

Module 2 - Arria Studio Introduction

Hello and welcome back to week two.

Today I want to give you a demo of the Arria Studio tool. You can think of Arria Studio as a sort of alien word processor that allows you to write data driven templates which include snippets of text and data, based on logic rules that you set up.

These templates can then be used to generate new content automatically based on new data that you upload. So my goals for the demo today are pretty modest. I want to show you how to make sense of the user interface in Arria Studio, how to load in some data and how to start writing some templates with that data.

I won't get too complicated, but there are some additional tutorials that Arria provides if you want to go more in-depth with the tool. You're welcome to work through the demo with me, but it's also totally ok if you just want to follow along by watching the video. So I'm going to jump over to the tool now so you can see what it looks like.

So if you go to www.arria.com/studio you'll go to the main web page for the Arria Studio tool. You can see in the upper right corner there is a button that says "sign up" if you want to sign up for a trial account you can click that button and insert your information. I've already done that, so I'm going to click that button, and it will take me to a signing page where it's remembered my signing credentials, so I can click the login button, and it takes me to a dashboard page.

So there are a few sample project types here on this dashboard page which can be useful starting points. Today what I want to do is create a new project, so I'm going to go in the upper right hand corner here where it says "new project" and I'm going to click that button there.

So now it's asking me what kind of project I want to create, and you can see that there's four different project types Arria Studio offers. For today, we're just going to use the first project type that describe each row project type, and for this project Arria interprets the data that you upload such that it will generate a separate story for each row of data in the spreadsheet that you upload. So I'm going to click this and it's asking now for a project name so I'll call this Arria demo and then I click "let's get started."

So, now I'm in the main Arria interface and you can see there are some tabs on the left hand side. It's defaulted us to the data tab where it's asking us to upload a new CSP data file. CSP is a common data file format (stands for comma separated value) and the data that we're going to use today is actually data that I found from BuzzFeed News.

So the data that we're going to use was collected by some BuzzFeed reporters who were investigating fake news online and what they did was they created a data set of articles, of fake news articles, that had been shared on Facebook.

And in this dataset they list the title of the article that they found, the URL of the article, the amount of Facebook engagements or the number of Facebook engagements the article received, the publication date, the category whether it was crime politics music sports et cetera, and also the source of the data.

Ok so this is the data that we're gonna use, now again from the previous video lectures, we talked already about the importance of having data if you want to use and produce automated content on your own you'll have to find your own data sources in order to do that.

Today I'm just going to demo it with this data that BuzzFeed has already created through their reporting process. And in fact, I've posted an excerpt of this data directly on the course website for this week, so that you can download the data there and loaded into Arria if you're following along with the demo.

So I'm going to jump back to Arria now, you can see there's an area where it says "drag and drop or browse just like a file." I'm going to drag and drop my file over here, it says "success here," so it successfully uploaded my data. One thing to be aware of is that there is a limit on the data file size that you can upload with the free account.

In this case, I've already made sure that the file is less than the file size limit. So, now I'm going to hit continue, and Arria is taking me into its data tab where it's showing me the spreadsheet of data that I just uploaded.

Now you can see, if I scroll down here you can see that there's 74 rows of data that were uploaded. You can also see the columns of data, so these are the the different column names that are in the data set.

The title of the article, the URL, the amount of Facebook engagement, the publication date, the category and the source. This is really important because you need to have the header row in the data set that you upload so that Arria knows the name of the columns or the name of the variables that you want to insert into your template that you're writing.

So, I can show you also the next tab down which is called variables. If you're familiar with data basing this will be familiar to you. What you can see here is that it's a list of the different variable names and the variable types. So, some variables are strings, some are numeric, some are date times. This isn't terribly important, but I just wanted to show you that it's there.

What's really important, what I want to show you now is the compose interface. So this is going to be your text editing interface for writing templates with Arria. It looks like a pretty normal editing interface. There's two menus at the top or two rows of buttons at the top. The second row has things that you're probably very familiar with in a text editing interface, things to control the

style on alignment and things like that. The top row buttons actually have some menus on it, things for inserting variables, inserting conditionals, inserting functions, inserting scripts.

So this is really the functionality that makes Arria Studio different than say your standard word editor. So, let's say I want to write some templates or a template to generate tweets based on the data that I've uploaded from BuzzFeed.

So the template will generate a different tweet length snippet of text for each row of data that I've uploaded. So, you're welcome to follow along with me and type in the the text that I'm typing in. I should also mention that Arria does work in different languages and you could also type these templates in your own language and it should work just fine. I'm going to demo it in English and you're welcome to follow along with me that way.

So let's start typing our template. I'm going to say BuzzFeed News found that a fake news article with the title of XX. Now I just wrote XX here as a placeholder. So I'm going to go back in a minute and insert a variable into that placeholder, but I'm going to continue writing now my template title of XX was shared on Facebook XX times, so I left another placeholder where I'm going to insert a variable here.

So, how do I go and insert data into this template now? Well I'm going to select the first placeholder here and go up to the menu in the upper left corner where it says "insert variable." Now if I click that it's going to give me a list of all of the different variables or column names in my dataset. So you can see I've got category "Facebook engagement," "published date," "source" and "title," and title is the name of the variable that I want to insert here, so I'm going to click that and you can see now in the template it has inserted that that's signaled by this blue underline on the text, and so that's how the interface shows that that part of the template is data driven.

I can insert data for the next placeholder here by selecting it and then inserting variable. I'm going to use the Facebook engagement variable in this case and again, you can see that it has underlined that in blue.

Now I want to see what the output text will actually look like and to do that I can use this preview feature. So, if you go in the upper right hand corner and click "preview" that will take you into the preview interface, and what we're previewing here is a sample input row of data, so you can see that sample row of data here.

It has the title, the URL, the Facebook engagement and so on. And then it has the output text for the template using that data from that row. So you can see Facebook News found that a fake news article with the title of blah blah blah was shared on Facebook 2.3 million times.

Now you can see that these numbers came from this row of data, right? Took 2.3 million up here and it took this title and inserted them into my template. Now we can also see what the text looks like with different rows of data. In the upper right corner I have a "next" button I can click

through and look at different rows of data, and you can see those different rows of data that reflected in the text produced below.

OK, so I'm going to click "done" on that now. So, let's say I want to add a bit of extra information to my template. I'm going to write: the article's main theme was XX. So I have one more placeholder here, and for this I'm going to insert a variable called "category" and I'm going to go back and preview this now.

And you can see it's now added the second sentence in where it says: the article's main theme was crime. And what I want to point out is that the originally the data had crime upper cased and it's just copying that upper casing into my sentence here, but in English is a little odd to have an upper case at the end of the sentence, so we want to figure out a way to lowercase that text so it's actually correct.

So the way I want to do that is I'm going to use one of the built in functions that Arria has and that function will automatically lowercase any of the data that's applied to it. So the way to do that is I'm going to select this section of text where it says "category" and then the third button over on my top menu where it says "insert function."

I'm going to insert a function, and you can see there's a range of different sub menus here, I'm going to go down to the text menu and the function that I want is called "lower" and I'm going to click this function, and what the lower function does is whatever text it's applied to is lowercase.

So I'm going to click that. It brings me into a function editing interface, but I can just save the defaults here and you can see this is now reflected in my template with an orange underline where it shows the function that's being used lower and also the variable name or the column name category that that function is being applied to. So now if I go into my preview it will actually lowercase that text. So, even though in the original data it was uppercase it is being lowercased in the output text now.

So one last thing I want to show you that will be valuable for your template writing is how to add a little bit of variability to the templates that you're writing. We can do that using a function called "choose at random." So what I'm going to do is I'm going to insert a snippet of text where the template will choose at random which snippet of text is going to be inserted into the output text.

So let's say I want to provide some variability in this phrase "fake news." I'm going to select that phrase "fake news," and then I'm gonna go to "insert function," and the function I want is under the language menu and it's called "choose at random," so I'm going to select that function. So the choose that random function again will randomly select from any of a set of different phrases that you provide.

So the first phrase is "fake news." That was the one that we already wrote. Maybe I'll provide an alternative that's "fabricated news," and then I'm going to save it. So I've just provided two different phrases here and I'm going to save that, and you can see that that's now been inserted into my template where it is showing fake news or fabricated news.

So what does this look like when I preview it? So, the first row of data that I'm previewing you can see it says fake news. I'm going to go to the next row and the next row and actually randomly selected fabricated news.

If I keep going, the third row it's back to fake news, fake news, fabricated news. So you can see each time I'm generating a new row, a new output, it's randomly selecting which phrase to include.

OK! So there's a lot more functions that are available in Arria Studio, and I don't have time to show you all of them, but I do want to point out that there are some really good tutorials that are available for you to learn more about Arria Studio.

So if you go down here in the bottom you can see documentation link, that's going to take you into a page where you can find a number of tutorials. So for instance the describe each row project type has 10 different tutorials. They're going to show you how to insert variables, use functions, and so on.

And I would really recommend that if you want to, write your own templates that you work through these tutorials. So again there's a lot that you can do with this tool. I hope that this short demo gives you at least a bit of an idea of what you could do with a tool like this, and I would encourage you to give it a try. Good luck with it.