



[Digital Storytelling in Practice]

TRAINING MANUAL FOR DIGITAL STORYTELLING WORKSHOPS



[DIGITAL STORYTELLING IN PRACTICE]

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1. “seven billion digital stories”



If we want to grasp the essence of digital storytelling, words are probably the least effective medium. Digital storytelling (DST) is best understood when seen and experienced: this is the most practical way to realize the power and the potential of this method, as well as its effects on ourselves and others. People like stories, and we all want to leave some trace behind us for the future. The fact is, we all have a hidden, untold story within ourselves. With the help of digital storytelling, anyone can find that special voice and story within themselves that are unique to them. There is no such thing as a banal or bad story; every person has their own fascinating stories which are important to them for some reason or another. Digital storytelling is “only” a method which helps us find and unfold these important stories, which are however buried in us, so that we can share them with the world or just narrate them out loud for ourselves.

The telling of stories is a basic human need, as old as humankind itself. After many millennia, the adjective “digital” has been added to this notion, which for many may seem odd or hard to define. Digital storytelling focuses on one’s own personal story, and as such, it is not different from the way any other story was told in the past. It is like when, for instance, our ancestors told each other their most exciting hunting stories, or when at class reunions we share the most important events of our adult lives with our former classmates. But in the last two decades a method has taken shape which is able to help us direct or “channel” our story towards the core of the message with the help of various tools and with the purpose of producing a particular short film at the end of the process. These stories are then told in our own voice and illustrated with our own photos. After they have been recorded digitally, they are made available to the public. And of course, they can be digitally saved so as to keep them for our own purposes and for posterity.

To sum up the essence of the method in a few words: digital storytelling (DST) helps us focus on ourselves and our stories, put them into words, dramatize them and relate them to others with the help of photos or other visual tools. In this process storytellers elaborate and relate their own personal stories, illustrating them with personal photos, objects, drawings, etc. The result will be a roughly two-minute short film narrated by the storyteller and based on personal pictures.

The power of digital storytelling lies in its very personal and straightforward nature, i.e., in the process itself by which we find and articulate our story, as well as listen to and watch those of others. The method is basically about the journey we experience during the making of the short films – about the struggle of finding our story and giving it a form. The end result will be important not only for us, but can have an effect on others’ lives as well. We share personal photos and stories through the social media every day, but with the help of digital storytelling we will be able to develop new skills by which we can give a deeper and more genuine meaning to our message.

The present manual has been produced within the “i-DIGital Stories – Stories Educational Learning Facilities” project, with the financial assistance of the Erasmus + program of the European Commission, with the aim of presenting the method, fields of use, results, applicability and effects of digital storytelling.

Like most guides, this is not comprehensive. It is intended to offer an overview of the methodology which is inherent to a first approach to the digital-storytelling model. The methodological, theoretical, ethical and practical guidelines need to go along with personal experience and a comprehensive knowledge of the entire process, which we highly recommend.

The present publication provides assistance for organizing and carrying out digital storytelling training sessions, by giving a step-by-step description of the entire process.

Then it can be realized in either a formal or an informal educational environment, in a group workshop or working individually. The present manual is based on the method developed by Daniel Meadows and the team of Capture Wales.

This manual strives to go beyond the essentially methodological approach of similar publications, by giving an overview of the origins of digital storytelling, its social and psychological impact, and the options to address unconventional, out-of-the-ordinary situations, and the opportunities it offers to address a variety of human situations.

The staff at Anthropolis Association started organizing digital storytelling workshops under the personal guidance of Steve Bellis, drawing a lot upon Joe Lambert's – key persons digital storytelling development – experience. The authors of the present volume became acquainted with the method of digital storytelling and made their first films in 2011. Since that time they have trained many Hungarian and international groups, and helped several hundred digital stories to take shape. Our experience of several years and the many trainings we organized have proved that the method is successful, useful and effective in helping people.

This methodological guide is a an effort to increase the potential fields of use of the Digital-storytelling. As Joe Lambert put it, "There are seven billion people on earth. If each one of them has made their own digital stories, I will be satisfied".¹ At the same time creators of the method have realized that although trainings follow certain strict rules and the basic framework of the emerging stories and short films is fixed, the correct assessment of the situation, flexibility and adaptability to unforeseen situations are still very important for trainers. Even though the manual does not give precise guidelines for such situations, it discusses them and gives practical advice based on our previous experience.

1 Hétmilliárd digitális történet. Beszélgetés Joe Lamberttel [Seven billion digital stories. Interview with Joe Lambert]. Anthropolis 7.1 (2012).

Digital Storytelling – What is it?

definition:

A DST film is a narrated story, written and told by the owner of the story, illustrated with his/her personal images, created and shared through digital technology



2. Storytelling in culture



Storytelling is as old a practice as human history itself. As a cultural cornerstone of early humanity organizing itself into society, storytelling was important and well-documented in the life of the community, well before writing appeared – even though today its role is subject to debate. We don't know for sure why hunting scenes and prey animals had been depicted on the cave walls of ancient man around 30.000 years ago, but we do know for instance that the drawings on the ceiling of the Lascaux cave are not merely random paintings but are connected – they are probably visual impressions of some myth. In other words, they are ancient storyboards.

Apart from their practical significance however, the depictions painted, drawn or carved on cave walls testify to a characteristic which is unique to humankind: the need and the desire to leave a trace behind.

The purpose of cave drawings in the belief system and magic of the community is controversial, but their role in transmitting common knowledge is unquestionable. The same stands true for verbal presentations of the then emerging legends and tales, as well as for their storytellers. Presenters of stories stand out of the community and hold a privileged role because they give a unique and individual face to the common treasure of the community, the story. This is the moment when storytellers and their audience are born. Storytellers developed a personal style – they played with their voice, words, hands, and body. Each storyteller interpreted the same story in a different way and accompanied it with gestures and later with music and dance. The process became an essential part of religious rites and performing arts, and through that, of representational arts. Storytellers were assisted by individual symbols carved in stone or wood, from which the cave paintings and later the stories depicted on vases and pottery developed. (A uniquely beautiful example of the visualization of storytelling is an eleventh-century tapestry made in England, now on display in Bayeux, France. The original, more than seventy-metre-long, embroidered tapestry recounts the story of the Norman conquest of England of 1066 in a comic-book way.)

Verbal storytelling remained indispensable even after the appearance of writing and the use of written records – on the one hand, due to the illiterate layers of societies, accounting for the majority of their population, and on the other, due to the strength of its personal nature. In earlier times it was messengers and wanderers who brought news from far away parts of the world to communities which were mostly fixed or just a little mobile. They often told embroidered stories about the exploits of far-away noblemen and kings, about heroic feats, battles and extraordinary events. Storytellers played an important part in the creation, preservation and spreading of legends, myths and narratives embedded in the local tradition, bearing the characteristic traits of the broader community and the geographical region. Wandering minstrels or theatre companies, whose sole purpose was entertaining, relied on these same stories too. Folk tales, myths and legends were individualized and transmitted, thus contributing to the development and strengthening of the community identity, while preserving their role in transmitting cultural and social values.

Stories have always had a crucial role in knowledge transfer, not just at the dawn of civilization. Like every

story, the history of culture also has its heroes and heroines. The story of every scientific “feat”, discovery, or the creation of a seminal work becomes part of the common knowledge of humanity in an anecdotal form. The story of the apple falling on Newton’s head is much more amusing and memorable than a complicated formula or definition. Moreover it conveys just the amount of knowledge about a phenomenon of physics and its discovery – as well as about the history of science – laypeople can absorb and may need in everyday life. Transmitting knowledge in an entertaining way, via stories, has become an independent genre by now. There are quite a few outstanding representatives of infotainment in several fields of science – it will suffice to mention David Attenborough, Bill Bryson, and Umberto Eco. Still, many examples can be quoted on the relevance and the efficacy of transforming personal memories into narrations, such as for the contributions from Margaret Mead, Anne Schützenberger, Françoise Dolto, Gregory Bateson, just to quote some above many others².

The culture-shaping potential of stories is especially conspicuous in the light of religions. With the emergence of writing and the use of written records a new and effective medium was born for the purpose of transmitting stories. This considerably facilitated the spreading of canonized stories of religions, and thus the spreading of religions themselves. Authentic translations tried to guarantee that stories of great importance could be spread without being distorted, conquering linguistic, geographical and temporal boundaries. (The faithfulness of translations is being questioned all the time, and mistranslations and misinterpretations have their own history.)

Religions conquered new territories through their stories, too. There is considerable variation in the length of stories within the same religions, but even amazingly short stories are able to convey the message and transmit the main teachings. Zen Buddhist koans, or parables, are excellent examples of how to initiate a person into religious mysteries even through a story told in a few words. Another example is the Passion, which is evidently longer than a koan but it grasps the basic teachings of Christianity with similar concision. Thanks to the depiction of the Stations of the Cross, the main message – a personal story of salvation told in 14 images – becomes easy to understand and alive even for illiterate people.

Stories have a central role not only in the evolution of humanity but in that of the individual as well. Tales enter our lives from early childhood and have a fundamental influence on the development of our personality. It has been proved by genetics that we are predisposed to tales and stories: we are born with a pre-coded hunger for stories – our brains are wired to understand them and to learn from them. Through tales we not only get to know the world of tales but the real world as well. Apart from moral guidance we may also discover the working rules and interrelations of social life in them. Tales influence our world view, and it is possible that our most basic cognitive distortions – for instance, our belief in a just world – are also based on tales. Besides their effects on the intellect, their usefulness in psychology is also impressive. They can help dissolve our tension and pacify us while inducing a special state of consciousness. Tale therapy, for

2 more references on the effectiveness of narrations in various fields are available in bibliography

example, uses the healing power of tales and applies it to children.

Tales have a formative effect on our view of the world in a basic way. They begin to form our personality from the beginning of its evolution, parallel with the development of consciousness. They then accompany us through our lives in a way that, in retrospect, the life of the individual itself will form a story rich in adventures, spanning from birth till death.

Our parents used to sit by our beds and lull us to sleep also with a tale, and in the process we learned an ancient mode of action: storytelling. Many of us may never purposely think about what makes a good story or how to systematically build up one, but we learn the basics of storymaking very young, as if we learned a recipe book by heart. The ingredients for a simple story are the following: the time, the place, the heroine, the intrigue (the conflict), and the solution. And we will be able to apply that knowledge anytime – or at least when we become parents ourselves and begin to tell tales to our children, just like our parents did to us. Storytelling is as natural an ability as breathing.

In a way, every story is made up, but the human personality is influenced not only by fictitious stories like tales. When we reflect on ourselves or construct our ego, we do it with the help of stories, creating our own reality in the process. We picture ourselves in a system of interrelated causes and effects; our identity is partly built up of stories. Our life stories and personal myths originate from the intricate web of our personal knowledge woven about our past. These stories about the self ensure the continuity between past and future, and this series of memories makes up our personal identity (see Schacter³). The things we experienced – i.e., our whole life – are invested with a meaning through narrations and stories. It is not just us who create stories – stories are creating us just as well.

3 Daniel L. Schacter: Emlékeink nyomában. Az agy az elme és a múlt. Budapest, 1998, Háttér Kiadó. [Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind, and the Past, 1996.]

3. The origins of Digital Storytelling



In the 1950s and '60s, historiography began to turn its attention to formerly neglected non-written sources. As a forerunner, we find the French Annales School of historiography, founded and developed in the first half of the twentieth century and flourishing after the Second World War. Besides “traditional” sources, the Annales School was willing to deal with documents of “everyday” life – bills, journals, letters, etc. – in order to study long-term social, economical and political questions. Adapting the methods of ethnographical research, the so-called “oral history” was developed in Great Britain at the beginning of the 1970s, which recorded narrations of everyday people and families, first focusing on the background of great historical events, and later on occurrences of everyday life.

At the same time traditional storytelling has lived on as a means of transmitting knowledge, experience, community history or personal and family memories until this day. This is because storytelling is not a self-centred activity but a sharing of knowledge and memories, which is as important to the receiver of the story as it is to the storyteller. Human stories are usually universal, therefore they can easily serve as a bridge between different groups, cultures or generations. Whereas in certain cultures narrating stories orally before a group of people has been a living tradition to this day, in other hand this tradition is apparently losing ground. But even though various new techniques and forms of expression have recently become available, the whole of humanity needs this mode of expression and this kind of leaving a trace behind even today.

3.1 American beginnings

The tradition of storytelling has been kept alive in English-speaking countries and it set the imagination of several creative, experimental artists in motion. Performing and visual artists began experimenting with different forms of expression based on storytelling. During the 1970s and '80s, several projects and initiatives were started both in Great Britain and in the United States which can be considered as prototypes of digital storytelling. They included for instance the touring performances in which the stories narrated by storytellers on the ad-hoc stage were accompanied by locally created visual effects, i.e., slide projections.

Around the same time practising artists, in cooperation with school teachers, began to connect art programs with education, leaving the sanctuary of art behind, and trying to involve as many people as possible in the interpretation and practice of artistic approaches?. One of its means was to connect storytelling with the visual arts which, apart from self-realization, aimed at identifying social problems and conflicts and finding a solution to them. The broad definition of the digital storytelling method has been used by many artists and producers to link what they do with traditions of oral storytelling and often to distinguish their work from slick or commercial projects by focusing on authorship and humanistic or emotionally provocative content.

This was also an age when tremendous changes were taking place in the media and visual consumption. Television became part of everyday life to a so far unprecedented extent, and the TV set moved in the family

living-room. Television series based on the lives of so-called average families became highly popular, as well as programs in which ordinary people could become the centre of attention – e.g., quiz shows –, even if for a short time. Many people began to feel they could identify with TV programs more and more, even if the media was one-sided and controlled from above: TV companies and producers conceived, tested and produced the programs, and viewers received a ready-made product. Even if television productions were shaped and modified taking into consideration viewer ratings and test projections, the story itself had nothing to do with viewers. It did very much influence their lives though, whereas they had very little influence on the content of programs. Several artists and educators who specialized in this field urged a more democratic use of the media, which was still difficult, but not impossible to realize with the technology then available. The appearance of home video players and cameras was a milestone in the democratization process of the media, which became fully realized with the spread of computers, digital technology, the internet, and social media.

The first digital storytellers were Ken Burns, Dana Atchley, Joe Lambert and Daniel Meadows. Ken Burns used the method rather for documentation, such as his film “The Civil War” in 1990. The highly popular nine-episode series, totalling ten hours, was made with an enormous amount of personal documents – letters, journals and photos –, based on a new approach never used before, involving the viewers in the interpretation of historical events in a novel way.

In developing the method of digital storytelling, the American-born interdisciplinary artist and media producer, Dana Atchley, undoubtedly played a pioneering role by telling personal stories, sometimes in front of a live audience. It was Atchley who taught storytelling in workshops and worked with companies such as Coca-Cola, Apple Computer, Adobe or Pinnacle Systems. Atchley was helping senior executives create emotional, compelling talks that used the latest technology to create “digital stories”, connecting and appealing to audiences in a more visceral, visual, emotional and real way.

“Digital storytelling combines the best of two worlds: the ‘new world’ of digitized video, photography and art, and the ‘old world’ of telling stories. This means the ‘old world’ of PowerPoint slides filled with bullet point statements will be replaced by a ‘new world’ of examples via stories, accompanied by evocative images and sounds”.

Dana Atchley’s ideas about technology and storytelling were beginning to shake things up in the ‘90s. At this time many others were also trying to create something new in the field of media art, but Atchley remained faithful to realizing personal stories. In doing so he worked with family archives and visual diaries already existing or made for the purpose:

Home Movies: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bKuGpBaWqQk>

Readheads: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=njwiKJkWUys>

Horse-Cow: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_WU5SaGDnU

Elaine Woo wrote the following of Atchley in the columns of the Los Angeles Times, after his premature death in December 2000: “A self-described old hippie who once toured the country as a performance artist named Ace, Atchley combined a love of family history with his skills in new media to create an autobiographical show called ‘Next Exit,’ which he performed at film and video festivals around the world. (...) In the early 1980s he became an independent video producer. During this time he also acquired a Macintosh computer, which became the central tool in crafting his first digital story. ‘Next Exit,’ first performed in 1991, drew on family archives dating from the late 1800s as well as thousands of images taken by Atchley since he got his first camera at age 7. Reviewers and fans compared him to a digital-age version of Garrison Keillor – or ‘somewhere on the road between Mark Twain and Jack Kerouac,’ said Peter Bergman of FiresignTheater.”⁴.

In the 1990s, after numerous media experiments, Joe Lambert, who was a theatre producer at the time, was working on the democratization of the cultural and visual scene with several of his colleagues, with the objective of giving “voice to powerful stories of harm, healing, and hope in the midst of social and political conflict.” In the training sessions they organized with Dana Atchley they saw that storytellers were able to make strong personal short films, even when they lacked the most rudimentary media skills. The first such trainings, aimed at making short films based on personal stories, could be realized with the active support of the American Film Institute. Then in 1994 Atchley and Lambert, along with Nina Mullen, founded the San Francisco Digital Media Center. Over the next several years, the group refined a curriculum that became the basis for a community workshop called “digital storytelling.” The Centre became a place of professional training, and its staff of 10 trainers has the skills to carry out digital storytelling trainings and thematic workshops applicable to any field, mostly for state, local authority or business clients all over the US. With the method of digital storytelling, they were able to improve and achieve considerable changes in the approach of several educational, health, social service and even business organizations. The [Centre for Digital Storytelling](#), which from 2015 on continues to work simply under the name of StoryCenter, has worked with nearly a thousand organizations around the world and trained more than fifteen thousand people in hundreds of workshops to share stories from their lives.

3.2 Digital storytelling in Europe

One of the aims of the StoryCenter in Berkley, California, is to spread this genre in the world among the widest possible audience. It was Daniel Meadows, a photographer and teacher who, doing research for the School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies at Cardiff University, came into contact with the work of the American institute and learned the method of digital storytelling from them. He thought it would be possible to break the monopoly of the top-down controlled media industry with this technique, which tells

4 <http://articles.latimes.com/2000/dec/30/local/me-6346>

everyday stories in a personal form. In 2001 he helped conclude an agreement between Cardiff University and the regional TV channel, BBC Wales, concerning a long-term digital storytelling project entitled Capture Wales. The program's objective was to open up the airwaves for a wide range of new users, giving a voice to people who, until then, had been thought of merely as members of the audience. The project lasted until 2008, during which time they held monthly workshops with 10 people participating all over Wales. When selecting participants, the only criterion was that the first 10 to arrive were admitted to each workshop, says Meadows. In these workshops people were able to narrate and produce their roughly two-minute personal short films, which were then broadcast in prime time of the channel. In the course of the program several thousand people put together and narrated their own stories, recorded them in their own voice, and in the meantime learned how to write a script, create a storyboard from their family photos, and produce their own short films with help from the channel's staff.

It was also Daniel Meadows – together with Joe Lambert and the staff from the BBC – who, based on his experience gained in California, worked out the seemingly strict methodology. It limits the length of a story to 180-320 words, which can be illustrated with 15-25 photos and narrated in approximately 2 minutes, without using any movie effects, music or noises, if possible. The framework of the digital storytelling workshop used by many schools and institutions – and presented in this manual – is based on the very same principles.

At the beginning the European school – as well as a few other schools worldwide – interpreted the method differently than their American counterparts. The American approach focuses more on the process of making the film, as opposed to the European approach which concentrates on the end-product of the process, envisioning a marketable multimedia product which can be broadcast on TV. After a few educational institutions and non-governmental organisations began to use digital storytelling – one of the major centres of which became the Yale College in Wrexham, Wales, and one of its major proponents Steve Bellis, who thinks of himself as a “professional digital storyteller” –, its psychological implications became evident and the focus shifted more and more to the inner process of working out personal stories. “Before Yale College, I used to work in TV production for years as a camera operator, sound recordist and video editor, and I was trying to create a kind of ‘candid media’. In many cases this is in contradiction with the basic attitude of media and with the fact that it is continuously sending messages to viewers, who then passively receive them. I wanted to turn this around. We should not think that the viewer can only sit back in front of the TV screen. We should encourage them to show themselves – who they are, how they live. This may seem a bold idea, but I’m convinced digital storytelling makes it possible” – says Steve Bellis in an interview he gave to *Anthropolis*.⁵

5 Foglalkozása: digitális történetmesélő. Beszélgetés Steve Bellis-szel. [Profession: Digital Storyteller. An Interview with Steve Bellis.] *Anthropolis* 7.1 (2012)

Digital storytelling and other similar methods have since become known in many countries; several institutions are working with it, using various approaches, techniques, and targeting different audiences. But the various methods are based on the personal aspect and the use of digital technologies everywhere. In the past few years, the importance of digital storytelling has further grown with the quick development and easier availability of newer technologies. Despite the media having become more easily accessible and the use of Facebook, Youtube, Instagram, and Twitter ever more widespread, the acquisition of the necessary digital skills is not self-evident. Digital storytelling can help a lot in this respect. Instead of a superficial use of these technologies this method offers a useful tool which does profit from technological development but focuses instead on the quest for and promotion of real, personal human stories and social values which became more and more hidden. Instead of the almost uncontrollable compulsion for communication, it helps us concentrate on the essence, on the real message.

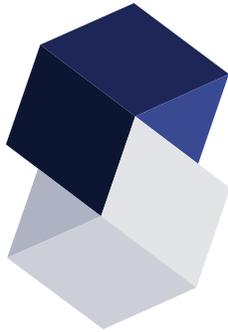
Technological advancement helped a lot in making the method of digital storytelling available and practically applicable for a wide range of educational institutions, non-governmental and benevolent organisations. In the past, the making of a short film required huge and highly expensive technical equipment, often a complete television studio background (sound studio, editing room, filming material, etc.), whereas today the necessary technology (laptop, digital camera, smart phone, tablet) is available to almost everyone.

From the 2000s, taking advantage of this new possibility, several organizations have learned the method of digital storytelling and adapted it to their own needs. They had the opportunity to seek out practically applicable solutions, and with their help, groups and individuals with various backgrounds (be they disadvantaged, undereducated, young, struggling with language barriers or communication problems) could adequately tell and produce their own stories in a way that – among others – their language, communication, visual or even computer skills or social adaptability could be improved. (A few such examples will be presented in Chapter 7.)

Thus the first step in the democratization of the media has been made. Now it is the responsibility of the organizations using the method to provide trainings and organize workshops which are adequate to the technology and capable of uncovering genuine, personal stories and contents, whilst helping the psychological and social development of the group and the individual.

The exchange of ideas and the sharing of experience between organizations working with the digital storytelling method – and naturally the presentation of films – are facilitated by the internet, but personal meetings are still important. There are several digital storytelling festivals organized regularly worldwide, among others California since 1995 and in Wales in the past decade. Apart from these festivals, bigger events are regularly organized by mostly American and British universities, and international conferences are held from time to time in different parts of the world on digital storytelling, interpreted in the widest possible sense.

4. Fields of use



Digital storytelling can be applied in every field where the need to create and tell individual or communal stories arises for different reasons or purposes. Examples given in this chapter are not exhaustive – the nature of the genre makes it impossible to cover all the fields of use of digital storytelling. But the method is open enough to allow its practitioners to apply digital storytelling in whichever field they see it justified or practical. Let us approach the method as we would a newly discovered continent, where huge unbroken lands are awaiting their explorers.

The effects of digital storytelling on participants of the process are not independent from the composition of the target group we work with and the aim and framework of the workshop. In this chapter we will primarily sum up effects which affect participants in “traditional” workshops similar to the basic form, who make their individual short films based on personal stories.

It comes from the nature of the technique that making digital stories requires a special time-frame. Naturally, we can devote relatively more time and energy to create a well thought-out and carefully organized story even if it is presented verbally or published in writing. But to tell a digital story, personal photos are needed, which requires more preparation and some amount of research. This cannot be saved, and is better not to be. Thus even before the workshop begins, while researching the story worth telling and looking at old photographs, participants start to experience those emotional processes which will mature during and after the workshop.

Below the reader will find examples from fields in which the authors have gained some practical experience.

4.1 Digital storytelling in education

Digital storytelling can be used in all fields of education (in formal, non-formal, and informal learning), after being adapted to the given learning situation. In the adaptation, generally the following questions have to be answered: will storytellers (students) make individual or common, real or fictitious stories? The answers depend on the people the trainer (the teacher) wants to use the digital storytelling method with and the purpose of the training.

In the case of younger age groups (6- to 10-year-olds) it may be appropriate to work on fictitious stories and tales created together and process them digitally in-group sessions, but this is by no means obligatory. We do this so not to pressure the child into talking personally about them self, but in some cases the child may wish to create a personal story. Individual, personal digital stories can be made with children too, and even adults can make up a story together from which they then make a short film (see also Chapter 7).

The European Union and consequently the member states have defined key areas and competencies which have to be developed because they provide the basis for the adaptability of the individual. These competencies have to be acquired by all students by the end of their compulsory education and constantly

improved throughout their lifelong learning. Digital storytelling is able to develop the following competencies: digital (ICT), learning, and social competencies, mother-tongue skills, communication in foreign languages, cultural awareness, expression, active citizenship, as well as self-image and self-awareness.

When making digital stories, it is not only students who get closer to themselves and deepen their self-understanding. Teachers also get to know their students from a new perspective, discovering new skills and competencies in them, whereas the teacher-student relationship also gets promoted to a new level.

The method of digital storytelling can be integrated into any subject, depending on the creativity of the teacher. But the most obvious choice seems to be the subject which already has the word “story” in its name – history. As a matter of fact any period of history can be studied with this method, but it is worthwhile to choose a topic which offers the opportunity for students to discover the relationship they have personally to the chosen topic or subject and elaborate on it. In a project of Anthonopolis Association, entitled “Tales from the china-closet – Family narratives of the Shoah”, secondary-school students explored the topic of the Holocaust through relics relating to it, and got closer to understanding an historical event than they would have by learning about it through a more traditional education approach.

As we mentioned earlier, the complex world around us is easier to grasp through stories. We are constantly bombarded with ready-made stories that are meant to help us understand and interpret the world, thanks to the information and communication technology, all the time and everywhere. From this torrent of information recipients have to select what they hold to be true and authentic. The task is challenging everyone’s ability to interpret and process texts, irrespective of age. Therefore it is extremely important to develop the competence of critical reading and acquire a critical eye with which we can see the world we live in more clearly. This is the only way to avoid the traps of manipulation – be it calculated or accidental – of the mass media and social media. Digital storytelling may have a key role in this. It does not matter whether the storyteller creates a personal or a fictional story, s/he can realize that every story is, by definition, constructed. Even a story recounting personally experienced memories is a series of events selected at random from the endless chain of events and rearranged into a system of causes and effects. Via a good story, the storyteller purposely evokes certain emotions in the recipient, which s/he channels in view of attaining a certain goal with the help of visual and verbal tools. In other words, the storyteller also manipulates. By acquiring the method of digital storytelling students learn to understand and use visual, cinematographic and dramaturgic tools which are meant to emotionally manipulate recipients and make the storytelling as effective as possible. This manipulation may serve the purpose of better understanding, exploring and grasping something, but it also may help with advertising or popularizing an intellectual or commercial product or an ideology. When students learn to use the linguistic and visual tools of effective communication through digital storytelling, they also learn to recognize these same tools when they meet them as recipients. Critical vision and critical thinking help them understand the intentions of the speaker and explore the power structures which characterize the context of the – not always written – text. It is never too early to start learning and practicing critical thinking.

4.2 Digital storytelling in the museum

Stories which are authentic by dint of their personal nature become more and more appreciated in all fields of life. Museums are not an exception either. With the help of this method digital stories can be made in connection with certain items of the museum's collection, thus making them more familiar to visitors through personal stories. These objects will then appear not just in a historical-scientific context befitting a museum, but in a more personal one. The objects explored this way can become alive and may offer a greater opportunity for emotional involvement, enriching visitors with a new experience.

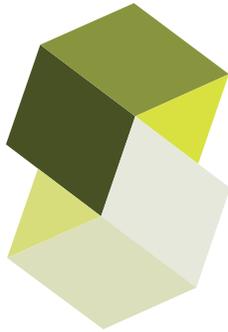
When speaking about the method of digital storytelling, we generally emphasise the process. Its application in a museum environment is the exception, however, when we rather approach it from the perspective of the end-result, i.e., the film which is created. This does not mean that the trainer does not have to be as careful during a museum-oriented training than in any other digital storytelling setting. Upsetting memories can surface in a storyteller even if the story is made about a museum object for the purpose of presenting it to the visitors of the museum. Therefore trainers have to ensure that storytellers have the same emotional-psychological security as at any other time. However, the goal is different: the storyteller makes a story which is targeted at a specific group right from the start – museum visitors (and the broad public). Notwithstanding this, after seeing the end-result the storyteller can still decide if s/he wants to fully share the finished film with the public.

4.3 Digital storytelling in the media

The end-result of the digital storytelling process – the 1.5-2-minute-long film – can easily find its natural “habitat” in the social media. In this case it is exclusively the maker of the film who decides about the public or the platform they want to share their film with. But stories based on a collection of personal photos have a relevance in the official media too (state or commercial TV channels). Living proof of this is a BBC project called 'Capture Wales', in which digital stories collected nationwide were broadcast in primetime on BBC Wales (see Chapter 3). It would be nice if more and more public channels recognized the opportunities this method offers to express communal identity and self-image.

Storytelling with one or several pictures has a well-established tradition in journalism into which digital storytelling fits seamlessly. In the printed and online media many journalists use stories built around one or many pictures in their work (or as a hobby). These stories differ very little – or not at all – from DST movies which strictly adhere to the characteristics of the genre. Films narrated in one's own voice and taking maximum advantage of the possibilities offered by editing softwares may flood the online media. These films meet the criteria of digital storytelling outlined in the present manual, and at the same time satisfy the public's demand for personal stories.

5. Special cases



The present manual offers a particular approach to the flexible and multipurpose method of digital storytelling. The model of the digital storytelling workshop presented in Chapter 5 may have to be modified according to circumstances. Such influencing factors can be, among others, the amount of the available time, the target group, and the theme of the films.

The trainer and the organizer of the workshop must ascertain already in the organizational phase whether the form and framework presented in this manual are appropriate for the given circumstances, or rather modifications will have to be effected in the course and nature of the training. But unexpected situations can come up during the training too, therefore trainers will have to be flexible and improvise if necessary any time during the process.

In this chapter we will deal with a few such out-of-the-ordinary or unexpected situations and circumstances.

5.1 Digital storytelling in trauma recovery and in therapeutic frameworks

We clearly emphasise that digital storytelling is not a therapeutic approach, although it may have a therapeutic effect on participants. When looking at old photographs, traumatic memories may often surface. If they need to be dealt with, the method of digital storytelling may also be used. It can also support the process of bereavement and make the grief over the loss of a loved one more bearable.

The digital storytelling seems to be applicable as a tool in the therapeutic process, such as in therapies aimed at the recovery of persons who underwent trauma, in cooperation with a trained psychotherapist. It may also help in transforming narratives into stories and sharing them in several fields: through experiencing the improvement of empathy (with oneself), the development of self-reflection, the feeling of being accepted through sharing, and technical learning as empowerment.⁶

There are basically two cases:

- when the digital-storytelling is used in normal sessions, it might have a beneficial effect on participants, and the conductor can be not-qualified, yet be careful in handling personal issues related to trauma, bereavement, sickness of particular relevance...
- when the digital-storytelling is used as part of a therapeutic process, the conductor must be a qualified psychologist and/or psychotherapist

⁶ Dénes Szemán: A digitális történetmesélés (DST) alkalmazási lehetőségei a modernkori rabszolgaság következtében traumatizált emberekkel folytatott segítői munka keretein belül. [Fields of application of digital storytelling (DST) in helping traumatized people due to contemporary slavery.] Manuscript. Anthropolis Association, 2015.

Digital-storytelling in overcoming a traumatic experience

The basic objective of overcoming a traumatic experience is to gain control over traumatic memories.

In case you are not a qualified psychologist and/or psychotherapist, it also must be very clear from the start of your sessions to inform the group that the DST might have beneficial effect but it is not a therapeutic framework.

The beneficial and therapeutic effect of digital storytelling lies in the fact that it may help participants to process and recover from a traumatic experience which was so far hidden, untold or stored in a “trauma bubble”. As we have seen, from an emotional point of view, the making of the film begins before the actual beginning of the workshop, during the preparatory phase. When making their film, the storyteller identifies and articulates the painful memories that create anxiety, in accordance with the strict rules of digital storytelling, and speaks them out before the group.

Through constructing a story out of the traumatic life event, the storyteller also makes it easier to deal with, and finds it a place in their own life. By saying it out loud, they take charge of the memory that came to surface and makes it a part of their identity. If the content which was previously hidden from others or kept a secret, or which caused anxiety, becomes an integral part of the personality, it loses its traumatizing effect.

It comes from the genre of digital storytelling that sometimes a trauma may surface in certain participants during the workshop, which can only be processed with the help of a trained therapist. The trainer must recognize if that is the case and privately suggest to the participant to seek out outside help. The trainer cannot practice therapy, but the process of digital storytelling may have a therapeutic effect on participants, which the trainer may encourage with the necessary empathy and attention.

Digital-storytelling as part of a therapeutic process

It must be very clear the case in which a qualified psychologist and/or psychotherapist decide to use the digital-storytelling as part of its work.

In this case, it must be clarified that the digital-storytelling has not a therapeutic purpose, even if might have some beneficial effect. This because the group itself becomes clients and participants to a therapeutic process; therefore additional measures of safety must be met.

In such specific case, the mandatory actions apply for any therapeutic/DST process must be included, such as:

1- the conductor must be a qualified psychologist or psychotherapist who received specific training in group-

work

2- all the participants must undersign an informed consent and a privacy agreement

3- all the rules of psychological and psychotherapeutic groups are applied such as privacy, discretion, confidentiality

4- the participant at any moment (even before the showcase) has the right to withdraw their digital story from being shown

Psychologist/psychotherapist might use DST to investigate the emotional inner world of participants. The process of recovery from bereavement will remain a psychological process, for which the conductor is totally responsible.

These points require to be clearly underlined:

- a training that applies exclusively the method of digital storytelling cannot be organised for therapeutic purposes if the conductor is not a qualified psychologist or psychotherapist

- if the digital storytelling trainer is not a psychotherapist, no therapeutic purposes are allowed to be undertaken

- if the conductor notices that a participant cannot cope with a problem alone during a non-specifically contracted therapeutic session, i.e. during the training, it is the conductor responsibility to suggest to the participant to call in an outside expert.

The DST tool might be used during various recovery process, during group-work session which are focused to investigate and empower the existential dimension of the self. The process of transforming the narrations into digital stories, and the act of sharing them in the groups might become an interesting tool: especially for younger participants, who are native in the digital era, the process of working together and of sharing a common goal is the proactive way to overcome conscious resistances and censorships. However, the handling of a process which include the investigation of such strong elements of the individual's identity, it is always a process which required particular care and specific qualifications.

In any case, whether the group-session is a general ones, whether it is specifically targeted to specific issues (such as trauma, bereavement, sickness of particular relevance...), the first step is that the group will receive a very clear and explicit explanation of what is the goal to reach.

In determined cases, for examples when the group is targeted specifically on bereavement, it must be clear that the DST will not constitute a solution or a recovery from the grief by itself, but a tool that the qualified.

Once that the group clearly understand and share the common goal, the conductor will pass to explain both the "what to do" and the "how it should be done."

Like in any group-work session, the constant maintenance and monitoring of the group dynamics is precious to encourage the group and its members. A good process must always alternate moments of experience and share of the emotions, with moments of analysis of the process itself, focusing on what was shared, what are the result so far, what are the changes.

The amount and the quality of communication of the emotions within the group experience is a part of the process which might be specifically handled with care. Still, the ability to listen to the emerging needs and emotional statuses of the group members helps the conductor to cope with some blocks and delicate-issues that may arise during the work.

This is not to say that trauma may not appear in your session even if it is not the primary focus of the works. After all the idea for the digital story is up to the participant. If you come across a participant who is working with traumatic or painful material a few things you may want to cover would be that:

- the participant know this will be shared
- the participant feel like they “have” to use this as it is interesting

The main key is vulnerability, within the role of the facilitator you will be in charge of the care of the participants therefore you need to make sure that you yourself are ready for what stories may arrive which is why we also recommend experience with the groups you are working with and relevant information on safeguarding procedures that may be relevant to your particular group (i.e. children or vulnerable adults)

5.2 Digital storytelling in the educational communities

Digital storytelling is a new way to keep up and empower the joy of participating in a community, and especially in an educational community: DST lead participants to feel the joy of learning and inquiring for beneficiaries real needs in a creative procedure.

Digital storytelling can be used as an educational tool for giving beneficiaries the logical space and the conduct them into a path that starts from the strong need of educational communities to share and to interact within a knowledge creation procedure.

Educational communities have a key role in supporting their beneficiaries to face depressing scenarios caused by the period of crisis, due to austerity measures, to lack of inclusion possibilities and to unemployment. Some beneficiaries are socially invisible, due to social conditions (immigration, unemployment), and they need to develop a sense of belonging and also to built up again their identity telling their story.

Educational communities can use DST method for supporting unemployed people in order to analyse their situation and to plan an exit strategy from their vulnerable condition. Facilitators, thanks to DST method, can

help them to bring out their competences and skills. This is really useful for unemployed people in order to take an active role in realizing their personal project.

Especially with immigrants, DST method can be used to help them to express their expectations about their migration project, starting from their own capacities and expertises represented in an original form through pictures or images of their personal story. DST Method can help immigrants to increase their awareness on their own abilities and to focus them on their expectations in order to reach their goals in the host country.

Thanks to DST method, beneficiaries can take an active role in learning, rather than passively receiving information from instructors. With digital storytelling beneficiaries can become knowledge creators, producers, editors, and evaluators and knowledge inter-actors in a more interactive and learning environment.

Educational communities can implement DST method in their educational practices in order to:

- foster the use of ICT into educational and social initiatives
- promote interaction, communication and collaboration in a knowledge community, where the joy of learning, the inquiry and the creativity are the base for the knowledge creation
- empower learning responsibility and autonomy of beneficiaries
- support the social visibility of vulnerable groups
- increase the transgenerational and transnational transfer of knowledge and skills
- contribute in investigating the link between work and one's identity

DST method can be integrated in a new innovative policy of active education based on new and catchy multi-levelled tools accompanied by multi-purposes structured praxis, supports the designing of new tools addressed to teachers and adult learners.

Educational communities can benefit by the implementation of DST method at different levels:

- the promotion of learning autonomy and learning responsibility, implementing an educational method that focuses on knowledge creation, learning outcomes and learning self-management
- the reinforcement of active citizenship of its beneficiaries, making them actively responsible for inquiring and addressing the social changes in the world of work, and by participating in social learning
- the strengthening of educational communities, removing geographical barriers, by the use of 2.0 environments
- the fostering of employability: the implementation of the method in the educational practices related to the topic of work, it could identify the new skills acquired to adopt to the new conditions in the labour market, and

being able to design a relevant career plan

- the development of digital skills, for all beneficiaries of the method both trainers/facilitators and learners
- the on-line dissemination of knowledge through the educational e-platform and the fostering of continuous creation of the knowledge, providing the digital storytelling method as an individually producing knowledge procedure.

The educational capital of the organisations which implements DST method on their educational practices, can be enriched with new knowledge on adult learning and trainers and facilitators will develop training skills in a 2.0 environment. There can use new tools and educational materials, addressed to contemporary needs.

5.3 Digital storytelling in the community building

Self-expression and community building are inseparable in the method of digital storytelling – this fact is indicated even by the title of a book written by Joe Lambert, one of the founders of the genre (Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community)⁷. The original audience of these films, based on autobiographical narratives, is made up of the community of their creators. These films are generally made for public (offline) viewing/screening and discussion (Gács).⁸ Storytellers partake of a common process based on trust which is full of emotions, (initial) anxieties, obstacles to overcome, and a sense of achievement when these are vanquished. Sometimes it is frustrating, sometimes casual, funny or entertaining but it is almost always successful: at the end a personal short film is created and is ready to be shown. The emotional effects experienced together and the mutual trust result in a collective experience which has a special power of group cohesion. Workshops for existing groups (work teams, school classes, local communities, etc.) can be organized mainly with the method's community capacity building in mind.

5.4 Digital storytelling in the topic of work and empowerment

The original objectives of the genre include the empowerment of individuals on the fringes of society through the democratization of the usage of digital technology. The method aims to offer a tool to those who have none so that they can speak about their lives, about themselves, about their identity. Pioneers of the method

7 Joe Lambert: Digital Storytelling. Capturing Lives, Creating Community, Berkeley, California, Digital Diner Press, 2002.

8 Gács Anna: Digitális konfesszió. In: Orbán Katalin – Gács Anna (eds), Emlékkerti kőoroszlán. Írások György Péter 60. születésnapjára. Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem, Bölcsészettudományi Kar, Budapest, 2014, 503–512.

had the ambition from the very beginning to provide technical help to marginalized groups so that they can express themselves and to give them a tool which could eventually help them reintegrate into society.

In his study on the possible therapeutic uses of digital storytelling, Dénes Szemán⁹ puts the method of digital storytelling in the point of intersection of art therapies and technology-based empowerment methods when working with victims of serial abuse and aggression.

The author thinks that digital storytelling is capable of helping people create stories out of their narratives and share them with others, while promoting the experience of growing (self-)compassion, the improvement of self-reflection, the sense of being accepted through sharing and the experience of technical learning as empowerment. Szemán argues that digital storytelling can help the healing of trauma victims in the third phase of overcoming trauma, namely in assisting their reintegration into society, and in putting their stories in a greater perspective. He thinks that the method can be successfully used in psychotherapy after adapting the original methodology, within the framework of a long-term process.

Educational communities can benefit by the implementation of DST method on its practices at different levels:

- the promotion of learning autonomy and learning responsibility, implementing an educational method that focuses, in knowledge creation, learning outcomes and learning self-management
- the reinforcement of active citizenship of its beneficiaries, making them actively responsible for inquiring and addressing the social changes in the world of work, participating in social learning
- the strengthening of educational communities, removing geographical barriers, by the use of 2.0 environments
- the employability fostering: working in the implementation of the method in the educational practices related to the topic of work, it could identify the new skills acquired to adopt to the new conditions in the labour market, and being able to design a relevant career plan
- the development of digital skills, for all beneficiaries of the method both trainers/facilitators and learners
- the on-line dissemination of knowledge, by the educational e-platform and the fostering of continuous creation of the knowledge , providing the digital storytelling method as an individually producing knowledge procedure.

9 Dénes Szemán: A digitális történetmesélés (DST) alkalmazási lehetőségei a modernkori rabszolgaság következtében traumatizált emberekkel folytatott segítői munka keretein belül. [Fields of application of digital storytelling (DST) in helping traumatized people due to contemporary slavery.] Manuscript. Anthropolis Association, Budapest, 2015.

Unemployed people live in a difficult situation due to the distance, increasing every day, between them and the labour market: through DST method they can acquire 2.0 skills to spend in the labour market and improve the use of IT tools. Educational communities can use DST Method as a guiding tool to support unemployed people in bring out their formal and informal competences acquired in their previous jobs and their own expectations in the research of a new job.

Especially with adolescents who have just completed their educational path, DST method can be utilized by facilitators to inquire about their expectations related to their future employment in a creative procedure, starting from their abilities and competences both formal and informal.

This can be very useful for facilitators for identify some beneficiaries' expectations and skills, which hardly come out in a guidance interview. Adolescents people through DST method can feel the joy of learning and acquire new competences that they can spend in the labour market.

5.5 Improving self-image in case of problems of communication and/or self-expression

Each true story told in the first person singular is at the same time an expression of an aspect of identity. DST short films are autobiographical stories told and shared with others through digital technology. Through the short film we step in front of a narrower or broader community with a story of which we can at the least say that this is the one story we thought worth telling from among our countless personal stories. How “deep” this story is, or to what extent it reveals our inner, personal world, is another question, and answers can vary from individual to individual. But it will always reflect some aspect of our identity or at least our relation to it (at the given moment).

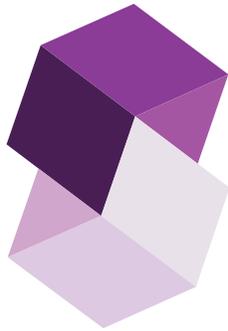
Our digital short films are therefore identity stories. When we choose the story we want to tell we are forced to think our lives over and identify the most interesting, important or even decisive events in it, which we will insert into our self-image as a closed, coherent whole in the process of forming the story, and which at the end we will stand by before the community through sharing. Therefore digital storytelling is an excellent opportunity to consciously reflect upon ourselves and to “authenticate” the result of the process by the community as well.

In certain cases we cannot expect storytellers to write or put what they want to say in a concise form. This may be due to linguistic difficulties, but also to communicative or writing disorders. If that is the case, we can work with the storyteller individually, bypassing the storytelling circle, using the guided interview technique. We can start a free conversation about a personal object or a photo. Studying a personal photo is an easy way to get the storytelling started. During the interview a special moment of the storyteller's life may emerge, which is worth pursuing further. The whole conversation should be recorded – naturally with the storyteller's prior permission –, with a high-fidelity sound recorder or dictaphone in proper circumstances. It is the trainer

who will edit the story from the recorded material after the interview, which is complete in itself and reflects the personality of the storyteller. The finished story will then be shown to the storyteller, whose personal photographs the trainer uses to complete and illustrate the digital story.

After the first interview it can be practical to try to focus only on the chosen story and ask purposefully about it during the subsequent talk. This should naturally be recorded as well. (It is possible that the second time the storyteller is less enthusiastic about their story; in that case we can still use the recorded material of the first interview.)

6. Digital storytelling in practice



In the following pages we will give a detailed presentation of how a digital storytelling workshop is structured and the way it can help participants to find, write and produce their stories on film. In doing so, we will focus on the framework of the workshops, the skills required for trainers, as well as the necessary technical and organizational preparations. Although readers will find a step-by-step description of the approach in this chapter, the process itself requires a spot-on assessment of the situation, improvisation, flexibility, and an early recognition of whether or not the method presented here is applicable to the groups or individuals in question. Chapter 7 will outline a few options for such cases.

6.1 The role of the trainer

Anyone can become a digital storyteller but in order to be able to find, write and produce the right story, an outside helper is needed. It is the trainer's task to help participants find the story which is important to them and may be valuable or instructive for others too – but which may be deeply hidden – and then narrate it as a complete story with their own words so that it can be made into a sincere and personal short film.

The task of trainers is complex. In the course of developing and dramatizing the stories, they may often have to address sensitive, difficult or psychologically taxing situations, and in the meantime they also have to maintain group cohesion and coordinate processes of group dynamics. Naturally, technical help is also necessary during these trainings, but in most cases this is provided by a separate trainer. For a group of 8 participants two trainers are suggested who can work in pair mentoring and supervising each other. The method allows for storytellers not to do the technical work by themselves, but to finalize the film with the help of a trainer.

The complexity of the process makes it obvious that at least one trainer is needed to follow the work of the group (of not more than 7-10 people) all along the process, from whom participants can get constant help and instructions. The trainer also facilitates the making of the film from the first meeting up to the collective screening and the subsequent evaluation.

The personal nature and sincerity are the two most important elements of digital storytelling; therefore it is absolutely vital to create an atmosphere of trust within the group which allows for even the most personal contents to surface. In order to achieve this, participants have to be informed of the framework of the training, beginning with the most important aspect: confidentiality. This means that all the information shared during the training will remain within the group, and it cannot be disclosed to any third party unless the storyteller expressly wishes it otherwise.

Although digital storytelling in itself is not a therapeutic method, in some cases it can have therapeutic effects. Therefore the trainer – even if not a trained psychologist – must have the appropriate emotional attitude, empathy and insight into human nature to be able to deal with unexpected situations. He or she

must react to problems arising, has to channel group dynamics, deal with tensions and conflicts. (These issues will be dealt with in detail in Chapter 6.)

Apart from being sensitive to others, the trainer must also have good communication and writing skills to be able to effectively help participants in writing and dramatizing their stories. But it should be done in a way that participants can still identify with their stories and they should not feel that the trainer prevails over them or enforces his/her opinions on them. The trainer must assist the writing and refining of the stories using subtle methods and giving valuable advice as to what could be highlighted, or even left out of the narration (oftentimes applying the principle of “less is more”), while leaving its train of thought and style intact. It is also a challenge to convince participants that the relatively strict limits will make their film stronger.

The technical realization of films is usually assisted by another trainer who works in close cooperation with the leader of the training and naturally with the participants. This trainer’s task is assisting the technical realization of the short-film concepts: recording the voiceovers, digitizing the photos and editing the short films. It is important for the technical trainer to have a high command of digital editing software programs and troubleshooting skills, and at the same time to be able to assist participants in dramatizing their films with the right cinematic tools. During trainings technical assistance can be of two sorts: on the one hand, participants can have a basic technical training and thus make their own films with some trainer support; on the other, it can be the trainer who makes the film on the basis of the storyboard, with the active involvement of the participant. The role of the technical trainer – like that of the leader of the training – is to give advice. We should let participants feel that the film was made based on their own ideas and help them realise it, and we should by no means enforce our own cinematic concepts and solutions on them.

Although the present manual gives a step-by-step description of a time-tested method of digital storytelling which has been used by many, life can produce many situations in which trainers will have to act differently from the written form. If that is the case, the course of the training needs to be modified. Such cases will be detailed in Chapter 7.

6.2 Participants

Digital storytelling trainings can be organised for relatively younger children as well, but experience shows that a really intense individual work is possible with participants from 14-16 years of age. The method of DST can be applied with primary school children, but in that case the structure of the training described in this manual has to be somewhat modified (such examples are given in Chapter 7). In adult workshops the ideal number of people in the group is 5-8. If it is more than that, we will have to split the group and have more than one trainer to provide adequate time and attention to each participant.

Although experience shows that at the end of trainings participants usually feel they have gained an important

experience or even got help in solving a problem in a specific life situation, it may still be difficult to recruit participants for a training in advance. The reasons are, firstly, the time required to complete the training and secondly, the fact that the method is relatively unknown. The organizers of the DST training have to invest time and energy into the recruitment of participants.

Our job becomes easier if we manage to persuade an already existing group of people – for instance, a club or a hobby group – to participate in the training together and make their films along a common theme.

Such groups can be a teaching staff, a group of workers in different kind of social and educational field, a subject interest group, a club, a study circle, people interested in the local history or local memory, or sharing the same problem – e.g., because they are immigrants, etc.

Persuasion can be helped by a short presentation that attracts attention, in which we may briefly explain the aim, results, and applicability of the training, and show some short films of varying subjects and tones. It is worthwhile to select the films carefully, and not to show exclusively dramatic or exclusively funny films. We should give correct preliminary information and should not raise expectations we cannot meet.

With whatever participant group you work with, your experience of working with these groups is vital, some trainers may struggle if they are bringing both a new model of work and working with a new type of group.

To reinforce the conductor self-confidence and authoritativeness, we suggest for your first few workshops to possibly work with the groups you have most experience with i.e. children or adult learners.

6.2.1 Digital storytelling in a group

There are specific situations (e.g., because participants are too young) when the stories cannot – or would be very difficult to – be produced as a result of individual work. We can organize a workshop where group cohesion is given more emphasis than the articulation of individual, personal stories. We can do group work with work teams with the purpose of team building, where the goal is joint problem solving, or in trainings aimed at larger groups of children or classes.

If we are planning to work with children during the training, we must take into consideration the degree of depth, concentration and individual work allowed by the given age group. In the case of younger children (6-12 year-olds) it is worthwhile to think in terms of group work, common story development and story building. The work in a children's group can be supervised by a teacher of the class as well as an outside trainer. If it is a trainer, a teacher may be needed to cooperate and assist the trainer, strengthening trust in the children and managing eventual difficulties. But it is stimulating to have an outsider and a neutral trainer to interact with the tightly-knit group.

If we decide on working as a group, we can assign roles in advance, taking into consideration the skills and

characteristics of the participants. One person can be the scriptwriter, another one the storyteller, a third one the cameraperson (the person making the photos), a fourth the director of the film to be made, etc. The story can be fictitious, invented by the participants – they will very often mix their real experiences into the story anyway. If we do the storytelling as a group, the visual world of the short films cannot be built on personal photos therefore they have to be produced – also as a result of a collective process. Part of the collective work is creating a creative storyboard, and based on that, taking photos. These can be photos taken on the spot – they can even be staged – drawings, collages or photographed scenes made with prearranged materials (dough, building bricks, Lego, Duplo, figures, sticks, etc.), or any combination of these. But not only fictitious stories can be produced during the group work. The group can focus on narrating a collective experience (camping or travelling together, the realisation of a common project, etc.) or on articulating a problem. Besides the original benefits of digital storytelling (improving linguistic and communicative competence, IT skills, empathy), the creation of a collective story can help develop interpersonal and cooperation skills within the group.

6.2.2 Digital storytelling in pairs

We can make digital stories in pairs too; in this case we will be able to work in a more in-depth way. We can use the method of working in pairs with secondary school students (12-18 year-olds), when for instance the DST film sums up the results of a curricular or extra-curricular research, intended for educational purposes.

Pairs can be made up of students of differing ages; this method – when an older child works with a younger one, or even a grandparent with a grandchild – can be very effective and instructive for both parties. The telling and invoking of stories based on old photographs can bring the past nearer to younger generations, who then can help adapting the story on film and leaving a trace, applying their technical skills. On the one hand, it can bring the two generations closer together, on the other it can make a family or local story easier to understand or more alive and personal.

6.2.3 Digital storytelling as an individual

It can happen that due to the sensitivity of certain subjects or linguistic or intellectual shortcomings, we are unable to hold a storytelling circle in the usual way. In such cases – similar to what has been said in the “Problems with communication and/or self-expression” section – the story has to be explored individually with the participant. A closer collaboration is necessary than the usual trainer approach and the participant has to be assisted in building up their story and putting it into words. It is worthwhile to talk with the person in connection with an object or photograph which is important to them, thus uncovering the story and background of the storyteller, and then put the story into words together.

It is generally recommended to provide the digital storytelling training in the mother tongue of participants, as people are obviously most confident in their own language, in which they can express themselves in the most adequate and colourful way. However there are situations in which the story has to be written and told in a different language than one's mother tongue (e.g., in the case of films made by refugees). Individual help is necessary here too, in putting the story into words in an authentic but still rather simple way. We should not use expressions that are unknown to storytellers or difficult to pronounce, and we should try to adjust the story to their vocabulary. Films made this way may need to be subtitled for better intelligibility.

6.2.4 Drawings, pictures

Drawings can be used instead of personal photos in the creative process not only with children but with adults too. There are situations when the dramaturgy of the story requires that we illustrate our story not exclusively with live photos. In other cases drawings can make the expression of certain social problems, delicate situations or conflicts easier while preserving the anonymity of the storyteller, and still making a sincere and authentic film. This method can be used – among others – with persons who were abused or with crime victims, and also to faithfully expose incidents of human rights violations.

It can also happen that there is only one drawing, picture or photo at our disposal to make our film, or – in very rare cases – if we want to preserve the authenticity of the story it is ill-advised to use more than one illustrative photo. Then the trainer may use their cinematographic and technical knowledge (e.g., highlighting certain details, applying digital effects, etc.) in order to make that single picture “alive” and capable of conveying the message of the film in an enjoyable way for the viewers.

6.3 The structure of the digital storytelling training

At the beginning of the workshop the structure and framework of the training have to be presented. Participants should be informed of the timetable and the basic preparations in advance. In the introductory part (Step 1) we should give all the relevant information about the training and we should stick to it during the whole process. We should also stipulate basic rules that both protect and help participants.

6.3.1 Time frame

We have already emphasised the importance of the time factor. The digital storytelling workshop is a time consuming process, and in order to be able to produce genuinely sincere and personal stories it is important to ensure the required time. The entire training requires a total of 22-24 hours, which – according to demand – can take place in two or more days in succession (e.g., during a long week-end) or can be split into

smaller units, e.g., weekly meetings. In case we do not provide technical training during the workshop, in other words the making of the films will be done by the technical trainer, the required time will be less: the basic training requires 12-13 hours, after which the maker of the film will individually work together with the experienced trainer for an extra 2-4 hours, depending on preliminary skills, to make the film.

6.3.2 The venue

When choosing the venue of the workshop the main consideration is to provide the opportunity to work undisturbed, without unexpected or distracting external stimuli. The confidential and sincere atmosphere of the storytelling circle should not be disturbed by comings and goings in the room. For this group session a table is required for participants to sit around it and to be able to see each other. But some people may need the lonely atmosphere of creation in order to be able to write a personal story; therefore we should provide some possibility of separation (e.g., a table turned away from the others). For the sound recording, the ideal room is as soundproof as possible, but with no echo and a peaceful atmosphere (for further details see section 5.4). The projection of the films presented in the introductory part and at the end of the process requires appropriate darkening. Before the meeting, the acoustics of the room have to be verified as well as visibility of the screen. The room should not be too sunny or too noisy either.

We should never organise a workshop at an unknown, unverified venue. It should be checked well in advance of the event so that we can modify certain things if necessary. Once the workshop has begun the venue should not be changed.

6.3.3 The technical aspect

While during the storytelling circle no technical equipment should be used, the making of the film itself naturally requires appropriate equipment. To write the story we will need a desktop or a laptop with word-processing software on it and a printer. To digitize the photos we will need a high resolution flatbed scanner, but we should also have a camera with us. For the introduction and the concluding projection we will need a projector and a sound system. To actually make the film and edit it, we can choose from a wide range of software. The important thing here is to choose the program which the trainer is most familiar with, and thus is able to teach to participants and assist them in using it with confidence. If participants are using their own computers, trainers should check their capacity, technical parameters, and whether the selected editing software (either available online or installed on the computers) works appropriately. For the editing we should use good quality headphones and an external mouse.

We have to be sure that the room is equipped with the basic technical requests: having enough plugs for the laptops and other electrical equipments. However the internet is not required for a successful digital

storytelling workshop, a working internet network is needed for some cases (finding some pictures or clarify data).

6.3.4 Rules

The most important task of the trainer is to create an atmosphere of trust. To this end participants will agree rules of confidentiality: no information whatsoever passed in the circle can get out of the circle to avoid any risk of harm to participants or others. As the shared informations are confidential, the trainer must advice participant that in case of disrespect of this confidentiality rule, the trainer must report and, in extreme cases, interrupt the session.

During the story circle no sound or visual recording should be made and mobile phones should be switched off.

The trainer should see to it that everyone gets equal opportunity to speak. We should never rate or qualify anything that was stated or stated during the story circle or the whole process, including the films produced.

Neither should we judge anyone or anything that was said. No fellow group member should be criticized for their personality, character, abilities, or deeds. It is the trainer's responsibility to create an environment which is based on mutual confidence and acceptance of each other. Again, the trainer must advice participant that in case of disrespect of this rule, the trainer must report and, in extreme cases, interrupt the session.

6.4 The digital storytelling workshop step by step

Digital storytelling has a wide range of characteristics, possible uses, applications, and sources worldwide. The various well-known and widely used methods can sometimes even be in contradiction with each other. The present manual is based on the book written by Daniel Meadows and the team of Capture Wales for the BBC. The end result of their method, described in this publication, is an approximately two-minute short film based on a personal narrative, in which the creator of the film tells their story in their own voice and uses personal photos to illustrate it. Moving pictures are to be usually avoided, unless the story explicitly needs them; the same stands for music, which can often be distracting. Exceptions can be pieces of music which are significant from the point of view of the story or the storyteller. Apart from an in-depth description of the methodology, the present manual does not attempt to provide technical training due to the fast-changing IT environment and software programs; it rather gives guidelines and lists useful sources for the creation of the film.

Step 1 – Introduction

In the introductory part would-be storytellers get acquainted with the concept and methodology of digital storytelling, the framework of the stories and the process of the digital production, and they watch a few sample films. The introduction is also an opportunity for storytellers to get acquainted with each other and the trainer in a more informal environment. This presupposes a suitable milieu. During the introduction any fears and anxieties arising in the storytellers regarding the process have to be dissipated. Participants should be given ample opportunity to get answers to all their questions. It is important to dissipate all negative sentiments (e.g., lack of self-confidence, fear, anxiety, etc.) surrounding the storytelling or the filmmaking process.

The aims of the introduction are the following:

- to present the elements of digital storytelling
- to describe the process and the timetable in clear terms
- to make clear what the next steps of the process are, such as tasks to be completed for the next session (e.g., when to select the photos, when to write the narration)
- to explain basic legal and copyright questions
- to outline the end of the process and the afterlife of the films (saving, publishing, creators' right of disposal)

It is very useful if either before or after the introduction – depending on the timetable of the digital storytelling workshop –, but in any case before the story circle, we play some kind of ice-breaking game with the participants in order to dissipate inhibitions, tensions and to cheer up the atmosphere (It does not matter whether they already know each other or not.)

Step 2 – The storytelling circle

The process of writing begins with the story circle. This phase is especially important so that the participants can form a mutually supportive and trustful circle in which the intimate world of storytelling can manifest itself. The storytelling circle must be adapted to the needs and attitudes of the participants. It usually lasts for 1.5-2.5 hours. The aim of the story circle is for participants to work up the draft of their story from which they can later create the script, i.e. the narrative of the film.

The location of the story circle should be a relatively separate, cosier room without any external disturbances. Participants should be able to make themselves comfortable, see each other well and have enough table space. Seats should not necessarily be arranged in a circle, they can be arranged in a triangle or a square.

There should be no disturbing external source of noise (noisy corridor, street) nearby and no distracting external visual effects.

The basic principles of the storytelling circle are the following:

- each and every participant should take an active part in it, including the trainer and members of the technical support (if there are any)
- nobody should feel sorry or apologize if there is something they do not understand, is beyond their abilities or confidence
- the essence of the story circle is trust: whatever is said there cannot leave the room
- participants do not judge each other or each other's work.

The story circle is the basis upon which the whole process is built; this is when participants get to know each other, eventually share information about themselves, and find the story of the short film to be produced during the workshop. It is essential that participants should be happy to share their stories with one another. The story circle dissipates the tension between participants not knowing each other in a playful way, and helps getting acquainted.

There may be participants in the story circle who have absolutely no idea of a story they could share with others, or they think they have nothing interesting to tell. Therefore the storytelling circle is not just about playfulness and having a good time before starting work.

It plays a crucial role in creating trust so that participants can open up and find their story by trusting and inspiring one another. Those who already have their story ready when they come to the story circle will not simply share them with others but can gain ideas as to how to interpret them in novel ways or how to improve the narration.

Although the atmosphere of the story circles is informal, the leader should keep track of the available time and the tasks to be completed. By the end of the circle, ideally all participants should find the stories they want to tell and have the first few drafts of the storyboards ready, on the basis of which the stories can be elaborated in writing and the voiceovers recorded.

The arrangement of the scene

It is important that the selected location should be quiet and well-separated, in which participants can be certain to be undisturbed. The trainer should arrange seats – in a circle, triangle, or square – so that everyone has an equal chance to participate. On the one hand, the trainer moderates all the different exercises, but on the other, they also participate actively in the different ice-breaking and storytelling games. The trainer

reinforces the self-confidence of participants and at the end evaluates the result of the common work. It is important to maintain a casual and playful atmosphere free of pressure. In this phase there should be no technical equipments – laptops, digital, visual or sound recording devices, etc. – on the tables and mobile phones should be switched off.

Preparing for the story circle

The trainer has to prepare the following props (depending on the selected games):

- pens/pencils and paper
- a whiteboard
- everyday objects in a bag (game 5)
- a box of long matches (for gas stoves) and a glass of water (game 10)
- story strips (game 13)

Storytellers should bring the following props:

- 3 objects which are important to them (this can also be a photo or photos used for the storytelling) and which have a personal story to them
- in case they have already written it, a printout of the draft of their story

The games

The word “game” should be used with caution when introducing the story circle because it can be scary, intimidating or even alienating for some. If an atmosphere of trust has already been created between participants, we can talk about games more freely. The first four games described below are ice-breakers which can help in creating the right atmosphere and in getting to know each other better. They can be used to overcome inhibitions and to help participants open up to the storytelling. The essence of all games is being relaxed and having fun, not competitiveness. The list of games below offers more options than are needed for an average story circle. The trainer can select the ones they like, taking into consideration the available time.

Game 1: Who is sitting next to you? (ice-breaker)

It is an easy and obvious way of getting to know each other. The trainer tells participants to have a chat

with the person sitting next to them, thus getting to know them in a more informal way and without being self-conscious, unlike if they presented themselves in front of the whole group. These casual talks help participants become more relaxed for the following storytelling. After a few minutes of chatting, everyone presents the person sitting next to them to the whole group.

Game 2: Tell me about your name (ice-breaker)

Members of the group form pairs, preferably with persons whom they do not know. Everyone will tell a story to their partner about their own name (e.g., about the origins or meaning of their first name or family name, or why they got that first name, or about a situation that happened to them in connection with their name). We should leave a few minutes for participants to tell their stories to their partners, then the group forms a circle again. Partners present each other to the group based on the stories they heard.

Game 3: Name memory game (ice-breaker)

This game usually works well with younger participants. A member of the circle presents themselves and adds one piece of information their name that they are willing to share or thinks is particularly characteristic of their personality. (It can be an adjective put before the name). The person sitting next repeats the name and the information, then does the same. The next participant has to repeat the first two names and characteristics, then add their own name and characteristic information, and so on, until the last member has to repeat all the names and information connected to them.

Example:

John says: “Your name is Mary and you like hiking, you are Peter and you play tennis, Katie, you like dressing up in funny clothes, and I’m John and I hate spiders.”

In one variation of the game, players add an adjective before their names, which begins with the same letter as their name. The next person in turn has to repeat all the names together with their adjectives in the right order and continue the list with their own name and the adjective added before it.

Game 4: The game of unrelated words

In this game participants have to make up a story from unrelated words. Each participant writes down, draws or says out loud a word that comes to their mind. The trainer collects them and sticks or writes them on the board so that everyone can see all the words. Then each participant writes a coherent story, using all the words on the board. Generally, the stories will be completely different. The quality of the stories is

unimportant; the more surreal or far-off a story, the more interesting. This exercise greatly helps in making participants more relaxed, and at the same time demonstrates the different characteristics of a short story of this genre (length, structure, simplicity).

Example:

Words: apple, glasses, clock, long, car, pink, wood, shoe

Mrs Wood glanced at the clock and was relieved to see that she only had another ten minutes before the school bell rang. She was eager to eat the pink lady apple that she had found rolling around in the back of her car along with the shoe she'd lost earlier in the week and her purse that unfortunately had no money in it. She looked at the apple and wondered how long it had been there for. She was starving and with no money had little choice but to eat it. "Perhaps the time has come for a trip to the opticians" she said to herself, "maybe I need glasses".

Game 5: Mysterious objects

We ask all the members of the group to randomly choose something from the bag which contains everyday objects and which the trainer prepared earlier. Then everyone tells a memory, a feeling, or a story that particular object evoked. If someone chose an object and nothing comes to mind about it, it is better to choose another one which triggers something personal to say. Meanwhile the trainer helps and encourages participants to find their connection to the given object.

The items in the bag should be objects connected to everyday situations, which are susceptible to evoking some memory. For instance, a toy car, a remote control, a watering pot, a sachet of instant soup, a train ticket, etc. The trainer should highlight the more powerful parts in the stories and with their questions help find weaker points and unfold the story.

Example:

The storyteller takes a ticket from the bag.

"This reminds me of a trip I made to Edinburgh when I was little. I was excited about going because I'd never been to Scotland before. We spent a lovely day visiting the Castle and watching tartan cloth being made. My Dad ordered Haggis at lunchtime because it was a Scottish delicacy but he didn't like it".

The Trainer asks questions about the visit and how they got home.

The storyteller is able to add:

“We got the train home but were very delayed because the man in the seat opposite became ill and had to be taken to hospital. My Dad and I stayed with him on the journey because he was travelling alone. Our trip to Scotland lasted longer than we thought”.

We see that with judiciously asked questions even more interesting details of the story are revealed.

Game 6: Childhood toys

The trainer asks participants to think of a very much loved, desired or even very much hated childhood toy of theirs. If everyone has found the object in question among their memories, we ask them to tell a story connected to that object.

This exercise can evoke many stories from storytellers. If we place the story into childhood, storytellers will often open up more easily and let others in on the details of their lives. This exercise may reveal a personality who used to be a rebel, a passive, an exploring or a leading personality. It may also demonstrate that older generations had much fewer toys and therefore they treasured them more.

Example:

“My most precious possession as a child was my bike. It was my means of transport, my ability to escape and explore and it represented freedom for me. It wasn’t new when I first had it, my Mum and Dad bought it at an auction and it had been well used. It didn’t have gears and the chain was a bit loose but it didn’t matter I loved it because it was mine. I would spend hours fiddling with it, adjusting the brakes and pumping up the tyres, and it was cleaned very regularly. I remember spending the whole of one day repainting it dark blue, and it looked fantastic.

I was only eight when I had that bike but we had some brilliant adventures together. A bottle of water and a bag of crisps, my friend Clare and I regularly used to ride twenty miles to town. If my Mum had known she would have had a fit. But like Clare my bike was a good friend, it never shared my secrets”.

Game 7: Personal photos

Photos are personal objects and people interpret them in a very personal way. It can be very instructive if storytellers bring an especially important photo with them to the workshop, and then they swap photos with another member, thus ending up with a new and unknown photo in their hands. Each participant has to make up a story that they think is connected to the unknown photo. After everyone has described the photo and told the story they made up, photos get back to their owners who then tell the real story of the photo.

This is an interesting exercise to illustrate how the same object – in this case the content of a photo – can be approached in different ways. It also gives an opportunity to storytellers to let their imaginations loose in order to make an unknown photo alive.

Game 8: Our decisions

Participants are asked to write a story about a particularly important decision in their lives. They can tell their story however they like but it cannot be longer than 50 words. The exercise has two purposes. On the one hand it highlights the importance of past decisions; participants can think over how a previous decision affects their lives today. On the other hand, it helps put our thoughts in a concise and purposeful way. After having put the stories on paper, participants read them to each other.

Game 9: The very first time

Storytellers get 10 minutes to evoke something that happened to them for the first time in their lives (first kiss, first flight, first drink, etc.). They draw up, and then write down for themselves the story of that first occasion and how it affected their future lives or those of others. Then participants read the stories out loud for the others.

Game 10: Let's play with fire

The essence of the game is a concentrated, pure narration, a composed message created in a short time. Participants have 10 minutes to prepare their stories and then tell about their passions. This can be a person, a cause, a sentiment, or anything or anyone towards which or whom the storyteller has a strong feeling. Then participants can tell their stories with a burning match in their hand: they have to finish the story before the match burns out. The goal is to tell a story in a concentrated and concise way, with an eye on the flame of the match at the same time. If the match burns out or is extinguished before the story ends, the storyteller has to stop the narration. The burning match helps to concentrate on the essence and to narrate the story in a straightforward manner.

Attention: The trainer has to watch out for fire security, and make sure not to trigger a fire-alarm system in the room with the match's smoke. Storytellers should have a glass of water in front of themselves in order to be able to drop the match in it before it burns their fingers. It is best to use longer type matches, suitable for gas ovens.

Never use this activity with children.

Game 11: Love/hate

Participants make a list of the ten things they love most and another of the ten things they hate most, which they then read out to other members of the group. Participants have to use their voice to express the sentiment they feel toward the objects in question. The lists may contain the most diverse set of things (a certain feeling, a quality, an event, etc.). With the help of this exercise a list can be created, the elements of which may even suggest ideas to eventual stories, and the trainer can help elaborate their details.

The exercise helps create group cohesion and at the same time is an effective way to prepare for the recording of the storytelling during which participants will also have to convey sentiments and emotional tension with their voice.

Game 12: Three objects

About one week before the training (at the introduction), the trainer asks participants to choose three objects at home, which have a personal story to them (the objects can be photos as well).

In the story circle the trainer asks a participant to choose one object out of the three he/she brought to the training, and without telling the related story, to pass it on to the person sitting next to them (as in Game 7). This way the objects move one place and each participant has to write the story of the unknown object received.

After the fictitious stories are told, the owners of the objects tell the real stories related to the objects. (It is practical if the same story will be the basis of the future DST film.)

Attention: The game requires preliminary preparation on the part of participants.

Game 13: Story cube

This game is based on a commercial game. Rory's story cubes are dice which have different images or icons on their sides. (There is a basic set of dice and different thematic series.) One box contains nine different cubes.

Participants, one after the other, throw all the dice to generate 9 random images and then use these to invent a story, using all 9 elements in any order they like. (The story can be fictitious, fable-like, or even a real story taken from life.)

Attention: Different versions of this game can be purchased at, e.g., <https://www.storycubes.com/> or in

bigger toy stores.

Step 3 – The writing

By the end of the story circle all the participants have to reach the point where they find the story they want to tell, and in an ideal case they also prepare a first written draft of it. After making the necessary modifications and – if need be – consulting with the trainer, the final and typewritten story is ready to be read out. For those storytellers who have problems with reading, there are alternative solutions. For example, telling their story in an interview situation (see Chapter 7). In such cases it has to be made clear to participants by the end of the story circle that they have the option to tell their stories within an interview, so that they can prepare themselves for it.

The script

By the end of this work phase a simple but clear script has to be finished, which is actually the story itself, or the narrative of the film, which the storyteller will read out themselves at the recording phase. In the script it is best to think in simple, short sentences, taking care of using expressions and idioms characteristic of the storyteller and avoiding phrases which are strange to their personality. It is important for the storyteller to feel that at the end the story is their own, regardless of the amount of help and advice they received during the process. It is worthwhile to read the text out loud before finalizing it. The text should be between 180 and 320 words.

Basically everybody should be allowed to spend the necessary time to develop their story. If possible, we should time the workshop in a way that storytellers have the time – literally – to sleep on their story before finalizing it. The many sentiments and experiences that come up during the storytelling circle often inspires storytellers to write their stories, but still ample time should be left for developing, modifying and finalizing the text.

If necessary, the trainer should assist with asking the appropriate questions in order to elucidate what the story should focus on, which are the superfluous plotlines that should be left out (often the exact date, place or a lot of other marginal circumstances are unimportant, which the storyteller however thinks essential) in order for the story to be clear, linear and easy to follow and picture.

We should help not only those storytellers who are stuck with their stories but those who are overconfident as well. There are people who are sure of their work, of their stories on paper, but these writings are often not well thought-out or sincere enough. In such cases, just as with stuck storytellers, the best way to help is asking purposeful and relevant questions to fine-tune the stories in a way that we do not directly interfere with the writings.

Useful tips for the storywriting¹⁰

“Getting the story down on paper – how to start

- Don't sit about looking at a blank sheet. Give yourself a time limit and just write. Don't judge at the beginning.
- Remember that spoken words are only heard once, in contrast to the written word which can be re-examined. Clarity is important. Avoid repetitions unless it is deliberate. Find other words. Don't use literary expressions or connecting phrases like “as I mentioned before”. They will jar on the ear.
- Find your own voice. Don't imitate. Be aware of how you like to use words and have the confidence to use your own idiom.
- Picture what you are writing about in as much detail as possible – feelings, colours, textures, smells.
- This will influence how you write.
- You don't have lots of words so plunge in. There's no need to tell the story in a linear way, even though it will require a beginning, middle and end. Find what's most arresting and start there. It may be from any point in your narrative.
- Don't get too attached to the exact facts. Don't let them get in the way of the truth.

Refining and completing the story

- Try your story on others and get feedback. What works and what doesn't? Are you being clear? Have you left out something important that was there originally?
- Less is more. Expect to re-write and re-write. Edit rigorously. What is the essence of your story? Attempt to express that in one sentence. Now make sure that you have nothing unnecessary. Does everything move the story on?
- Avoid cliché and banal sentiments. Phrases like “he's always there for me” are exhausted. Look for a fresh form of words.
- Generalities are lazy and close things down. The specific, well observed detail is what will resonate.
- Remember that whilst an anecdote can meander, a story needs structure. The end needs to have

¹⁰ Recommendations of Gilly Adams, director of the BBC's writer development unit at BBC Wales, for getting the story down on paper.

some connection with the beginning to be satisfying. Think of stepping stones. When you reach the other bank of the river you should still be able to see the bank from which you started your journey.

- And the stepping stones are important. They are the steps that build the story. Make sure you haven't missed a vital step out.

- Treat your story with respect, as though it were the best story in the world.”

The storyboard

It can be very helpful, so it is recommended that we make a so-called storyboard, based on our script and photos. This is a simple two-column table, one column of which has the text divided according to a certain rhythm – usually sentence by sentence –, paired with the appropriate photos in the other. The storyboard makes the proportion of pictures vs. the text in the story visible. When picturing and drafting their story storytellers often miscalculate the amount of necessary and available pictures, but after finishing the storyboard it becomes clear whether there are enough photos for the whole length of the film and whether they are distributed proportionately, according to their dramatic weight. In general a couple of sentences are the right amount of text for one photo, thus allowing for an evenly-paced, easy to follow film to be made. One may naturally deviate from this guideline if the emotional rhythm and the dramaturgy of the film make it necessary.

Besides the narration, the storyboard may contain other sound elements or noises, too.

Readers will find a sample storyboard in the Appendix.

Step 4 – The recording

The voice recording

The technical part of digital storytelling begins with the voice recording. Both the technical quality and the “subjective feel” of the recorded voice are crucial for the success of digital storytelling. The trainer should make sure to find an appropriate venue for the reading out and recording of the stories.

In order to find the right venue for the voice recording it is worth knowing a few practical tricks. We should try to find a room where the furniture consists of soft, upholstered armchairs and seats, where there is wall-to-wall carpet and many curtains, if possible. These can help a lot in absorbing the echo. We can test the room by clapping and listening to the echo being absorbed. If our clapping does not echo at all, the result is perfect.

We should exclude external noises as much as possible and make sure there is no noisy street, crowded foot-path, corridor or electric devices in stand-by mode nearby, or an elevator next door. Everything which is audible for the human ear will be audible on the sound recording too, diminishing the audibility of the narration. If the text is not recorded in the proper circumstances, it can ruin the whole film. If we have no other option, we can make a fairly good recording even inside a car if we park it in a quiet place and shut all the doors and windows. In any case, we should always make a test recording before the actual recording of the voiceover in order to verify its clarity and quality.

During recording time, mobile phones should be completely switched off (mute is not enough as the radio waves generated by the phones may interfere with our recording) and put the farthest away from the voice recorder. Or even better, we should not bring them in the room at all if possible. The voice recorder should be placed the farthest off from all kinds of electromagnetic devices (switched-on computer, telephone, radio, modem, etc.), because they – just like mobiles – can cause noises inaudible for the human ear but very much audible in the recording.

We should never record alone. There should always be someone – a technical trainer, if possible, – who is listening through earphones to whether there are any external noises or electric disturbances inaudible for the ear. We should give a copy of the printout of the text to our partner too, so that they can follow it while we are reading it and can tell us if we made a mistake which is only noticeable to someone else.

The assisting trainer makes sure to follow the text and calls the storyteller's attention to any mistakes. It is not a problem if the storyteller cannot read the text without mistakes in one sitting. This is not the point, as mistakes can be nicely corrected during the edit. To correct mistakes we should repeat the wrong sentence or paragraph, otherwise there may be a skip in the text during the audio editing. It is always best to mark the mistaken parts on paper too, this way we will surely remember where to correct when editing the recording. The trainer also follows the text as an "external ear" and may help to best adapt the text to the personality of the storyteller and the mood of the story.

For everyday people reading out a text and recording it can be a challenge. People generally don't like to hear their own voices back, which may sound strange from outside. If we are not satisfied with our recording we mustn't hesitate to make several versions until we find our own voice. A basic rule of recording is to make at least two recordings of the complete text. The active help of the trainer is needed during the audio recording as well. The trainer must also point out to the storyteller if their reading is too fast, too slow, monotonous, boring, overacted or alien to the storyteller's personality. One of the most essential features of digital storytelling is clarity, authenticity, and a readiness to be experienced. We should make sure during the recording phase that these circumstances are met. If the voiceover of a DST movie is inaudible or the storyteller doesn't sound sincere, the story loses its authenticity.

Image recording (digitizing, taking photographs)

The recording phase includes the digitizing of photos (drawings, figures, etc.), and the taking of new photographs if necessary. Part of the pictures used for the digital storytelling process can be paper prints; these have to be scanned for digital/computer usage. Besides these, photos made with a digital camera or downloaded from the internet or social media sites can also be used for the storytelling. When using them, there are two important aspects to consider: the size and resolution of the picture and the question of copyright. We should avoid pictures taken by a third party – not ourselves or someone we know – as much as possible. If our story requires that we complement our short film with photos downloaded from the internet, we must make sure they are free to use (cc- creative commons, copyright free) and do not have any recognizable people on them. If we want to use photos from social media sites, we should only use those that are connected to us or to people we know, but before we publicly share them we should ask permission from the persons concerned. In the case of photos downloaded from the internet or photos taken or scanned by us we must make sure they are high resolution (at least 1280x720 pixels, 300 dpi; JPEG or TIFF format). To illustrate a two-minute short film, using 15-25 photos is recommended – if we use less, the pace of our story will become too slow, if we use more, it will be too rapid and hasty. It is therefore important to choose the right amount from the photos available.

Video clips, music

There are digital storytelling trainings or digital storytelling movies where it is possible to use video clips, music and other effects to produce the film. The present manual does not recommend either of these elements (of course it does not exclude them either). Their use is justified only in cases when the element in question is closely connected to the story and enhances its message or its understanding. In the editing process, we have to deal with all three elements carefully so that they don't divert viewers' attention from the story. The volume of the music and the effects should not kill the storyteller's voice and it should not hamper intelligibility and the general effect of the movie. An ill-chosen or not rightly set (sound-mixed) effect or clip weakens the strength of the movie, can ruin dramaturgically high points, and in extreme cases can even discredit the message.

Whenever using outside material – video clips, music, special effects – we should take into consideration copyright too. Any music, effect or video clip which is not made by us, does not belong to the public domain and is not Creative Commons (copyright free), is bound to copyright and/or permission. It is incumbent on the maker of the film to clarify this and to obtain the necessary permissions or pay eventual copyright fees. If one wants to use photos not made by them, we recommend freely downloadable, copyright-free sources.

We only recommend the use of music in a DST film in exceptional cases when it is an integral part of the

story (e.g., the storyteller speaks of a song or piece of music sung or played by themselves or a family member). Then again, we should only use music played by ourselves or by persons who gave permission to use it.

Step 5 – Editing

In order to make digital stories, completing several editing steps is required:

- the recorded sound has to be gapped and mistakes, stops removed, after which the voiceover is completed, giving the backbone of the story
- images have to be edited, if necessary (e.g., cut to size, set the contrast ratio, etc.)
- the edited and cleansed voiceover, the photos adjusted to it and the opening title together make up the edited digital story.
- The film can be made by the trainer based on the storyboard, with the collaboration of the storyteller, but after learning the basic skills of the editing process any of the participants will be able to make their own digital stories.

Because there are quite a few editing software applications on the market and their versions are often updated or changed, and also because different programs have to be used for PC and MAC computers, the present manual does not wish to provide specific technical aid. There are readily available free audio and video editing software applications, which however are not always compatible with each other, or the editing of the voiceover and the gapping of the images requires separate processes. There are also editing systems accessible on-line, which however require broad-band internet access all along the work process. We can also use complex editing software programs installed on the computer, which – despite their being rather complicated – usually offer a handy solution for making short films. The use of software depends on the technical background of participants or the training place. (If there are enough computers, the training place can provide the technical capacity needed.) Consequently, the technical means and approaches of editing and producing the films depend on the software used, as well as the trainer and the storyteller. Here we will only give a few pieces of general advice and some guidelines. In choosing the right software, parameters and links included in the appendix can be useful.

- The trainer must be familiar with the given software.
- At the beginning of the workshop the technical status of all the computers to be used in the editing has to be checked and the software has to be tested on them. Technical preparations should not take time from editing.

- Participants have to be given a presentation of the whole editing process at the beginning of the technical training, and they have to have explained step by step how to produce their own short films with the given software.
- During the demonstration participants have to pay attention only to the trainer; at this point they should not yet begin to try what they've heard on their own computers.
- We must allow enough time for participants to discover the software and make their film at their own pace.
- If there is need, we should assist participants. We may give them cinematographic advice or help them in the technical fine-tuning. We should draw their attention to possible technical shortcomings and help them eliminate them.
- The film must have a title which appears at the opening of the film. Whether the name of the creator appears in the opening title is optional.
- It is important that pictures should have the proper resolution. Bad quality, low definition pictures destroy the general effect.
- We should avoid using too many visual effects. Digital effects (the slight moving of still pictures, transitions between photos, highlighting certain details, etc.) may help making the story more movie-like, but we should only use them if the dramaturgy justifies it. The trainer may give advice as to the use of digital effects, but it is basically a question of taste.
- If we get stuck, or at any rate before finalizing the film, we should show it to someone else, preferably to the trainers.
- Once the film is produced, it is worth saving it in good enough quality, making sure the file is not too big (the following formats are recommended: mov, mp4, mpeg, avi), for future use, including uploading on the internet.

It is easy to underestimate the time needed for editing. Although it is basically a single technical process, creativity plays a key role in the end result, i.e., a good quality digital story. Editing is however a rewarding and enjoyable process, when our short film is beginning to take shape from different elements, or when it acquires new momentum and a new meaning thanks to a tiny change. A small adjustment in the editing can have a huge effect on the outcome. When the editing process is finished and our film is ready, the editing software “merges” the elements together according to the specified parameters, thus producing a video file (mov, mp4, mpeg, avi, etc.), which can be presented to or shared with the public any time.

Step 6 – Sharing (screening)

Digital stories are made to be shared with others, but sometimes a film can be produced whose creator does not want to share it with the broader public in the end, only with fellow participants of the workshop. But with them, by all means.

As a conclusion to the process participants of the workshop show each other the finished films. The screening is the coronation of the 20-22 hour-long work process. It is a festive occasion when the storyteller steps out of the closed world of creation and stands before the others. This may be accompanied by stage-fright and anxiety.

The trainer must strive to make the screening an event worthy of its importance. The room should be arranged in a way that the screen can be seen by everyone and blacked out if necessary. We should use high-quality video and audio equipment.

The trainer should introduce each film with a few personal words, in order to dissipate the storyteller's discomfort and ensure that the work gets proper attention. At this stage the trainer should abstain from any critical remarks and should not give the opportunity to do so to participants either.

All the participants should be present at the screening. Other people (family, friends, etc.) can only be invited to the screening if all the participants have agreed to it.

Step 7 – Debriefing

The closing of the digital storytelling workshop is a short group discussion when each participant gives feedback to the group and the trainers on the whole process. This is the time to share personal experiences, not so much to talk about the finished films; and criticising them is absolutely out of the question.

In the closing circle each participant should say something, including trainers and assistant trainers. To encourage participants to speak up, they can be asked to tell about one positive and one negative experience they encountered in the course of the training.

During the debriefing, the future of the films should be made clear. The finished film is the intellectual property of its maker and in the future it can only be used with their – preferably written – permission. It is the filmmaker who decides about the audience the film will be available to. This may range from complete disallowance through partial permission (when the film is made available for a limited audience, e.g., for educational purposes), to permission for the widest possible audience (complete availability for everyone through the internet). We should reassure filmmakers that they can change or revoke their written permission any time. This means they can later give permission to publish their film on the internet or may request its removal from the worldwide public domain (e.g., from a website managed by us).

Digital Storytelling – Script (SAMPLE)

The Best Christmas Tree Ever

This photo shows a very modest branch of a pine tree, but that one was my best Christmas tree ever. In nineteen eighty-five my father received a scholarship to go to Rome for nine months. He could manage to take me with him for five weeks what was a really special that time. I was ten and I could leave the communist Hungary for such a long time and also that was my first visit to Western country.

My father was such a great guide showing around all Rome, hitchhiked to Florence and Pisa and organised our best Christmas. For the eve he asked me to pick one thing in a toy store which I would like as a gift, so he bought me a walkie-talkie. He also surprised me with a huge can of pineapple in syrup which was a kind of favourite of mine. In the Christmas eve, when the street were a bit less crowded, we found a branch of pine tree on the corner of the Campo dei Fiori and we brought home as a tree. For decoration we hang some bus tickets and bottle caps on it and I put a photo next to the tree of my step sister who stayed in Budapest with her mother.

My grandparents sent me a second hand camera by post, a great but really heavy soviet model called Zenith, and I started to take my first pictures. One of the first test images was taken of our best Christmas tree ever.

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Digital Storytelling – Storyboard (SAMPLE)

N.	Image	Voice
	<p>Title: The Best Christmas Tree Ever by David Bán</p>	
		<p>Storyteller: This photo shows a very modest branch of a pine tree, but that one was my best Christmas tree ever.</p>
		<p>Storyteller: In nineteen eighty-five my father received a scholarship to go to Rome for nine month.</p>
		<p>Storyteller: He could manage to take me with him for five weeks what was a really special that time.</p>
		<p>Storyteller: I was ten and I could leave the communist Hungary for such a long time and also that was my first visit to Western country.</p>
		<p>Storyteller: My father was such a great guide showing around all Rome,</p>

		<p>Storyteller: hitchhiked to Florence and Pisa and organised our best Christmas.</p>
		<p>Storyteller: For the eve he asked me to pick one thing in a toy store which I would like as a gift, so he bought me a walkie-talkie.</p>
		<p>Storyteller: He also surprised me with a huge can of pineapple in syrup which was a kind of favourite of mine.</p>
		<p>Storyteller: In the Christmas eve, when the street were a bit less crowded, we found a branch of pine tree on the corner of the Campo dei Fiori,</p>
		<p>Storyteller: and we brought home as a tree. For decoration we hang some bus tickets and bottle caps on it,</p>
		<p>Storyteller: and I put a photo next to the tree of my step sister who stayed in Budapest with her mother.</p>

	<p>Storyteller: My grandparents sent me a second hand camera by post, a great but really heavy soviet model called Zenith</p>
	<p>Storyteller: and I started to take my first pictures..</p>
	<p>Storyteller: One of the first test images was taken of our best Christmas tree ever.</p>

Words: 179

Photos: 15 (2 repetition)

Music: none

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Scheme of Work for DS Workshop 24 hours, or a three days session

session	Time	Topics	Outcomes	Resources	Notes
Briefing	3 h	Introduction and house rules, Health and Safety Show relevant examples of DS Process of DS and Schedule Expectations Legal/ copyright considerations Introduce the signing off process Advanced warning of future needs	First sign-off for story.	Data Projector Computer/ laptop PA sound Stories on USB stick/ hard drive Handouts	
Storytelling Circle	3 h	Story ice breakers and games	1 st draft script	Pens and paper Photographs Optional flipchart, matches, Glass of water, household items in a bag	
Finalising Scripts	1-3 h	Workshop session. Redrafts and feedback to participants. Storyboarding	Final version of script Storyboard	Laptops with WP software Printer and paper	Timescale varies according to the number of participants
Voice recording	1-3 h		Wav or mp3 file. Editing in Vegas, Audacity or Garage Band	Voice coach handout Laptops with audio editing software Portable Digital audio recording device Headphones Scripts	Timescale varies according to the number of participants
Editing 1	3 h	Folder layout and media management Sizing Images Importing images and sound	Developing skills in editing	Laptops with audio and video editing software (and Photoshop) or iLife suite or iMovie (Mac)	

Editing 2	3 h	Producing the rough cut Adding titles and extra audio	Developing technique in editing	Laptops with audio and video editing software
Final edit and export	3 h	Producing the fine cut . Exporting to a .mov or .avi / .mp4	Finished film ready for mastering	Laptops with audio and video editing software
Screening	1 h		Group sharing of stories and experiences	Data Projector Computer/ laptop Sound Stories on USB stick/ hard drive
Debriefing	2 h	Signing off the stories. Discussion: what went well/ less well? Evaluation	Feedback on strengths/ weaknesses. Next steps	Evaluation sheets



Some links for the digital storytelling

Capturing Wales: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/arts/yourvideo/queries/capturewales.shtml>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/audiovideo/sites/galleries/pages/digitalstorytelling.shtml>

Center for Digital Storytelling: <http://www.storycenter.org/>

Anthropolis, Storycenter (Hungary): <http://storycenter.hu/>

Historypin: <http://www.historypin.com/>

Daniel Medaows, Photobus: <http://www.photobus.co.uk/>

Breaking Barriers: <http://www.breakingbarriers.org.uk/>

Cowbird: <http://cowbird.com/>

Patient Voices: <http://www.patientvoices.org.uk/>

Storyworks: <http://www.storyworksglam.co.uk/>

Digistories: <http://digistories.co.uk/>

Historiana: <http://historiana.eu/>

MemOro – Bank of The Memories: <http://www.memoro.org/index.php>

Queensland University of Technology, Australia: <http://digitalstorytelling.ci.qut.edu.au/>

Digital Storytelling: Tips and Resources: <http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/eli08167b.pdf>

DeTales (European stories): <http://detales.net/>

K-Values (Empowerment stories): <http://www.kvalues.eu/>

Diamond (Digital storytelling in museums): <http://www.diamondmuseums.eu/project.html>

IntegrArt (Digital stories with immigrants): http://fotomemoria.eu/integrart/?page_id=8

X-story (Digital storytelling in schools): <http://www.storycenter.hu/x-story/>

More links: http://www.freeeslmaterials.com/digital_storytelling.html

Guide for digital storytelling: <http://www.schrockguide.net/digital-storytelling.html>

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- Digital Storytelling for Social Impact <https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/blog/digital-storytelling-social-impact/>
- Digital Storytelling as a Social Work Tool: Learning from Ethnographic Research with Women from Refugee Backgrounds <http://bjsw.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2013/11/19/bjsw.bct184.abstract>
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Name

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I understand that the intention of the [name of the project/institution] to make the digital stories available as an educational and learning resource as part of the international drive to improve the quality and attractiveness of lifelong learning education for adults, but that the project team can have no control over, or liability for, how they are ultimately used.

I consent to the use of my story as part of the project.

I consent to the above training program and consent to the photographing/videoing and publication of images of my involvement in the project/institution. I have obtained all appropriate permissions for materials used in the story.

Igive my consent for my story to be published on the web: [web address].

Signature Date:

