Twitter Thread by Cynthia Graber



Cynthia Graber
@cagraber

For audio folks (or really anyone interested in a peep behind the curtain), I'd like to share our adventures in long-distance audio storytelling for this week's ep:

We've wanted to do this for a while, and we got a special donation to report it this year. But we wanted to visit in person! How to do so from afar? So, we set to work figuring that out. Can't hire locals to tape folks in person, but wanted to recreate that warm, in-person feel -

I did a bunch of research on gamer headsets, gamers like good sound. Figured we'd mail everyone headsets with return labels. Also bought Blue Yeti USB mic. Hated the sound of the Blue Yeti, not great if you're not a pro. Went to MicroCenter to try out headsets....

Talked to a super helpful young guy there about the headsets, and then he pointed me to a really inexpensive mic made by a gaming company. He hadn't tried it, he said, but he heard great things. I bought it. Wouldn't have worked on its own with a laptop (rather for desktop) BUT

Luckily I had a small dongle to turn my pro mic into a USB mic, and it worked with that. And it was so much better than the headsets! SO I bought four of them, ordered four of the dongles. Planned to send them around to the interviewees. BUT

Zoom/Skype slightly distorts the sound as its sent. Did a lot of research on how to clean it up, add back what was missing. That wasn't working. Thought: What if they could record it on their computer? Okay! Realized QuickTime for Mac would work. What about PC?

Turns out PCs have Voice Recorder onboard. Phew. Okay. Sent mics to interview subjects. Did pre-interview set-up to plug in the mics, show them how to hold them, figure out how to record on their computers. And for the scenes?

With a few, gave very specific instructions for maybe 5-10min of using their phones to record the scenes. Exactly how to do it, exactly what we wanted. Had to trust them from there.

Spent a lot of time going back and forth to MicroCenter to return things and buy new things, a lot back and forth to UPS to send things and create return labels. Nervousness at end of interviews where we found the recordings they'd made on their computer (we taped zoom backup)

And had them send those recordings via WeTransfer etc. For many folks, this was super challenging. BUT at the end, it all worked. This was an intellectually difficult ep to make, we tried to cover a lot of ground and still have it move quickly and be interesting and fun. But

In addition to being super proud of the work the whole team of 3 did on it (HUGE THANKS to superstar fellow @SonjaSwanson for everything!!!), I'm also really proud that we figured out how to make a sound-rich, on-location story this pandemic season without being able to travel.