Multiple Purposes of Digital Stories and Podcasts in ePortfolios

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Abstract: The ancient art of storytelling can be a powerful tool for deep learning and reflection. Add today's multimedia technology and you have a highly motivating project-based learning activity as well as a powerful artifact in an electronic portfolio. A digital story is a short digital video clip, usually told in first person narrative with the learner's own voice, illustrated primarily with still images, and often with an added music track. Share examples of digital stories/podcasts in ePortfolios to address different purposes (introduction of self, reflection, rich multimedia artifacts) and emerging Web 2.0 development tools. An emerging theory of storytelling as learning and reflection on practice will be discussed, as well as the role of digital storytelling in teacher education.

Purpose & Objectives

I have been exploring the many uses of digital stories in electronic portfolios. An ePortfolio is a purposeful collection of work that demonstrates effort, progress and achievement over time, stored in an electronic container (CD, DVD, WWW). In this context and in terms of the technology, a digital story is a digital video clip, told in the author's own voice, illustrated mostly with still images, with an optional music track added for emotional effect. Rhetorically, a digital story is a personal narrative that may show the author's identity: strengths, weaknesses, achievements, disappointments, learning experiences, passions, and hopes for the future; in other words: reflection.

We need to emphasize the writing (and media-savvy) skills that are acquired/investigated as part of the process of creating digital stories. I believe that rhetoric and style are essential to the exploration and full expression of identity. My interest in rhetoric (and learner-directed essay writing, in particular) means that, when it comes to learner engagement and the expression of identity, I would wish to articulate concepts of "voice" and "identity" more fully. I perceive that the language of "voice", as used in relation to digital storytelling, can sometimes appear to express the belief that "voice" is something "natural" or inherent. Instead, I would emphasize that learner identity is inherent, but that "voice" is an expression of that innate identity, and hence a product of good communication skills. Hence I would like to focus on how it is that we can best encourage students to explore different styles, and what are the most effective ways that we can model good practice for them, as they learn the skills they need in order to communicate compelling personal narratives.

In this presentation, I will address two issues in developing digital stories in ePortfolios: Why? and How? or the Multiples Purposes for adding digital stories to ePortfolios and the emerging Web 2.0 tools that can be used to develop digital stories. Where I have examples of digital stories, I will provided web links.

Here are twelve purposes within three major categories for including digital stories in ePortfolios:
Introduction of Self
- Voice & Personality
- Legacy
- Biography
- Memoir

Reflection
- Transition
- Decision & Direction
- Benchmarking Development
- Change over Time

Rich Multimedia Artifacts
- Evidence of Collaboration
- Documentary
- Record of Experience
- Oral Language Development

Perhaps ePortfolios can become the Trojan Horse for integrating digital storytelling into the curriculum. Most ePortfolios today are digital paper: text and images only. Digital Stories can humanize any model of ePortfolio using any type of ePortfolio tool. Digital Stories add VOICE to electronic portfolios. Digital Storytelling is also a motivating strategy for involving students in their own learning using 21st Century tools of engagement.

Some of the digital stories and podcasts shared in this session have been developed by middle school and high school students in Alaska and Budapest, Hungary.

Outline

Introduction/Overview of Digital Stories and ePortfolios – 5 minutes
Examples of Digital Stories showing Introduction of Self and Voice – 10 minutes
Importance of Reflection in Learning – 10 minutes
Examples of Digital Stories showing Reflection – 10 minutes
Examples of Rich Multimedia Artifacts from project-based learning – 10 minutes
Web 2.0 Tools for creating Digital Stories – 10 minutes
Conclusions and Questions – 5 minutes

Supporting Research

Digital Storytelling facilitates the convergence of four student-centered learning strategies: student engagement, reflection for deep learning, project-based learning, and the effective integration of technology into instruction. There is substantial research that supports the use of both project-based learning and effective technology integration into instruction. Jennifer Moon and James Zull demonstrates the importance of reflection to support brain-based learning. McDrury and Alterio (2002), researchers from New Zealand have written a book, *Learning through Storytelling in Higher Education,* in which they outline a theory of storytelling as an effective learning tool. They link the art of storytelling with reflective learning processes supported by the literature on both reflection and learning as well as making meaning through storytelling.

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