



Digital Storytelling as a Teaching Strategy



There are many ways to assist students in making meaning of their experiences through reflection; this Fall semester, CSL piloted the innovative strategy of Digital Storytelling. Digital Stories are “short videos that employ images (still and/or motion) and sounds (spoken words and music) in a multilayered, economical narrative, the goal of which is to capture the essence of an experience. Many blogs are digital stories, and so are some tweets, but when using capital case, it refers to both a kind of video story as well as the methodology used to produce them” (Reilly, D).

Digital Storytelling has many benefits for students, but the basic function is synthesis or integration of knowledge. The simple act of creating a Digital Story compels integration of knowledge, cutting, paraphrasing, revising, synthesizing, and, often, reflecting. (Alexander, 2011). This methodology was piloted in a Philanthropic Studies course (P330), in combination with a paper focused on students’ personal *Call of Service* Paper.

The initial goal was for students to simply create their own Digital Story based on the content of their *Call of Service* paper. Through the process, the instructors and the students discovered this assignment offered much more. The instructors began to see the potential for Digital Stories to be a powerful reflection tool for students engaged in service. And, students had a product – something they can show to others – that illustrates why service is important to them, what motivates them, and what sustains them during challenging times. The story also has useful purposes beyond the course—it can be included in a student’s ePortfolios, shared on a social media site, or serve as a product to share with a potential employer to help illustrate their civic commitment as well as their ability to use various forms of technology for creative purposes.

After completing the assignment, the students highly recommended that instructors include Digital Stories in future classes. They expressed how much they enjoyed the process of creating their digital *Call of Service* and were clearly proud of their creation. Several students said that it caused them to reflect and think more deeply about their *Call of Service* and they were all interested in seeing their fellow classmates’ creations as well.

This teaching strategy will be revised and implemented in this Philanthropic Studies course (P330) again spring semester. Two groups of Sam H. Jones Community Service Scholars—Community Partner Scholars and America Reads*America Counts Team Leaders—are utilizing this strategy in their exploration of social issues.

Bibliography:

Reilly, D. *What is digital storytelling?* Retrieved November 7, 2011, from <http://digitalstorytellingworkinggroup.wordpress.com/2011/04/19/what-is-digital-storytelling/>

Alexander, B. (2001). *The new digital storytelling: Creating narratives with new media*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.

Faculty and staff interested in Digital Storytelling and how it might be incorporated into a class or program, please feel free to contact Kristin Norris (norriske@iupui.edu).