

What is Digital Storytelling and How to Get Started

in
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Course:
[CMNS 420 Children and Media](#)

Welcome to the "What is Digital Storytelling and How to Get Started" Workshop. This short workshop is designed to introduce you to what digital storytelling is, what makes a good digital story, and how to produce your own digital stories. The workshop links you to some of the best websites that are dedicated to digital storytelling as well as to websites for the technologies you may want to use.

WHAT IS DIGITAL STORYTELLING?

This is a short story created by combining a recorded narrative with images (still or moving), and music or other sounds. The story is usually 2-3 minutes in length and told in the first person, about a person, event or issue the narrator feels strongly about. The digital storytelling process typically recognizes many elements of storytelling, including the oral tradition, the writing process, the power of visuals, and the role of digital media in recording and sharing stories. These are stories about people and places that often go untold. They can be transformational, as we are invited to see events, places and people from a new perspective and experience them in a new way.

"Digital Stories are short, personal, multimedia tales. Written with feeling and in the first person there's a strictness to their construction: 250 words, a dozen or so pictures pictures, and two minutes is about the right length. Considered narratives which subject themselves to strictures of form tend to elegance. Digital Stories -- when properly done -- can be tight as sonnets: multimedia sonnets from the people. ...and, when imagined as a tool of democratized media, it has -- I believe -- the potential to change the way we engage in our communities.

~ Daniel Meadows, www.photobus.co.uk

"In this age of increasing media monopolies, global media markets, and convergent media, mainstream media has struggled with its traditional methods of gathering news from diverse perspectives. [...] This traditional approach has sharply contrasted with the rise of the community digital storytelling movement, a grassroots media phenomenon in which communities are creating their own short, three- to five- minute digital stories from the found material in their lives (digital video, photographs, letters, news clippings, etc). [...] Though community digital stories are not professional productions, what community digital stories offer in terms of intimacy and authenticity is invaluable in providing multiple community perspectives on important life issues as well as providing an important and powerful forum for communities to tell their own truths in their own voices."

~ Third World Majority, www.cultureisaweapon.org

- Learner Narratives for Digital Story-telling <http://learnernarratives.wikispaces.com/How+to+Examples>



VALUES AND PRINCIPLES OF DIGITAL STORYTELLING

(from the Digital Storytelling Center's Website)

There are many ways to make media and many reasons for making it. The Digital Storytelling Center's work is guided by a strong commitment to offering non-threatening production environments in which the process of creating digital work is just as meaningful as the stories created. We support the individual learning styles of workshop participants rather than insisting on uniform methods, we stress the importance of understanding why and how stories are being produced, and we encourage our storytellers and collaborating partners to share their stories in ways that support positive individual and collective change. The following core values and principles inform all of the work that we do:

1. Everyone has many powerful stories to tell. The ritual of sharing insights and experiences about life can be immensely valuable both to those speak and those who bear witness. People who believe they are mundane, uninteresting, or unmemorable possess beneath this mask a vivid, complex, and rich body of stories just waiting to be told.

2. Listening is hard. Most people are either too distracted, or too impatient, to be really good listeners. In some parts of the world, this has resulted in a profusion of individuals who get paid to do the emotional labour of listening – researchers, therapists, social workers, etc.). And yet anyone can be reminded to listen deeply. When they do, they create space for the storyteller to journey into the heart of the matter at hand.
3. People see, hear, and perceive the world in different ways. This means that the forms and approaches they take to telling stories are also very different. There is no formula for making a great story -- no prescription or template. Providing a map, illuminating the possibilities, outlining a framework – these are better metaphors for how one can assist others in crafting a narrative.
4. Creative activity is human activity. From birth, people around the world make music, draw, dance, and tell stories. As they grow to adulthood, they often internalize the message that producing art requires a special and innate gift, tendency, or skill. Sadly, most people simply give up and never return to creative practice. Confronting this sense of inadequacy and encouraging people in artistic self-expression can inspire individual and community transformation.
5. Technology is a powerful instrument of creativity. Many people blame themselves for their lack of technological savvy, instead of recognizing the complexity of the tools and acknowledging that access and training are often in short supply. But new media and digital video technologies will not in and of themselves make a better world. Developing a thoughtful approach to how and why these technologies are being used in the service of creative work is essential.
6. Sharing stories can lead to positive change. The process of supporting groups of people in making media is just the first step. Personal narratives in digital media format can touch viewers deeply, moving them to reflect on their own experiences, modify their behavior, treat others with greater compassion, speak out about injustice, and become involved in civic and political life. Whether online, in local communities, or at the institutional/policy level, the sharing of stories has the power to make a real difference.



ELEMENTS OF THE STORYTELLING PROCESS

ORAL

1. Oral Stories and the Story Circle – Sharing a Personal Narrative – Hearing the Story
2. Indigenous Storytelling – Sharing the Traditions

WRITTEN

3. The Written Narrative – Writing the Story; Developing the Script; Developing the Storyboard

VISUAL

4. Seeing the Story - Representation – Selecting the images/artefacts which are part of, or inspire the story; Developing the Storyboard

DIGITAL

5. Hearing the Story – Recording the Voice Over; Selecting the Music
6. Seeing the Story – Scanning the Images
7. Assembling the Story – the Editing Process; Ordering the Images
8. Sharing the Story



FOLLOW THESE SUGGESTIONS IN CREATING YOUR OWN STORY

1. Visit the site for Murmur: <http://murmurtoronto.ca/about.php>

“[murmur] is a documentary oral history project that records stories and memories told about specific geographic locations. We collect and make accessible people's personal histories and anecdotes about the places in their neighbourhoods that are important to them. In each of these locations we install a [murmur] sign with a telephone number on it that anyone can call with a mobile phone to listen to that story while standing in that exact spot, and engaging in the physical experience of being right where the story takes place. Some stories suggest that the listener walk around, following a certain path through a place, while others allow a person to wander with both their feet and their gaze.

The stories we record range from personal recollections to more "historic" stories, or sometimes both — but always are

told from a personal point of view, as if the storyteller is just out for a stroll and was casually talking about their neighbourhood to a friend.

It's history from the ground up, told by the voices that are often overlooked when the stories of cities are told. We know about the skyscrapers, sports stadiums and landmarks, but [murmur] looks for the intimate, neighbourhood-level voices that tell the day-to-day stories that make up a city. The smallest, greyest or most nondescript building can be transformed by the stories that live in it. Once heard, these stories can change the way people think about that place and the city at large.

All our stories are available on the [murmur] website, but their details truly come alive as the listener walks through, around, and into the narrative. By engaging with [murmur], people develop a new intimacy with places, and "history" acquires a multitude of new voices. The physical experience of hearing a story in its actual setting — of hearing the walls talk — brings uncommon knowledge to common space, and brings people closer to the real histories that make up their world.

The stories are as personal as the relationship people have with the spaces they inhabit. Secret histories are unearthed, private truths unveiled and tales as diverse as the city itself are discovered and shared. All members of a community are encouraged to participate and contribute, so that the "voice" of [murmur] reflects the diverse voices of the neighbourhood. These are the stories that make up the city's identity, but they're kept inside of the heads of the people who live here. [murmur] brings that important archive out onto the streets, for all to hear and experience, and is always looking for new stories to add to its existing locations.

[murmur] was first established in Toronto's Kensington Market in 2003. That same year projects were launched in Vancouver's Chinatown and along St. Laurent Boulevard in Montreal, and over the past few years [murmur] has grown and expanded across other neighbourhoods in Toronto, Calgary, and San Jose, California. [murmur] Edinburgh launched in Leith in January 2007, and [murmur] Dublin Docklands launched in May 2007. [murmur] Australia launched in Geelong in February 2009.” (info@murmurtoronto.ca)

2. Identify the key elements of storytelling that are at being used in this kind of digital storytelling.

Consider how this kind of storytelling can contribute to the identity of an individual or a community.

3. Create a digital story for the Murmur website about a place or person in your community that is significant for you.

Your story should be approximately 2 minutes in length.

Consider the Following Steps in the Storytelling Process

- Identify a place or person that will be the subject of your story
- If you have chosen a person, choose a location that will serve to “anchor” your story in a physical way in the community.
- Identify your audience for the story. Will this be for a general audience, or are you targeting a particular age group?
- Identify a purpose for your story. What do you want your audience to think about or understand after hearing your story?
- Use your knowledge of elements of storytelling or narrative and effective voice to create the story.
- Consider the structure of your narrative: introduction, body, conclusion, point of view, descriptive language, metaphor, characters, action, setting.
- Pay special attention to the literal “point of view.” What will audiences “see” from the location/vantage point of your story?
- Plan and complete a draft of the story.
- Select other media that will add to the telling of your in a digital form (music, sound effects, etc).
- Complete a script for your story.
- Conference with colleagues in order to receive feedback and make any necessary revisions before recording your story.
- Practise and record your digital story for sharing.
- Share your digital story and reflect on your learning.



DIGITAL STORYTELLING – RESOURCES

[Think Literacy: Media, Grades 7-10 \(2005\).](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/studentsuccess/thinkliteracy/files/ThinkLitMedia.pdf)

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/studentsuccess/thinkliteracy/files/ThinkLitMedia.pdf>

Offers key concepts in media literacy for teachers to use in classrooms.

[Center for Digital Storytelling](http://www.storycenter.org/) - <http://www.storycenter.org/>

This is an international non-profit organization that assists people in using digital media to create stories. The center focuses on stories related to such issues as community development, education, historic preservation, human rights and environmental justice, recognizing that “sharing and bearing witness to stories can lead to learning, action and positive change”.

[Digital Storytelling Initiative](http://dsi.kqed.org/images/uploads/KQED_DStoryManual_Intro_08.pdf) - http://dsi.kqed.org/images/uploads/KQED_DStoryManual_Intro_08.pdf

This organization supports people in their creation of digital stories that “derive their impact by weaving images, music, narrative and voice together, thereby giving deep dimension and vivid color to characters and experiences.” DSI uses new media to explore cultural understanding through community-based digital stories.

[istockphoto](http://www.istockphoto.com) - www.istockphoto.com

This is an online source for user-generated, royalty-free stock [photos](#), [illustrations](#), [video](#), [audio](#) and [Flash](#).

[Silence Speaks](http://www.silencespeaks.org/) - <http://www.silencespeaks.org/>

Silence speaks is “an international storytelling initiative supporting the telling and witnessing of stories that too often remain

unspoken” — stories of survivors of armed conflict, violence and abuse, and marginalization. The stories promote human rights, gender equity and health issues.

StoryMapping - <http://www.storymapping.org/>

StoryMapping uses such on-line resources and digital mapping technologies as Flickr and GoogleMaps to create “maps that share stories about the places that matter to us, and place our life stories in countless geographic contexts.” The site also explores virtual tours and cell phone walking tours as well as opportunities to build story-based maps.

Digital Storytelling in the Classroom - http://www.microsoft.com/education/en-us/teachers/guides/Pages/digital_storytelling.aspx

A guide for teachers that includes information about the various software and hardware that is available, as well as suggestions for student projects. Written by Bernard Robin, one of the leaders in the field.

SOFTWARE RESOURCES for Digital Storytelling

Audio component:

Garageband - <http://www.apple.com/ilife/garageband/>

Audacity - <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>

Video component:

Final Cut Pro - <http://www.apple.com/finalcutpro/>

iMovie - <http://www.apple.com/ilife/imovie/>

Premiere - <http://www.adobe.com/products/premiereel/>

Pinnacle - www.pinnaclesys.com/

Photoshop - <http://www.photoshop.com/>

ARTICLES ABOUT DIGITAL STORYTELLING

[How to Tell Stories, One Byte at a Time](#)

By Claire Martin, *The Denver Post* (January 11, 2009)

[Digital Art and Soul](#)

By Autumn Stephens, *East Bay Monthly* (August, 2008)

[What's Your Story](#)

By Daniel Pink, *Fast Company* (December 18, 2007)

[Digital Tools Easier to Grasp](#)

By J.D. Lasica, *Online Journalism Review* (October 8, 2002)

[Digital Storytelling Finds Its Place in the Classroom](#)

by Tom Banaszewski, *MultiMedia Schools* (January/February, 2002)

[Is Digital Storytelling a Movement?](#)

By Joe Lambert, *dStoryNews* (Issue 2, September 20, 2000)

[Tell Me a \(Digital\) Story](#)

By Marcia Stepanek, *Business Week* (May 15, 2000)

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