

Defense Against the Dark Arts



Mistakes

Going to the dogs - and cats

BYLINE: [REDACTED]

SECTION: SEMINOLE TIMES; Pg. 1

LENGTH: 1607 words

As for dogs, Pinellas County defies the national trend for the favorite pooch. Registered pedigrees on file with the American Kennel Club in New York City showed the Labrador retriever to be the most popular breed in the country last year.

Here, the Lhasa apso, a small long-haired dog from Tibet, is the pedigree of choice.

CORRECTION-DATE: June 11, 1996

CORRECTION:

The Labrador retriever is the most popular breed of dog in Pinellas County. A story Sunday named a different breed.

NOTE: Don't do this. Ever.

Mistakes, More

Correlation not causation: the relationship between personality traits and political ideologies.



Conclusion: The results suggest that personality traits do not cause people to develop political attitudes; rather, the correlation between the two is a function of an innate common underlying genetic factor.

More Mistakes

Original:

“Those higher in Social Desirability are also more likely to express socially **liberal** attitudes.”

Correction:

“Those higher in Social Desirability are also more likely to express socially **conservative** attitudes.”

SideNote

Article on HHS website **DOES NOT** link to correction. Check. Check. Check your sources.

The Big Story

[Or how not to get lost in the numbers]

1. Datafy

2. Digitize

3. Chronify

4. Personify

5. Narrify



Datafy

You've already done this. The gathering of structured data for analysis.

Digitize

Make digital every single piece of a story—notes, photos, audio, video, documents. You want to be able to search and share. Some Useful tools:

Document Cloud — www.documentcloud.org

- Optical Character Recognition
- Annotation
- Public sharing

CometDocs — www.cometdocs.com

- PDF conversion to Excel, Word, Etc.

Digitize

- **Transcription**
Services like Trint provide a fast, computer-generated transcription for cheap. Accuracy not high.
- More trustworthy because done by people: [rev.com](https://www.rev.com); [Transcribe](https://www.transcribe.com) and [TranscribeMe](https://www.transcribeme.com)
- A warning: if it is a key quote, **REVIEW THE TAPE.**

Digitize

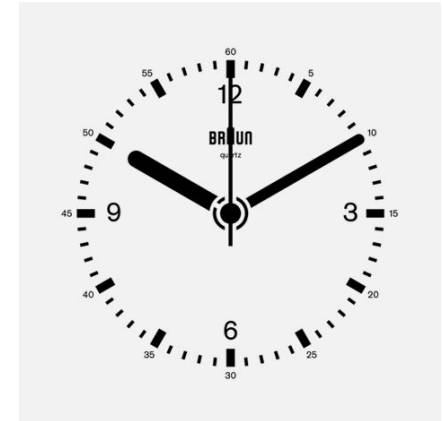
OCR Scanning – Legal services firms charge 15 to 25 cents per page for hundreds of pages. Very high accuracy.

Idea Organizers -- If it's a truly long project, you might consider getting special organizing software like Evernote or Microsoft's OneNote

Chronify

Every story takes place in time. Every narrative is driven by time.

- Make chronology in **spreadsheet** to sort.
- **Find relations** you might otherwise miss
- Helps **quickly refer** to events
- **Keep track** of sources
- **Calculate** time gaps and days of week



Chronify - Tools

- [Tiki Toki](#) - more for presentation
- [TimelineSetter](#) by my own shop, ProPublica. Very reporter oriented.
- [timelinejs](#), from UNC's Knight Lab



Personify

Characters

- powerful and moving life story
- speaks in fountains of quotes
- detailed memory
- recollects dates, times
- natural storyteller
- illustrates your story wellish

You will know them when you meet them!

Personify

Place

It's really a subset of personify. It helps locate you in the story.

- Is there a **setting**? Urban or Rural
- Does it have its own **history**?
- Consider reading **travel guides** to understand most salient features. Also, Wikipedia entries for almost any geographic place
- Look at **census data**
- **Plant names!**

Personify

Quotes

- Create a file of **just quotes** and nothing else.
- **Organize** your story around the quotes, rather than looking for a quote to make a point.
- Write **into and out** of quotes
- Think about creative uses
 - Said Sgt. Baxter: “ZYz”
- **Conversations wonderful**
 - Very intimate, fly on the wall thrill

Narrify

Chronology

- Powerful opening moment. Seek **emotion** - intrigue, anger, sadden
- Tell the reader why. Provide **fact** - AKA, the nut graf
- You don't have to give away the ending. **<- This is the hardest thing for journalists to do.**

Narraty

Biography

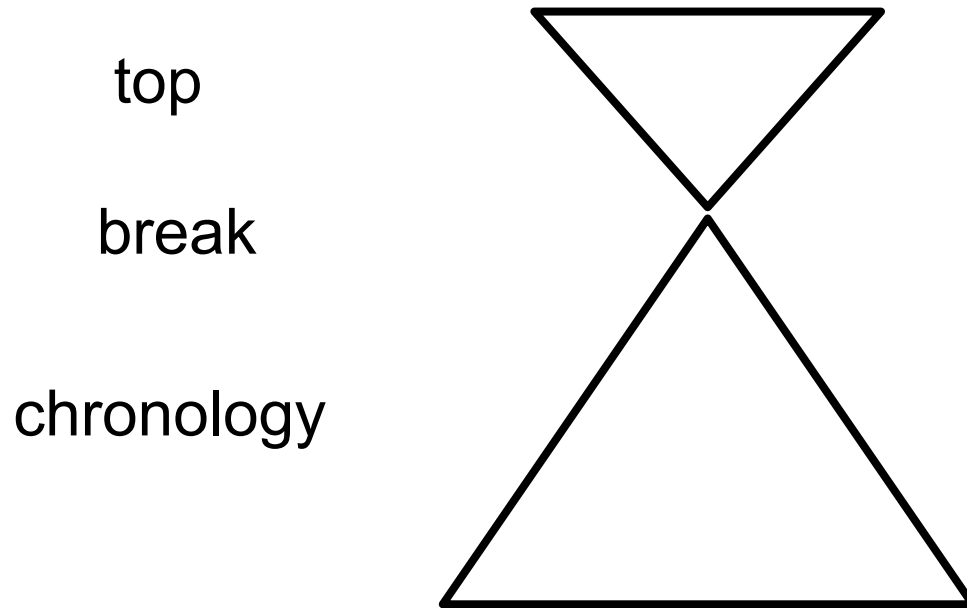
- a subset of chronology driven by human development

Character

- follow a particularly intriguing person or set of people.

Narrify

The **double triangle** - balanced approach



nonsequential chronology (time shifts and braiding)

Narrafy

The Outline

- Everybody tells you to do an outline but, shhh, I don't think it's necessary for long stories < 3,000 words
- Some writers can't start until the top is done
- **cdd**. Just write, whether it will end up beginning, middle or end.

Narrify

Thematic

- Necessary for issue stories.
- Bring alive with multiple anecdotes
- Best Ever Example: Bloomberg's [What is Code?](#)

