TIPS FOR SHOOTING QUALITY PHOTOS AND VIDEO

Great images can tell a compelling story of your service work. The Public Service Center wants to help you capture the images that tell your story, showcase your service work, and raise awareness of the great things MIT students are doing. Use this guide to ensure the production of the best possible images of your service project work, not only for your own personal needs, but for the Public Service Center to use in future publicity campaigns and donor-related materials.

Taking a photo and shooting a video will come more easily if you know what story you want to tell. Do you want to show the struggle of finding sanitary water for villagers in Tanzania, or do you want to show the villagers’ excitement after your completion of a water catchment for clean water? Once you are clear about the story you want to tell, it’s easy to know what to shoot. That said, we understand that you are not out on a CNN assignment, and in fact are very busy doing a public service project. In the process though, you may see the thread of a story to follow, and the images you produce can serve as a promotional piece for your work, as well as a way to remember your experience.

Below is a link to a quick and easy online tutorial that we have found helpful http://visualpeacemakers.org/index.php/?/documentaries/photo_story/254/

CHOOSING YOUR EQUIPMENT

The PSC has digital cameras, video cameras, voice recorders, and other equipment available for students to borrow for service projects. While the PSC can’t guarantee availability of equipment, you can request equipment by asking the PSC staff contact for your program about availability. Be sure to indicate what equipment you are requesting, the time frame when you would be using it, and what the intended purpose of using the equipment will be relative to your service project.

DIGITAL CAMERAS

The PSC has seven digital cameras available for you to potentially borrow during your service project to enable you to take the best pictures possible. We currently have two types of cameras, a Canon SD1000 with 7.0 megapixels and a 2GB memory card or a Canon SD890 with 10.0 megapixels and a 4GB memory card, both with carrying cases. All cameras come with charging equipment and a USB cord to transfer pictures to your computer. You may also use your own digital camera if it can provide high-quality, high-resolution photos; most cameras with 5.0 megapixels and higher will produce the best photos.

VIDEO CAMERAS

IMPORTANT!
Please label all video files that you download to the PSC on the external VIDEO hard drive with
1. Time span of video files with brief description of video footage
2. A star rating, with five stars the highest
The PSC has ten FlipVideo cameras available for you to potentially borrow during your service project. FlipVideo cameras are small, light and easily portable to any location, and can hold 60 minutes of video. FlipVideo cameras are formatted to create web quality video, rather than high definition footage. The software for downloading your video footage onto your personal computer is in the FlipVideo, and it is accessed via a retractable USB port built into the camera. This port also makes transferring footage to your computer easy. FlipVideo cameras run on two AA batteries.
The PSC also has three Sony DCR-HC96 MiniDV video cameras available, which come with a carrying case, software to install on your computer to make the transfer possible, all the cords needed to transfer video to a computer, and one 60-minute digital tape.
CAMERA MOUNTS
The PSC also has three types of camera mounts to help make taking photos and shooting video easier, and to improve the quality of what you shoot. We have six small, light and portable Gorillapods that will allow you to keep the camera steady on uneven surfaces. Gorillapods are very short, fit in your pocket and have the ability to latch onto poles, tree branches, and other surfaces. Two full-sized tripods and two full-sized monopods are also available, along with a carrying cases.

Don’t forget to have fully charged batteries or extra batteries and extra tapes on hand because you don’t want to be in the middle of a great shot when your camera dies.

BEFORE GETTING THE SHOT
When taking photographs, in most cases you should try to obtain permission from the people being photographed. You can download the MIT Release form as a PDF or as Word file to obtain permission, and be sure to return completed forms to the PSC office manager. This form authorizes MIT, and the PSC, full rights to any photographs, videotapes, and sound recordings. In situations where community members do not understand English, explain as much as you are able to, what the form implies, and request their signature. Let them know that if they are uncomfortable with any photograph that is used in our publicity that they can contact us and we will remove the photo from our library. Photo releases from a large group of people are unrealistic. Use your best judgment, ask first before taking photographs when possible, and don’t edit your photos based on who can sign a release.

PHOTO TIPS
Make sure that you set the camera to take photos in “raw” format, not jpeg format. Choose the highest resolution the camera can manage, giving you at least 1MB images. And make sure there is a large memory card in the camera; this will allow you to take multiple high-resolution photos.

Candid photos Get into picture-taking mode. Change your position: bend down so you’re at eye level, take the photo from above, change your perspective.

Staged photos Situate people where you envision the best composition, show students engaged with their projects. Take close-ups of groups of people, trios, and duos.

Take close-up shots of the materials and people. For example, a bicycle hub, a Petri dish, a gear. Take close-up shots of hands at work and people working.

Limit postcard photos. A few pictures of the scenery and interesting environment are sufficient.

Keep group shots to a minimum. Photos of groups of people posed for the camera may be nice for your memories, but they don’t tell us much about your project work or the impact on the community.

Does it spell MIT? If you see the possibility of spelling out MIT with materials that the group is using, or even the people themselves, take the photo. If it’s a great one, it could be used as an MIT home page Spotlight to publicize the PSC and the service work of students.

MIT gear Try to wear your MIT T-shirts and hats in any photo or video that shows you at work.

Location Look for a landmark, a sign or natural monument that tells the audience where you are.
VIDEO TIPS

Think in sequences. Shooting in sequences will allow the action to flow seamlessly. To achieve this in the edit, you need to capture a variety of shots: wide, medium and close-up angles.

Follow the five-shot rule: 1) close-up on hands, 2) close-up on face, 3) wide shot, 4) over the shoulder shot, and 5) another shot from a different angle, like a low shot or high shot.

It’s important to adhere to the five-shot rule because it allows footage to splice together cleanly. This rule helps when shooting interviews and hands-on project work; however, it is not as useful when shooting footage en route to a destination because of the constant motion and refocusing you would have to do.

Follow the action. Carry the camera at all times and keep it running before, during and after an event. Get as much footage as you can so you have something to work with later. Remember that you can always take a 15-second clip and make it a 2-second clip during editing, but you can’t take a 2-second clip and turn it into a 15-second clip.

Avoid zooming in and out too much. Use the zoom feature sparingly and do it slowly. However, panning and zooming will give you a variety of shots – the wide-angle, the close-up and the zoom in between - to choose from when editing.

Interviews. If you are interviewing someone as part of your project, it would be best to give them a general idea of what you’ll be discussing before you start shooting anything. You don’t want to reveal all of your questions beforehand because the interview will look and sound rehearsed and stiff. Have the camera roll for a few seconds before you ask your first question so you don’t lose anything. Avoid a straight-on shot – shoot the person from a slight angle to the left or right.

Refer to http://www.youtube.com/reporterscenter for more tips and ideas on how to shoot quality video.

WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR PHOTOS AND VIDEO FOOTAGE?

SUBMITTING YOUR PHOTOS TO THE PSC

Read for instructions on how to add your photos to the PSC’s iPhoto Library in 4-104.

1. On Desktop 1 (closest to the water cooler), under the apple icon on the top of the screen, log out of the current user. The computer will prompt you to either shut down or log in as a different user.
2. Choose to log in and select “PSC Admin” as your log in name.
3. When the computer prompts you to type in the password, ask a PSC staff member to type in the password for you.
4. Insert your CD-ROM into the right-hand side of the computer screen, label facing front or your USB key/flash drive in the slot on the lower left hand side of the back of the screen.
5. Drag the photos from the CD-ROM or USB key onto the desktop.
6. Double click on the iPhoto icon at the bottom of the screen in the menu bar (it looks like a camera with a photo of a sunset behind it).
7. Drag the photos that you saved onto the desktop into the iPhoto Library. Before adding another photo, click on the Comments space under “Information” at the bottom of the left-hand side column. Type in your name, the city/country your project took place, the PSC program (i.e. Fellowships, Grants), who and what is happening in the photo, and, if known, who took the photo. If you don’t have time to do this right now, take the Student Photograph
8. Repeat #7 for each photo you add to the iPhoto Library so we can credit who took it and properly use them in promotional material for the PSC.

SUBMITTING YOUR VIDEO TO THE PSC

You can post your project footage or completed video to the Public Service Center’s section of MIT TechTV. Let us know if you want to post your video so we can help you through the process or we can also offer feedback or ideas on putting your footage together. Your finished video will be subject to approval by the TechTV webmaster and PSC staff members before being uploaded onto the site.

Things to remember before your video is ready for TechTV:

**Your video file size must be small enough** for TechTV to be able to handle the file size during the upload process, so saving it in Quicktime format will be your best bet.

**MIT TechTV has strict rules about using copyrighted music.** Even though you may want to use your favorite song, it may violate copyright regulation. You can go to http://scripts.mit.edu/~techtv/blog/?p=21 and follow the instructions from TechTV on how to obtain royalty-free music for your video without violating any rules.

Excerpts for this guide came from:  
www.desktop-video-guide.com/shoot-video.html  
www.bbc.co.uk/blast/film/tipsandtools/videoshootingguide/  
multimedia.journalism.berkeley.edu/tutorials/video/shooting_tips/