Digital storytelling

Definition, history, methodology
A definition of Digital Storytelling

- The term "Digital Storytelling" means a method for creating short video narrations, which concerns stories, memories and personal experiences.
- The stories told are, almost always, stories that have to do with change, with personal growth;
- The stories can regard also the purpose of making known a specific social problem, historical events, or the promotion of social actions and projects.
“Digital Storytelling is the modern expression of the ancient art of storytelling. Digital stories derive their power by weaving images, music, narrative and voice together, thereby giving deep dimension and vivid color to characters, situations, experiences, and insights”

Leslie Rule
(Digital Storytelling Association)
Key elements of Digital Storytelling

- **the voice of the author of the story, who is usually also the protagonist of the story itself;**
- **images, which are often photographs or personal images related to the story being told;**
- **sometimes the authors use short videos, together with the images;**
- **music, which accompanies the narration**
Other useful elements

These narratives usually last between two and three minutes;

Often the authors of digital storytelling do not have prior technical knowledge, inherent for example in video editing, or digital media;

A way in which authors learn to create stories through digital storytelling, is often thanks to workshops or training activities, in presence or remotely.
The concept of "Digital Storytelling" began to be used by authors who began using storytelling for documentaries and other story-based communication products, such as in the Ken Burns miniseries The Civil War, or in a workshop created in 1993 by American Film Institute, focused on the production of "short narrated films";

The Digital Storytelling was later developed by Joe Lambert in the mid-1990s into a method of training;

Lambert then founded the Center for Digital Storytelling, which regularly offers training courses on this methodology;

Another significant example is its use in the BBC’s Capture Wales project, the Telling Live project, BBC England, the Rum för Berättande (Room for Storytelling) program, created by s. Sveriges Utbildningsradio.
The methodology of Digital Storytelling is made by five main phases:

1. Briefing
2. Writing
3. Recording
4. Editing
5. Sharing
Briefing phase

- This phase serves to introduce the DS and the workshop to future participants;
- Exploration of the elements of a DS;
- Explanation of the process and timescale foreseen;
- Requirements for the coming sessions;
- Basic but essential legal/copyright advice.
The writing process starts with a 'storytelling circle'. This session aims to solicit tales and memories that will serve to identify the story to be told. This phase usually lasts around two to three hours and can include several autobiographical storytelling exercises.
Writing phase

- In this phase, the facilitator supports the participants, helps them focus on what they really want to tell, and why they chose that story. It is therefore very important to share the scripts in the group, in order to get feedback from others.
The final phase of the writing phase ends with the creation of the script, i.e. the story that will be told in the Digital Storytelling.

The script is approximately 250 characters long.
Recording and finding images

- Registration is a very delicate and important action. It is necessary to find a suitable space for recording, without echo. At present it is possible to use smartphones and simple external microphones. Recording quality is very important.

- At the same time in this phase the author will define the images. He will also create a storyboard, linking the images to the story.
Recording and finding images

- There are several important considerations regarding the images:
- **number of images**: usually 10 to 20 images will be needed;
- **type of images**: the images are - usually - personal images, which belong to our personal photo archive; but we can also use external images, useful to represent parts of our story; or it is possible to produce new photos or images, also using drawings, stop motion, etc.
- **sizes and resolutions**: important that the images have a sufficient resolution;
- **copyright**: in case of use of other images it is good to verify that these images are free from copyright; there are websites from which you can download these types of images.
Editing phase

- There are several forms of editing required to produce a DS:
  - the recorded voiceover track needs sometimes to be joined and mistakes removed;
  - photographs need to be edited sometimes;
  - the edited soundtrack, edited photos, music and titles are combined to create the DS.
Sharing is the final stage of the DS creation process and represents a very important phase from the point of view of the educational impact of this methodology;

It helps obtaining the recognition of others for their history;

Sometimes is useful for overcoming shame, especially when it comes to telling stories related to trauma, to difficult episodes of life;

It contributes through its history to make known social realities, requests for social change, etc.
Sharing can take place in several ways:

- Through the creation of a **meeting**, a public event or aimed at the group that created the DS, in order to celebrate the works together, and above all to celebrate the stories that the participants told;
- Through the **web**;
- Through portals and **sites dedicated to DS collection**.
The Digital Storytelling methodology is applied to the most varied educational and social fields. That is because digital storytelling can be an instrument of empowerment, of development of self-esteem, of self-awareness, an opportunity to develop one’s professional skills and vocations, or to support social actions.

For example, digital storytelling is used:

- in the school;
- in social work;
- in international cooperation;
- in museum teaching;
- in professional training;
- in advocacy actions.
Useful materials

- Training document from the Capture Wales team
- Training manual developed by BBC Telling Lives team
- Story Center
- Jasonohler
The **StoryAp archive** is part of the project “StoryDec, Storytelling to Develop Civic Competences in Young People, Erasmus Plus Project – Youth.

The objective of StoryDec is to create paths of civic and social education addressed at young people, through autobiographical methodologies and digital storytelling.
Project web sites

- http://www.storydec.eu/
- http://www.storyap.eu/

Partners

- CEMEA ITALY – IT (Coordinator) - https://www.cemea.it/
- CEMEA FRANCE- FR - http://www.cemeacentre.org/
- Association Pro Xpert – Romania - https://proexpert.org/
- Stowarzyszenie Trenerow Organizacji Pozarzadowych – Poland - https://stowarzyszeniestop.pl/
- Mobilizing Expertises – Sweden - http://mexpert.se/
- Real Time – UK - http://www.real-time.org.uk/

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which be made of the information contained therein.
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