-gallery show with individually framed and matted original prints, but that form of presentation isn't really appropriate to your subject matter anyhow.

\* Of course, the material from this project becomes part of your inventory. But it also becomes part of your archive, and you understand it as such. By the end of the twentieth century, you and your classmates were reading about the disposition of this or that photographer's life's work. Some did it well, some did it badly, and some didn't do it at all — so the stuff got tossed out, or damaged, or dispersed, or simply vanished into thin air. People were stealing negatives, forging prints, taking images that photographers had never wanted to exhibit or publish and adding them to the photographers' bodies of work without clear annotation, and generally carrying on as if, after death, one was free to do anything one wanted to with a photographer's output. That didn't seem right at all.

You and your friends talked about this a lot, and most of you decided that the best way to put a stop to that was to start keeping accurate records early on, make clear in writing your wishes regarding various photos — especially any that you never want made public — and draw up a will covering those matters and naming someone to take charge of them. Even if that did seem way premature at age 22. Besides protecting yourselves, though, what you all could see clearly was that, if you stayed in the field for a good length of time, and certainly if you devoted your life to it, you gradually built up a huge pile of material that had all kinds of value. It had social value, it had historical value, it had scholarly value, it sometimes even had artistic value — and it almost always had some financial value as well.

The better organized and more comprehensive it was, the more value it had in all

those ways. If you didn't just leave it a heap, if you structured it as a whole, it became an archive. And there were all sorts of different things one could decide to do with an archive. You could license usage rights to its contents and live off it in your old age. You could sell it as such, all of it to one buyer, or auction it off to numerous purchasers. You could donate it to an institution. You could leave it to your family as a source of revenue. You could set up a foundation to manage it. The possibilities made your head spin, but you decided to annotate your contact sheets, maintain thorough records, stay reasonably current with your sorting and filing, keep all your correspondence, tearsheets, and account books, and put all your back files in storage. At least that way you wouldn't lose things you'd later wish you'd saved.

And here's your master plan:

By the year 2020, when you're 42, you'll have all these pieces in place. Your own picture agency, by then licensing rights to an inventory of at least a hundred thousand images and related materials. Multiple websites — one for this agency, one for each of your dozens of major projects by then — linked to each other for maximum traffic. An extensive product line of books, CD-ROMs, videotapes, prints, and other vehicles for your work. A select list of regular clients for your work — publishing outlets in print and in electronic formats — who respect what you do enough that they'll hire you on your own terms. A network of venues, public spaces where you can show your work to the general audience. And a well-organized storage and retrieval system for everything that by then will add up to a substantial archive, and that you'll continue to build for the rest of your working life — and that can become a sustaining project if you ever decide to retire.

Your fiancé got so interested in this issue that he opted to take an elective in estate management for artists, and set up computerized systems for you to make it simple to keep track of everything. Which just goes to show that your fiancé, who's getting his master's degree in business administration, really does understand most of this. Actually, he's already talking about incorporating you and taking you public somewhere down the line, though you don't think you're anywhere near ready to

become an IPO.

Anyhow, he's one of those sensitive new-type guys who doesn't have trouble with the idea of his wife having a profession and paying her own way. You're a good match. In fact, you've noticed that a lot of your classmates from the time-based arts program, male and female, have significant others who are MBAs and lawyers and accountants. You think this may be a trend.

Everything in life should work together, you believe, and your fiancé certainly agrees with that. He even understands why your favorite word since you first learned it when you were twelve years old has been *synergy*. He is so accepting when you shout that in bed at climactic moments. And he's promised that, in addition to exchanging vows and rings, when you finally do get married he'll spring for you both getting matching, elegant tattoos of that word, discreetly positioned down where they'll rub and press against each other on a nightly basis. How sexy is *that*?

Those of you in the audience today who are in fact what I've identified here as 21st-century photographers will probably recognize bits and pieces of yourselves in this quick-sketch portrait.<sup>2</sup> My advice to you would be to not write off the geezers around you — or the twentieth-century photographers and picture editors, living or dead — as irrelevant. You've still got much to learn from them, and from their work; and, like it or not, they broke the ground, and you stand on their shoulders.

The geezers among you in this room may not yet have encountered this new breed of photojournalist, but trust me when I tell you that they'll be knocking on your doors — and breathing down your necks — very soon. Yours will be the first older generation of press photographers who will have much to learn from the younger generation in your profession, because they grew up with and take for granted a dramatic technological evolution in your field with which you're still coming to terms, and which you're still struggling to master. I recommend that you invite the best ones you

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<sup>2</sup> To my surprise and delight, the young award-winning photographer who got up to speak immediately after I finished, and whose name I've regretfully forgotten, began his talk by saying "I'm the photographer A. D. Coleman just described," and proceeded to demonstrate that in detail.

can find to intern or apprentice with or assist you, pick their brains shamelessly, and swap tutorials with them. They'll outgrow you very quickly and move on, but there's a new crop every year — luckily for you, because the technology updates radically about that often, and you won't be able to keep up with it on your own.<sup>3</sup>

As for those of you who have resigned yourselves to roles as Jurassic-era twentieth-century figures, on the road to extinction, I urge you to think again. Just about any project you have in mind — especially the long-cherished dreams, the ones you've long since relegated to the realm of wishful thinking — have been made more possible, if not downright simple, by developments in communications technology that you've been too busy to track. Put those ideas down on paper and place them before students in media arts and time-based arts and photojournalism programs who are hungry for thesis projects and opportunities for independent study, and see what happens. Invite them to reinvent you. The results, in many cases, will surprise you.

For all your differences, none of you are truly irrelevant to each other. Not now, as the 21st century begins, and not for some time to come. This moment of transition, in which centuries and generations will on some levels separate and distinguish themselves from each other, can also serve as an excellent opportunity to find common ground and make common cause in the service of the enduring goal of your profession — which is to provide the citizens of the world with the photographic images and contextualizing material they need to understand what's going on around the globe.

That task is never completed. You all have something to contribute to it. So enjoy these festivities, and tomorrow's grand opening of the exhibition. And then, on Tuesday, get back to the job.

Thank you.

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<sup>3</sup> Since Eastman Kodak serves as WPP's main sponsor, the hall was full of mid- and upper-level Kodak executives, most of them middle-aged. I heard from colleagues seated among them that they grumped and grumbled throughout my talk, whose projections they found ridiculous. A year later, at Photokina, Kodak would declare that the company was taking the plunge into the digital realm.

(This is the complete text of the keynote address to the World Press Photo Awards Days 2000, organized by the World Press Photo Foundation; it was delivered on Sunday, April 16, 2000, in Felix Meritis in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.)