



The Instructional Value of Digital Storytelling: Higher Education, Professional, and Adult Learning Settings

McGee, Patricia
Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015

Book Review

Tags: adult learning | storytelling | student learning |
teaching with the arts

Reviewed by: Eileen D. Crowley, *Catholic Theological Union of Chicago*

Date Reviewed: January 18, 2016

Digital Storytelling originated in the early 1990s in the matrix of what was then called “new media”: a mix of graphics, photography, videography, audio recording, and video and audio editing. As first developed at the Center for Digital Storytelling in California, workshop participants learned to create a two- to three-minute first-person story in a digital format that could be shared via the Internet. By 2000 when media production software became commonly available on personal computers, what had been the realm of professional artists and media producers became a potential playground where ordinary people of all ages could be empowered to craft and to share digitally a succinct, poignant, brief first-person video story.

Since then, this form of storytelling has found advocates around the world: in small villages in Wales; in schools from elementary to college-level in the U.S.; in museum art programs in Australia; and in social service and social justice organizations in the U.S., Africa, and elsewhere; and in youth faith formation in Norway and Denmark. Major universities now offer education courses in this method, from the University of Cardiff in Wales to the University of Hawaii. ESL teachers have successfully employed this technique to help immigrants tell their stories. PhD students have written dissertations that explore the evolution and application of Digital Storytelling in a variety of settings, and media and cultural studies scholars have analyzed this phenomenon as it has been introduced in multiple cultures. While the original short format is referred to with initial capital letters, the wider field of digital media storytelling has evolved and now takes many forms.

Patricia McGee has carved out a portion of this diverse world of digital storytelling and limited

her comments to “Higher Education, Professional, and Adult Learning Settings,” which is still a very wide scope. She divides this well-researched work into three sections that provide excellent overviews of past storytelling traditions and new twenty-first century approaches; current institutional uses and emerging models for digital storytelling; and applications in diverse cultural and institutional contexts. She advises readers to turn to whichever section they find of most interest.

Theological educators and religious studies professors will most benefit from exploring the third section on applications. With a little imagination, they can envision how the digital storytelling examples McGee cites can be translated for application in their classrooms and how their ministry students and graduates can use digital storytelling in youth ministry, faith formation, catechumenal processes, new members gatherings, church building transitions and anniversaries, and church websites.

McGee, Associate Professor of Digital Learning Design at the University of Texas at San Antonio, is evidently a master of her wide-ranging, fast-evolving field. She is a good guide, one who will stretch the vision of theological and religious studies educators. By introducing this creative, communal digital storytelling process in their classrooms, their students can learn to empower themselves and others to claim their voice.

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