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An Introduction to Digital Storytelling

Digital Storytelling (DST) is a learning/creating experience supported by technology, allowing participants to create their own short film containing voice, imagery, and music.

Aim of the process

To complete a digital story that is 2-3 minutes in length and made up of about 20-25 images and has a script length of about one page, double-spaced

How does the process work?

The process of digital storytelling can be broken into a series of steps.

Writing and Scripting/Story circles

Digital storytelling first begins with constructing a story – it is very important that the story is a first person narrative. This stage is very important. Stories should be structured around a theme. Stories are prepared using a mixture of group work and individual work – where participants brainstorm ideas together and share potential stories and give each other feedback in 'story circles'. The end result of this process is a refined script. This step should not be rushed.

Audio recording.

Once someone has finished their script, they are ready to record the audio narrative. Often one workshop facilitator will be assigned to support this process – when a participant is ready they will find the facilitator, record their story (ideally in a single take) and then the facilitator will give them a digital file (Wav/mp3) with their audio narrative on.
Because people are often nervous recording the voice over it is best to record it in 2-3 sentence "chunks" so if people make a mistake you can re-record just a small section, not the whole thing.

Storyboarding

The next stage is thinking through how to match images with text. Participants may have bought photographs, drawing or images with them, or they may want to act out/illustrate their stories in the workshop, or find images online to illustrate their ideas. It is sometimes a good idea to get participants storyboarding prior to locating any multimedia as it forces them to think through exactly what images they want before looking for them. Images that participants have brought with them can be scanned in/photographed at this stage. As a rule of thumb digital stories tend to work best with about 20-25 still images.

Editing/creating the story

This stage of the process is done on computers using basic editing software – most commonly Windows MovieMaker – which coming free with the Windows operating system – Photostory is another option and can be downloaded. On a Mac participants can use iMovie. It is a good idea to start with a basic demonstration of the software, and back this up with simple handouts that describe the process. Participants place their audio recording on a timeline and then use their storyboard as a map to construct the edit. Another ambient/music track can be added if desired. The final projects are then 'rendered' to give a self-contained movie file.

Sharing the stories

This is perhaps the most moving stage in the process. Participants see their own completed stories for the first time, and those of their colleagues. Screening often give participants unexpected insights into their colleagues.

Websites of interest

Center for Digital Storytelling
http://www.storycenter.org
DigitalStories.org
http://www.digitalstories.org