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Making Links through Digital Storytelling

Editorial

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This special issue of the Journal of Community, Citizen's and Third Sector Media and Communication (*3CMedia*) is based on selected presentations given at the 5th annual *Making Links* conference, held at The University of Melbourne from 11th to 13th November, 2008. *Making Links* (see also www.makinglinks.org.au) is a conference that seeks to engage interested people, organisations and groups working at the intersection of social action and information technology, including community workers, educators, trainers, not-for-profit organisations, people who work with marginalised groups, activists and researchers. One of the program streams at this conference was dedicated to the practice of digital storytelling (Lambert, 2002; Hartley & McWilliam, 2009).

Making Links and *3CMedia* continue to be great allies in that the conference provides a forum that facilitates a horizontal dialogue across the non-profit and third sector, and *3CMedia* continues to support the consideration and promotion of uses of media by the sector. I am pleased to present this issue which brings together four contributions from *Making Links* 2008 – plus one invited paper – to tell stories of storytelling. Digital storytelling (shortened also known as DST) seems to capture people's imagination in novel ways without the necessity to hand-over the creative part to professionals. Low barriers of entry, steep learning curves, innovative usage of production and editing software tools contribute to the rise of this approach as a model of 'user-generated content' that is conducive to be applied to areas that are socially or culturally sensitive.

It is yet again, very welcome and appropriate that the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA), a peak association of the community broadcasting sector, is facilitating the dissemination of research presented at the 2008 *Making Links* conference, because the various DST models show parallels with the historic development of community media and community broadcasting. Many member organisations of the CBAA have long helped to establish and facilitate practices of co-creative media production, which are a focus of this special issue of *3CMedia* that draws attention to current initiatives in contemporary digital storytelling activity. Particularly significant in this issue are articles that report action research findings in youth and indigenous uses of digital storytelling, as well as by major cultural institutions. For these reasons, the articles in this special issue also illustrate how on the one side the original rationale for community media is still very much alive and relevant; on the other side the techniques explored here incorporating digital media and new collaborative arrangements to bring different stakeholders together offer lessons learnt that can be useful for the future of both the non-profit/third sector and the community media industry sector.

Aneta Podkalicka and Jonathan Staley introduce the *YouthWorx Media* project in Melbourne – one of the destinations for the Digital Inclusion Bus Tour that formed part of the Making Links 2008 program. YouthWorx Media engages disadvantaged and 'at risk' young people in media creation and training with a view to allow them to tell their story and connect them with education and employment opportunities. It provides a prime example of the role that community media, community broadcasting, and arts initiatives can play in stimulating positive social change for young people.

Peta-Marie Standley, Nic Bidwell and their colleagues at James Cook University and in Cape York present the Indigenous owned *Traditional Knowledge Revival Pathways* consultancy as a successful initiative that connects local communities and the environment through media. The team is to be commended not only for its innovative approach that combines traditional methodologies with new media tools to reach beyond sociocultural and geographic boundaries, but also for their cultural sensitivity and their aspiration to preserve and maintain the integrity of the diverse stakeholders involved. The project is a great example of a collaboration reconnecting both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people with place.

Natalie Davey and Samia Goudie follow with a discussion of the experiences running the *Hope Vale Pelican Project* and specifically, the digital storytelling component of the project. The authors report on the development and conduct of a media camp held in Cape York that introduced participating youth to digital storytelling practices to foster social and emotional well-being and environmental care.

Jean Burgess and Helen Klaebe, two of the leading figures of the digital storytelling node of excellence at Queensland University of Technology, examine the use of this methodology to capture commentaries in response to Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples. Their project, in collaboration with the State Library of Queensland, provides an example of a model that other cultural institutions and community-based media organisations could adopt and apply to engage participants in the creative recording of a variety of perspectives.

Helen Simondson concludes this special issue with an account of the digital storytelling practice at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI), a cultural institution based in Melbourne dedicated to the moving image. The article critically traces the development of this practice at ACMI, and explores the opportunities and challenges of integrating and embracing user-generated content into a program that needs to appeal to audiences in a rapidly changing media landscape.

References

Hartley, J., & McWilliam, K. (2009). *Story Circle: Digital Storytelling around the World.* Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.

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About the Guest Editor

Associate Professor Marcus Foth is a Principal Research Fellow with the Institute for Creative Industries and Innovation, Queensland University of Technology (QUT), Brisbane, Australia. He received a QUT Vice-Chancellor's Research Fellowship (2009-2011), and a Smart Futures Fellowship from the Queensland State Government (2009-2011), co- sponsored by National ICT Australia (NICTA). He was an ARC Australian Postdoctoral Fellow (2006-2008), and a Visiting Fellow (2007) at the Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford, UK. Dr Foth's research explores human-computer interaction design and development at the intersection of people, place and technology with a focus on urban informatics, locative media and mobile applications. Dr Foth has published over sixty articles in journals, edited books, and conference proceedings in the last five years. He is the editor of the Handbook of Research on Urban Informatics (2009). He is the conference chair of OZCHI 2009 (Melbourne) and the 5th International Conference on Communities and Technologies 2011 (Brisbane). Email: m.foth@qut.edu.au