

Digital Storytelling: An Alternative Way of Expressing Oneself

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ABSTRACT

Digital storytelling has many implications in teaching and learning. As a way to communicate ideas, experiences, beliefs, and topics to an audience through the use of technology and multimedia, digital stories help storytellers acquire many different skills and literacies. The most important aspect is that the storyteller learns to create stories using their personal voice and interpretation to be shared with a larger community. Self-expression is encouraged and confidence can be developed through the creation of digital stories. This paper examines digital storytelling from an instructional and learning perspective. Areas such as the implications of digital storytelling in education, the process of planning and developing stories, and a discussion of various tools to create digital stories are included. Digital storytelling can provide storytellers with an avenue for conveying ideas and information that are personal in nature or more informational.

KEYWORDS

Communication, Digital Stories, Digital Storytelling, Movie Story, Multimedia, Multiple Literacies, Technology Tools

INTRODUCTION

Storytelling is an old form of communication. Since the time humans develop the ability to communicate, stories have been told (Xu, Park, & Baek, 2011). People tell stories to share values, beliefs, perspectives, history, and important events with one another. Stories can be personal describing what has been experienced by the storyteller. Stories could also be more formal as the person articulates his or her perspectives toward a topic or event. Either way, stories become the collective accumulation of history and culture of a society. As people tell stories, their 'voice' becomes known, whether external or internal (Rossiter & Garcia, 2010).

Digital stories build upon this activity by integrating multimedia. Instead of just describing events and experiences orally or through drawings and physical movement, the use of multimedia permits storytellers to integrate other forms of digital communication such as sound and audio, video, animation, and images (Porter, 2005). Digital stories use elements related to design (e.g., graphic), literacy (e.g., media, visual), and communication (e.g., meaning-making messages) during the development process of creating stories (Fulwiler & Middleton, 2012; Kazmierczak, 2003).

Digital stories often revolve around a chosen theme and contain a particular viewpoint from the storyteller or creator (Suwardy, Pan, & Seow, 2013). A similar topic, such as Evolution of Life, can be presented completely different based upon the creator's experiences and perspectives. Further, digital stories can be reflective, historical, instructional, and persuasive (Robin, 2006). Creators could describe personal tales and events that occurred and how they have affected personal well-being and growth. Retelling of historical events and actions can be completed through researching various

people, geographic locations, culture, actions, etc. Stories could be used to teach, inform, or persuade someone about a particular issue, idea, process, or belief.

This paper examines digital storytelling from an instructional and learning perspective. Areas such as the implications of digital storytelling in education, the process of planning and developing stories, and a discussion of various tools to create digital stories are included. Digital storytelling permits creators to express themselves through multimedia to communicate a message, idea, belief, concept, and knowledge through creative means. This activity requires storytellers or creators to take the initiative to convey their perspectives and understandings through the interlacing of different media. As a result, the final product or story becomes their own personal narrative.

BACKGROUND

Digital storytelling is not a new concept. Novelty of this activity has gained popularity with the emergence of different media and technology available to storytellers. As access to digital and Web-based technology improves, the art of digital storytelling has taken shape and is used by educators and students alike as a form of creative communication. Because digital stories are created by a single or collective storyteller, the final works incorporate creativity and self-expression in recounting events, people, concepts, and more.

Definition

Digital storytelling (DS) has many different meanings based upon the definer. Some view digital storytelling as the dynamic interplay of multimedia that comes in the shape of movies. Others view digital storytelling as the combination of words, pictures, and sound in a digital format, as opposed to paper books. Suwardy, Pan, and Seow (2013) explains that “Digital storytelling harnesses the power of audiovisuals to engage students’ visual and auditory senses in ways that printed textbooks can never accomplish. The combination of text, image, and audio motivates students to engage in deep learning” (p. 110). In short, digital storytelling is the channel for telling stories with digital multimedia such as images, audio, video, and animations. These stories bring together a mixture of digital graphics, video, audio narration, text, and music to present information on a given topic. Although some digital stories may be simpler in form by combining words, pictures, and some sound, others may be more dynamic such as incorporating animations, video, narration, professional editing and video making, and more.

Regardless of the extent of multimedia used in digital stories, they all use technology-based tools or other electronic means of presentation. As Smeda, Dakich, and Sharda (2014) describes, “A digital story can be viewed as a merger between traditional storytelling and the use of multimedia technology” (p. 2). Tools such as video, sound, and animation editors can be used to help create the story. Software programs such as iMovie, Audacity, and GoAnimate can help the creator design the story in a way that is more interactive. Other programs available online also help storytellers design and develop meaningful stories. In education, examples of online programs such as ZooBurst and Zimmer Twins allow students to create stories that either resemble a pop-up book or a video format. Either way, technology does play an integral part in digital storytelling.

Digital storytelling also has other characteristics. Creators can work individually or collaboratively when developing stories. Depending upon the choice given to storytellers, this can have important implications upon the learning and creativity occurring. Collaboration between storytellers promotes social skills and sharing of ideas and experiences in authentic situations, conducive toward constructivist principles (Daskolia, Kynigos, & Makri, 2015; Duffy, Lowyck, & Jonassen, 2012). Individually, storytellers have ownership of the stories being told and rely upon self-dependence and initiative to complete the story project. The digital story is typically a few minutes long (2-10 minutes) if in a video format. Stories do not tend to go on and on like chapter books, but only document an instance of a person’s life, topic, event, or theme. Finally, digital storytelling can be

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