Digital Storytelling

This course introduces teachers to digital storytelling, a new media literacy tool for the classroom. We define digital storytelling, and explore ways in which to compose web-based digital stories. Different web sites and media platforms are discussed, student digital stories are introduced, and the use of digital storytelling is discussed as a strategy for student learning and engagement.

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Introduction

One of the most basic ways in which humans communicate with each other is to tell stories. Storytelling has been going on for thousands of years, beginning with the oral tradition and continuing through the written word, sound, pictures, film, and now online media. Digital storytelling is an artistic movement that allows people to share their personal stories easily and effectively via tools and resources found on the web, and often for free. There are many different media used to tell digital stories: video, blogs, web pages, slide shows, digital images, podcasts, and maps.

In this course, we will be exploring ways in which web-based stories can be written, told, and shared. We’ll examine the digital storytelling movement, discuss its possible benefits in the classroom, explore some digital stories in a variety of media, and then learn how to plan and create a digital story using a medium of your choice.

Objectives

Participants will be able to

1. Realize how digital tools can be used to tell a story.
2. Recognize how the choice of digital medium can affect how a story is told and understood by the reader/viewer.
3. Understand how digital storytelling can be a powerful medium for student learning and expression.

Session 1: What Is Digital Storytelling?

Overview

What is digital storytelling? What does it mean to use nontraditional forms of media to compose, tell, design, and share a story? Is something lost when paper and pen becomes phased out by mouse and keyboard…and is anything gained?

Simply put, digital storytelling, most simply, is a way of using digital resources to design and write a narrative. Moving away from pen and paper opens up a host of possibilities and can often be highly motivating to students. Being digital, stories are easier to share, and if written on the web, they are automatically being shared worldwide. By using several different forms of media (audio, video, visuals), students can tell a story that provides a richer experience to the reader (or viewer) than a print story ever could. Students can easily alter the traditional forms of narrative and learn to tell stories in diverse ways.

Though digital storytelling is most obviously a literary tool, it can be applied across the curriculum. Students can use digital storytelling tools to write an account of an historical event, present a biography of a mathematician, explain a concept in science, tell the story behind a piece of artwork or musical composition, or compose a story in another...
language (with subtitles if desired). Within the English Language Arts, the possibilities are nearly endless, from memoirs to creative writing to literary essays.

This session will introduce digital storytelling and its implications as a part of the K-12 classroom. You don’t need to be a technical wizard to create a digital story; in fact, it’s easier than ever for students to express themselves through multimedia resources. Most of the links included below are digital storytelling portals, containing many links and tips to help students create their own digital stories.

Readings

1. Read “Educational Uses of Digital Storytelling” (http://www.coe.uh.edu/digital-storytelling/introduction.htm) and “What is Digital Storytelling” (http://www.storycenter.org/memvoice/pages/areasmain.html). These two articles present an overall understanding of what digital storytelling is, and how it can be used as an educational tool.
2. Read “Digital Storytelling Finds Its Place in the Classroom” (http://www.infotoday.com/MMSchools/jan02/banaszewski.htm) and “A Story about Teaching Digital Storytelling,” (http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/forum/spr04/dstory.html). Both articles are written from the perspective of teachers who have introduced digital storytelling into their curriculum.

Reflection

Why has digital storytelling become a prominent force in educational technology? Why is it popular with educators and students? What skills does digital storytelling foster in students? What do you see as its potential for use in the K-12 classroom? How might you use digital storytelling in your classroom?

Session 2: Digital Story Sample Overview

There are almost as many methods to telling a story as there are stories themselves. In this session, we’ll be reading several digital stories. The best stories should have a clear and effective presentation as well as a compelling narrative.

Pay attention to the medium each author chose to tell his or her story and consider why he or she may have chosen that method. Consider how the medium has an effect on how the story is told, and how you (the listener/viewer/reader) experience the story. Also, think about the projects in a holistic sense: are the stories effective?

Readings

1. Watch, listen, and/or read three of the digital stories below. Choose stories that are told in different media (for example, video, podcast, digital images).

   - Long Elementary Podcasts (podcast)
     http://long.dearbornschools.org/podcast/Long%20Elementary/HOME.html
   - My Dog Merlin (web page)
     http://www.tech-head.com/aaa/merlin.htm
   - September 11 Personal Learning Map (mapping)
     http://www.communitywalk.com/map/17519
   - Losing Some Loved Ones (video)
   - One Hot Minute (digital images)
     http://flickr.com/photos/nanirolls/sets/251383
   - Vickery Memory Map (mapping)
http://www.storymapping.org/vickery.html

- **My Autobiography (video)**

- **Coming to California (video)**
  http://dsi.kqed.org/index.php/contest/about/C75

- **A Little Coffee in the Morning: A Story in 4 Frames (digital images)**
  http://flickr.com/groups/four/discuss/72157594306418029

- **Digital Story Examples (video)**
  http://www.storycenter.org/movies

- **Memories on Skates (mapping)**
  http://www.communitywalk.com/map/82658

- **Flickr Story (digital image with sound added)**
  http://ia300131.us.archive.org/0/items/Flickr_Story_1_Christmas_Yeller_by_Kristina_Fetkovich/flickrstory1.mov

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2. Read the following piece from The Center for Digital Storytelling’s Digital Storytelling Cookbook (http://www.storycenter.org/memvoice/pages/tutorial_2.html).

This section of the cookbook discusses ways in which to find a subject of a digital story and different genres of digital stories are defined.

**Reflection**

Of all the samples provided, what digital story did you find to be the most powerful and effective as a piece of storytelling? Explain. How did the choice of medium affect the way in which the story was told and understood? What genre of digital story did it best represent? Why?

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**Session 3: Creating a Digital Story**

**Overview**

We’ll be exploring different mediums and methods you can use to create a digital story. The methods you can use to tell a digital story range from the complex (video) to the simple (mapping). In this session you will find a method that feels most comfortable for you to use and through which an effective and compelling story can be told. There are many different ways to use digital resources to tell a story: video, podcasts, digital images, slide shows, mapping, blogs, and others.

Read through the links, which are primers on creating digital stories. Examine the resources on the Making the Most of the Web with Your Students CD, paying special attention to the teacher videos, each of which features a way to create a digital story. Think about how the medium affects the message, and what medium might be the best fit for the message you want to tell.

**Readings**

1. On the Making the Most of the Web with Your Students CD-ROM, view the sections on video, podcasting, blogging, and mapping. Each of these media represent a way in which a digital story can be presented to the public. View both teacher videos, on blogging and podcasting, and consider how each medium (or in combination with each other) can be an effective way to tell a digital story.

2. Read the following articles, “How To--Digital Storytelling” (https://www.teachersnetwork.org/NTNY/nychelp/manage/digistory.htm), and “7 Elements of Digital Storytelling” (http://www.storycenter.org/memvoice/pages/tutorial_2.html). Both articles talk about the steps necessary to create digital stories and the planning that must occur when working with students on digital stories.

**Reflection**

What medium most appeals to you for a digital story? Why? What makes that particular medium a powerful way to tell a story?
What more would you need to know to create a digital story of your own? What resources would you need to complete a digital storytelling assignment with your students?

Assignment
Describe a classroom assignment in which digital storytelling is used as a means to complete a final project. Describe the unit of study and how a digital story would enhance student learning. How would digital storytelling align with your curriculum? What particular medium would you ask students to use to write and/or design their stories. Why?

Resources

Digital Storytelling at Web English Teacher
http://www.webenglishteacher.com/ds.html
Good links to learn more about digital storytelling.

Center for Digital Storytelling
http://www.storycenter.org/index1.html
This page includes resources and samples of digital stories.

Art, Storytelling, Technology and Education
http://www.jasonohler.com/storytelling/
This site highlights some key sites on digital storytelling. It is a companion web site to Jason Ohler’s book (see below).

Integrating Digital Storytelling in Your Classroom
http://its.ksbe.edu/dst/
Excellent links to strategies and media for creating digital stories.

Adobe Digital Kids Club: Digital Storytelling in the Classroom
http://www.adobe.com/education/digkids/storytelling/classroom.html
Good advice on how to create digital stories using (of course) Adobe Products.

Memory’s Voices: A Guide to Digital Storytelling
http://www.storycenter.org/memvoice
An interactive, one-stop-shop for help and advice to create a digital story. Make sure to read the “cookbook” section.

Edutopia: How to Use Digital Storytelling in Your Classroom
http://www.edutopia.org/use-digital-storytelling-classroom
A great article that explains the ideas behind digital storytelling, as well as getting you in the right mindset to proceed on your own.

Digital Storytelling links
http://electronicportfolios.org/digistory/index.html
An excellent set of links on all aspects of digital storytelling.

Digital Storytelling Links
http://tech-head.com/dstory.htm
Another good set of links, including research and books on digital storytelling.

Digital Media in the Classroom eBook
http://www.ebookhost.net/tdmc2/ebook.asp.
An excellent resource from TechLearning magazine. Registration (free) is required to
view.

A well-rounded introduction to digital storytelling, written by a professor of education technology.

Written by a teacher, this book explores how digital storytelling can enhance classroom learning.