

Digital Storytelling: Overview and Webography

Pottruck Technology Resource Center

*Tell me a fact and I'll learn
Tell me a truth and I'll believe
Tell me a story and I'll remember it forever*

What is Digital Storytelling?

"Digital Storytelling is the modern expression of the ancient art of storytelling. Throughout history, storytelling has been used to share knowledge, wisdom, and values. Stories have taken many different forms. Stories have been adapted to each successive medium that has emerged, from the circle of the campfire to the silver screen, and now the computer screen."

– The Digital Storytelling Association

How is Digital Storytelling Relevant to Teaching & Learning?

"In [Roger] Schank's 1992 book, *Tell Me a Story*, he suggests that the cyclical process of developing increasingly complex levels of stories that we apply to increasingly sophisticated ways to specific situations is one way to map the human cognitive development process. Stories are the large and small instruments of meaning, of explanation, that we store in our memories."

– The *Digital Storytelling Cookbook*

Storytelling and learning are inextricably intertwined because the process of composing a story is also a process of meaning-making. Integrating opportunities for "storytelling" into coursework strengthens course participant learning. Through storytelling, students are asked to reflect on what they know, to examine their (often unquestioned) assumptions, and – through a cyclical process of revision – to record their "cognitive development process." Because the stories provide a record of students' thinking, teachers can use them in assessing student progress toward learning goals.

Technology – everything from Microsoft Word to blogs to iMovie – makes it easier to swap, critique, and revise stories. Digital tools make it possible for authors (even those who aren't very tech savvy) to construct multi-dimensional stories that are conveyed through a combination of hyperlinked, multidimensional words, images, motions, and sounds. Digital storytelling assignments are one way to increase student engagement and commitment – particularly students who do not respond to traditional academic writing assignments. Properly constructed with clear rubrics, digital storytelling assignments are every bit as academically rigorous – and involve just as much "writing" as term paper assignments.

For example, students in the English Department's Film Studies class at Hamilton College are asked to develop "digital stories" about their course experience. The

final product must demonstrate understanding and mastery of film literacy concepts they learned in the course.

Digital Storytelling and Science Education: While digital storytelling is most often associated with the arts and humanities, it can also be an effective strategy for learning in the sciences. For example, as part of their Masters in Science Education program through Lesley University, program participants are asked to share and compare personal experience narratives about motion in the first week of a fully-online Physics course. As participants learn more about the physics of motion in subsequent weeks, they are asked to reflect back on their motion stories – using physics to explain “forces” and identify recurring motion “signatures”. Later in the course, they translate motion narratives (some written and others presented as digital movies) into acceleration graphs.

Digital Storytelling in the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences: Digital storytelling provides rich opportunities for self-reflection. For example, students in an education course may be asked to write narratives about a memorable learning experience, and then analyze the stories to identify common criteria in positive (or discouraging) learning experiences.

Digital storytelling is also a powerful tool intercultural learning. Students can compare their “stories” with those authored by people from other culture and other life experiences. In so doing, fundamental assumptions can be challenged, questioned, or even reconsidered. People with diverse life experiences can also collaborate across great geographical distances to co-author digital stories that reflect multiple cultural perspectives.

The “Webography” below provides a range of high-quality digital storytelling sites. Browse the list to see the range of things that can be done with the medium. In addition, you may want to integrate a few relevant sites into your coursework – students can begin the assignment by reading the stories of others, then compose their own on a related topic (or develop a “story” about their reactions to stories of others).

NOTE: If you are interested in incorporating digital storytelling into courses you teach, Instructional Designers are available at PTRC for consultation on how to best implement your ideas. In addition, the PTRC offers training workshops on software that is useful for creating digital stories: iMovie, Photoshop, Flash, and Dreamweaver.

A Webography of Digital Storytelling

Story: Portals and Centers

The Center for Digital Storytelling (UC Berkeley, School of Education)

<http://www.storycenter.org>

Site includes case studies and articles – including a PDF of the 43 page *Digital Storytelling Cookbook* (<http://www.storycenter.org/cookbook.pdf>) that the Center uses in conducting digital storytelling workshops.

Center for Documentary Studies (Duke University)

<http://cds.aas.duke.edu/exhibits/multimedia.html>

Site includes an online multimedia gallery that links to project sites

Center for the Study of Human Lives (University of Southern Maine)

<http://www.usm.maine.edu/cehd/csl/excerpts.htm>

Archive of life stories – some of which are available over the web

The Digital Storytelling Association

<http://www.dsaweb.org>

An international organization sponsored by The Center for Digital Storytelling

Fray

<http://www.fray.com>

Founded by Derek Powazek, The Fray is a blog-like online publication devoted to the art of the personal story -- real people telling true stories in real time.

A new feature story is posted approximately once a month, and each one ends with a posting area where you can respond to the piece with your story.

Sound Portraits

<http://soundportraits.org>

Site is dedicated to telling stories that bring neglected American voices to a national audience.

StoryCorps

<http://storycorps.net>

A collection of stories recorded in a "Story Booth" in New York City's Grand Central Station.

Story: Family and Community

The Best of Hard Times

<http://www.secc.kctcs.edu/AppalachianCenter/AppStudies/2003/hardtimes/>
Stories of life in Southeastern Kentucky

Bubbe's Back Porch

<http://www.bubbe.com>

Site includes a collection of stories about grandmothers.

California Stories (CA Council for the Humanities)

<http://www.calhum.org>

Projects for this storytelling initiative include:

"Living on the Dime" (Inland Mexican Heritage)

<http://www.mexicanheritage.org/dime.htm>

Stories associated with life along highway I-10

From Generation to Generation: Making a Life in South Los Angeles, 1940-2005

<http://www.socallib.org/generations>

Community Arts Network: Connecting Californians

<http://www.communityarts.net/concal/concal.php>

Connecting Californians is the report of a research project exploring "story as a powerful means of building community." The report was developed out of a ten-month public conversation at the intersection of the arts, the humanities, grassroots narrative and community organizing. This report presents the findings of that inquiry, some questions for the future and a potential program design. NOTE: Community Arts Network sponsors a range of other projects related to storytelling.

Indivisible: Stories of American Community

<http://www.indivisible.org>

Through photographs and recorded voices, *Indivisible* focuses on the real-life stories of struggle and change in twelve communities—from Delray Beach, Florida, to Ithaca, New York; from the North Pacific Coast of Alaska to Chicago's Southwest side; from the Rio Grande Valley in Texas to the Yaak Valley, Montana.

Montana Heritage Project

<http://www.edheritage.org>

MHP is dedicated to teaching young people to think clearly and deeply about the world they face. Students are asked to explore their community – its place in national and world events, its relationship to the natural environment, and its cultural heritage as expressed in traditions and celebrations, literature and arts, economic practices, responses to crises, and everyday life.

The Telling Takes Us Home: A Celebration of American Family Stories

<http://americanfamilystories.org/stories>

Joe and Paula McHugh have been doing work with stories and identity -- especially connected with social issues. The site includes a range of audio recordings of stories about critical life experiences: becoming a mail order bride, surviving the holocaust, caring for sick and dying relatives, etc.

Swapping Stories

http://www.arlington.k12.va.us/instruct/swapping_stories

This site outlines a process by which intergenerational gatherings of people pair off, discuss, then come back to the group and tell each others' stories. For example, an older Jewish man may tell the story of a Salvadoran youth,

and then the Salvadoran youth tells the story of the Jewish man's experience as a child in a concentration camp.

Wisconsin Weather Stories

http://cimss.ssec.wisc.edu/wi_weather_stories

The site includes MP3s and transcripts of people telling stories about their severe weather experiences in snowstorms, flooding, and storms on the Great Lakes. Most of these were recorded by 7th and 8th graders who live in towns on the southern shore of Lake Superior. As we continue to pull the site together, more about regional identities reflected through weather stories will emerge.

Story: Language and Literature

Echota Tsalagi Language Revitalization Project (Auburn University)

<http://php.auburn.edu/outreach/dl/echota/index.php>

English Matters

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/ematters>

http://chnm.gmu.edu/ematters/issue4/body_current.html

A “digital storytelling” of the Walney Road ghost story – presented as audio, text, and ethnopoetic transcription

Ethnologue (lesser-known languages of the world)

<http://www.ethnologue.com/>

Journal of Ordinary Thought (Anything but Ordinary)

<http://www.jot.org/jot.html>

Every Person Is a Philosopher. JOT is founded on this basic idea and is dedicated to bringing out the unheard voices and stories of Chicago. Many of the writers in JOT groups are marginalized from traditional, mainstream literary circles, because of class, race, physical isolation, or other issues.

Katha

<http://www.fictionindia.com/about.asp>

<http://www.katha.org/Academics/index%20storytellers%20unlimited.html>

Started in 1988 by Geeta Dharmarajan, Katha is a nonprofit organization working in the areas of story, storytelling and story in education. They also publish and distribute children’s books.

The Oneida Indian Nation (Culture and History Section)

<http://www.oneida-nation.net/historical.html>

The People’s Poetry Gathering

<http://www.peoplespoetry.org>

In the spirit of Brazilian *cordel* (string) poets who hold forth in marketplaces with their poetry chapbooks strung across stalls, the People’s Poetry Gathering stretches a clothesline of poems from around the world across the streets of Lower Manhattan. Includes a “virtual” gathering of storytellers

Points of Entry: Crosscurrents in Storytelling Journal

<http://www.pointsofentry.org>

This journal "encourages narrative writing in journalism by exploring cross-currents in storytelling in reporting, fiction, and oral tradition.

Story and Ethnicity

Beyond the Fire

<http://www.itvs.org/beyondthefire>

This site (and corresponding video) portrays teen refugees in the United States telling their stories. "Beyond the Fire" is a resource-rich new site which conveys the real-life experiences of teenage refugees from seven war zones. Aimed at teen audiences, the site creates an innovative forum on issues of war, geography, history and human rights.

The California Indian Storytelling Association

<http://www.cistory.org/index2.html>

The Cape Verdean Web Page (Connecting the worldwide Capeverdean community)

<http://www.umassd.edu/specialprograms/caboverde>

City Lives: Stories from Lowell

<http://www.uml.edu/citylives/viewexhibition.html>

Stories of people who immigrated to Lowell, MA

Iowa Roots

http://www.iowaartscouncil.org/folklife/iowa_roots/index.htm

This site contains interviews with 13 Iowans, including: a Lao storyteller, Italian ironworker, Bosnian dancer, Aman tinsmith, Greek Orthodox priest, Meskwaki tribal elder, etc.

Keepsakes and Dreams

<http://www.gailonline.org/keepsakes>

Developed in 1996, this site contains stories written by recent immigrants (adult ESL learners) about the aspects of their cultures they hope to retain and their dreams for the future. The authors are from Bolivia, Argentina, Panama, Indonesia, Cambodia, Somalia, Pakistan, Korea, Guatemala, Mexico, and Hungary.

The Khmer Connection

<http://www.khmer.cc/home>

A portal site for Cambodian people who immigrated elsewhere (often as refugees) – includes online discussions, interviews, and stories written by Cambodian immigrants.

Masters of Ceremony

<http://www.ohs.org/exhibitions/moc/shell.htm>

Stories about rites of passage among people from Oregon (represents a range of cultures, including: Latina, Native American, and Palestinian)

Swapping Stories: Folktales from Louisiana

<http://www.lpb.org/programs/swappingstories/stories.html>

Includes transcripts, translations from Creole to English, and clips from recorded storytelling sessions with people from Louisiana.

Story and History

African Americans tell of life in the Jim Crow south

<http://cda.aas.duke.edu/btv/mmsplash.html>

Text, photos, and audio excerpts from oral histories

Ann Arbor, 1900-1975: A Woman's Town

<http://www.si.umich.edu/CHICO/aawomen/index.html>

Clips from interviews and storytelling sessions with African American women in Ann Arbor, including stories of civil rights struggles

Civil Rights in Mississippi: Digital Archive of Oral Histories

<http://avatar.lib.usm.edu/~spcol/crda/oh>

Center for History and New Media

<http://echo.gmu.edu/memory>

This site has compiled a set of tools that can be useful to those involved in collecting and telling stories. Tools include an online scrapbook maker.

ECHO (Exploring and Collecting History Online): Memory Bank

<http://echo.gmu.edu/memory>

Includes a collection of stories about women in science and engineering, computer day trading, and stories about the Washington, DC Metro

GI with a Camera

http://achs.category4.com/GIwithaCamera/Home_Page/McClymonds_Home.html

Online exhibit of a GI's WWII photo album and the story it tells.

History Matters: Making Sense of Oral History

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/oral>

This site includes guidelines for assessing and evaluating oral history narratives – including online sites.

Private Art

<http://www.private-art.com>

This site is a collection of letters to and from Private Arthur Pranger during WWII – the letters are juxtaposed with historic memorabilia to tell the soldier's story.

September 11th Digital Archive: Stories Section (Library of Congress)

<http://911digitalarchive.org/lc/911-browse-story/0/6>

The Veterans' Oral History Project: See and Hear Veterans' Stories (Library of Congress)

<http://www.loc.gov/folklife/vets/sights.html>

Within these Walls

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/house/default.asp>

This Smithsonian exhibit site tells the stories of five families who lived (sequentially) in a house over 200 years

What did you do in the war, Grandma?

http://www.stg.brown.edu/projects/WWII_Women/tocCS.html

An oral history of Rhode Island Women during World War II

Without Sanctuary: Photographs and Postcards of Lynching in America

<http://www.musarium.com/withoutsanctuary>

What was Told

http://www-cds.aas.duke.edu/hine/what_was_told

Photos and interviews with people living on the Cape Flats in South Africa