

James Benedict



This year the news is absurd to say the least. More often than not the headlines have me asking, what the hell is going on?

The news cycle moves so fast that most people are more concerned with the media's narrative than what is actually happening. But others, like Vox, aren't afraid to answer the basic questions first and actually explain what has happened. The commitment to first educate your reader separates Vox from the pack. Beyond written explanatory journalism, your widespread use of visuals makes the information more accessible and enjoyable to read.

Visual journalists have a duty not to shy away from the hard-hitting stories since our medium is often more understandable than paragraph after paragraph. Creating clear explanatory journalism has never been more important than today with the amount of partisanship and misinformation spreading. Visuals have the power to make the complicated and abstract tangible. I would love to learn from all the talented Vox designers excelling at this.

While I would be humbled to work with you, I do not lack the ability to make a meaningful contribution to your team today. I am a holistic reporter and designer who has been awarded for telling stories with **graphics, layout, pictures** and **words**. My first job after graduation was reporting with the Reuters national desk on an investigative series where I met short deadlines and learned how to organize large projects. I have extensive professional experience with web development and data visualization. A journalist should be able to tell a story with whichever medium serves it best, so I've worked hard to be well rounded. I have the ability to design a story to its strengths, whether that is selecting the perfect photos, visualizing a complicated dataset or sketching an illustrative element for an abstract point.

Beyond telling stories, I use programming to address institutional inefficiencies. As the Indiana Daily Student's digital director, other designers weren't producing websites at my standards. Instead of micromanaging their project, I developed an **educational template** that allowed them to focus on designing and not debugging. More than fifteen designers have learned to code using this template and it has made its way into the curriculum of the most advanced visual storytelling class at Indiana University's Media School. I've developed other software to accelerate my work, like a **Python image sorter** for the Society for News Design's annual book, which saved our team a week of busy work. I'm committed to making accessible tools like these because I believe cooperation produces better work than competition in the long run.

As much as breaking news is vital, it doesn't do much good if no one understands it. I would love to work with a team that cares as much about contextualizing the news as you do. I would be immensely grateful to demonstrate these skills with your team as we explain what the hell is happening in 2017.

Thank you for considering my application,

James Benedict