The world will very soon be composed of a billion media barons thanks to digital technology and mobile devices. As a result, people will be communicating information in whatever styles and formats that best suit them. But what is always suitable to the writer may not be the best way of communicating to the reader. The Digital Media Pyramid offers a standard approach to Internet writing that helps the casual writer practice techniques used by professional writers.

The Lead Paragraph
The Inverted Pyramid is an analog model, which does not instruct on how to use video, social media and cutting and pasting. The Digital Media Pyramid takes into account these new writing tools used by professional and non-professional writers, and it provides very simple guidelines on how to use those tools.

A novice blogger can follow The Digital Media Pyramid guidelines and as a result present a professional looking blog that readers will begin to trust and revisit.
Start with writing a simple 5w lead, which is sometimes called the 5w’s or “Who, What, Where, When, Why.” Use one sentence to explain each of the 5w’s and then make the text bold. The 5w lead is similar to the old analog Inverted Pyramid. But that is where the similarities end.

Cut and Paste, Copyrighted Material
After your bolded 5w lead you are free to cut and paste from other sources, so long as you provide attribution to those sources that is easy for the reader to find. Bloggers can paraphrase information from other sources (including photos, videos and press releases), but they still must provide explicit credit to the original source of the idea or information. Copyrighted content culled to your Web site must always give attribution or credit only after the blogger gets permission from the copyright owner. Sometimes the writer will have to pay for the right to use copyrighted material. For anyone under 25-years old – that also includes music – sorry.

Art and Ads
Internet writers must always be careful of the ads that appear on their Web pages next to their stories. Nearly all Web ads are placed on the pages automatically by roving software programs, so it is possible for an ad to suddenly appear next to your story and then compromise the story’s integrity.

For instance, imagine doing a story about gas tank problems with Chrysler sedans and next to that story is an ad selling a Ford sedan. Such an ad can leave the impression to the reader that your story is saying Chrysler has problems, but Ford – go out and buy one. For this reason writers need to protect the integrity of their information by being aware of ads that can appear on their Web pages.

The Digital Media Pyramid encourages the use of art. Art in the digital writing world is anything that is not text in your story. Video, photos, interactivity and audio are all considered art and they should be used to enhance each story.

Opposing Links, Resources and Social Content
The bottom of The Digital Media Pyramid is supposed to empower readers with the ability to gather their own information on the topic that is covered. The writer should provide “Opposing Links” that connect to Web sites that cover each side of a particular story. Writers should also provide a link to independent resources that the reader could use to further their own investigation and education. Finally, provide social media links for the readers. For instance, a story on auto safety can provide Facebook and Twitter links to people who are also concerned about auto safety.

A billion media barons will need some type of uniformity on which their readers can depend in order to manage a more chaotic world of information. This is an exciting time for information sharing. Although digital communication is relatively new, many old rules of trust, honesty and integrity still apply to communicators and these rules will still be important far into the future. But for now, The Digital Media Pyramid is a set of guidelines that help the writer and reader safely manage their way through the explosion of information coming forth in the new Digital Era.
Benjamin A. Davis is the CBS Harold Dow Visiting Professor at the FAMU School of Journalism and Graphic Communication. His e-book The Digital Media Pyramid is available at Amazon and at the Apple Itunes bookstore. Join Davis for a live Twitter chat on April 4 at 6 p.m. Follow @FAMU_LivingWell. Visit www.famu.edu/livingwell101.

Copyright © 2013. Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University Living Well 101. All rights reserved. No portion of this document may be copied and/or duplicated without prior written permission of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University.