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# StoryStorm: Communities with an urgent story to tell.

**Communities and Culture Network+ Interim Report.**

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**THE GLASGOW  
SCHOOL OF ARTS**



**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**



## **Introduction:**

Narrative and storytelling are as critical in today's society as at any other time in history. The very act of communication is fundamentally an act of storytelling and so the stories we fashion about ourselves to make sense of our life experiences are intrinsically linked to our identity, nation, and sense of self [1], shaping our understanding of the world.

Storytelling takes many guises, and, we argue, is often employed unconsciously. This network is driven by a series of events aimed at 'communities with an urgent story to tell'. Through these communities we scope questions and deliver workshops bringing them together with academia, industry and practitioners to understand key issues and map the range of storytelling tools adopted during the process.

The workshops not only take stock of existing storytelling processes and forms, but also explore emerging digital means of capturing and sharing stories, as a methodological tool for addressing overarching empirical and collaborative interests of the CCN+ community.

## **Aims:**

- To explore, and critically engage with storytelling and how it is being supported and shaped by digital technology.
- To identify how digital forms of capturing and sharing stories are responding to and generating new configurations of narrative, memory, identity, expertise and as, through this, understandings of heritage, history and everyday life.
- To identify how storytelling might support Network+'s interest in using collaborative methods to research the relationships between communities and cultures in a digital age, by creating ways of working across different perspectives and valuing different registers of knowing (cognitive, embodied, affective).
- To enhance and feed into the Network+ scoping projects by linking each of the workshops to one of the Network+'s emerging issues or themes in relation to storytelling.
- To enrich and develop shared network understandings on how storytelling can be used to generate new collaborative research insights by capturing and reflecting on the interactions at each of the themed workshops.

This interim report highlights the work we have undertaken so far, between September 2013 and November 2013, and outlines confirmed plans for the remainder of the project to August 2014.

## Progress

Following the award notification from CCN+ there was a delayed start to Storystorm due to an extended correspondence over project award terms and conditions. In reality it was September 2013 before the project had access to a finance code in order to deliver workshops, this severely delayed progress.

We have scoped four workshops, one having been delivered to date. Each Storystorm creates a dialogue with a different community and location, with each addressing different questions borne out of those communities. Each event has sought partnerships with appropriate projects, events or organisations. This has increased audience exposure for Storystorm, and has enabled access to resources such as marketing, space, and resources in addition raising the bar to bring in a high level of expertise to the Network.

The format of each workshop is adapted to suit the particular questions around storytelling issues. The four locations, questions and partners are:

- Storystorm Dundee. November 2013  
*'How do we create an autobiography of a City?'*  
Partners: City of Culture 2017, BookWeek Scotland, 'SerenA' (RCUK).
- Storystorm York March 2014  
*'What are the stories of Stonebow House and what might be the stories to come?'*  
Partners: 'How should decisions about heritage be made?' (AHRC).
- Storystorm Manchester April 2014  
Question currently being scoped in consultation.  
Partners: FutureEverything - City Fictions 2014
- Storystorm Vancouver June 2014  
*'A Collaborative Exchange of Methods for Storytelling'*  
Partner: DIS Conference 2014

## Storystorm Dundee Scoping and Community Consultation. August 2013

Woods was invited to the second in a series of national gatherings led by creative producers Big Sky, which seeks to set a challenge for the cultural sector in relation to a broader issue in society. Focusing on Dundee's bid to become UK City of Culture in 2017, this one-day event brought together representatives from the creative and cultural sectors with those in health, social care and education, to explore how the knowledge and imagination of the country's creative sector might have wider applications for society.

Figure 1 shows a mapping in consultation this event and the communities present identified the question of creating an 'autobiography for a city'.

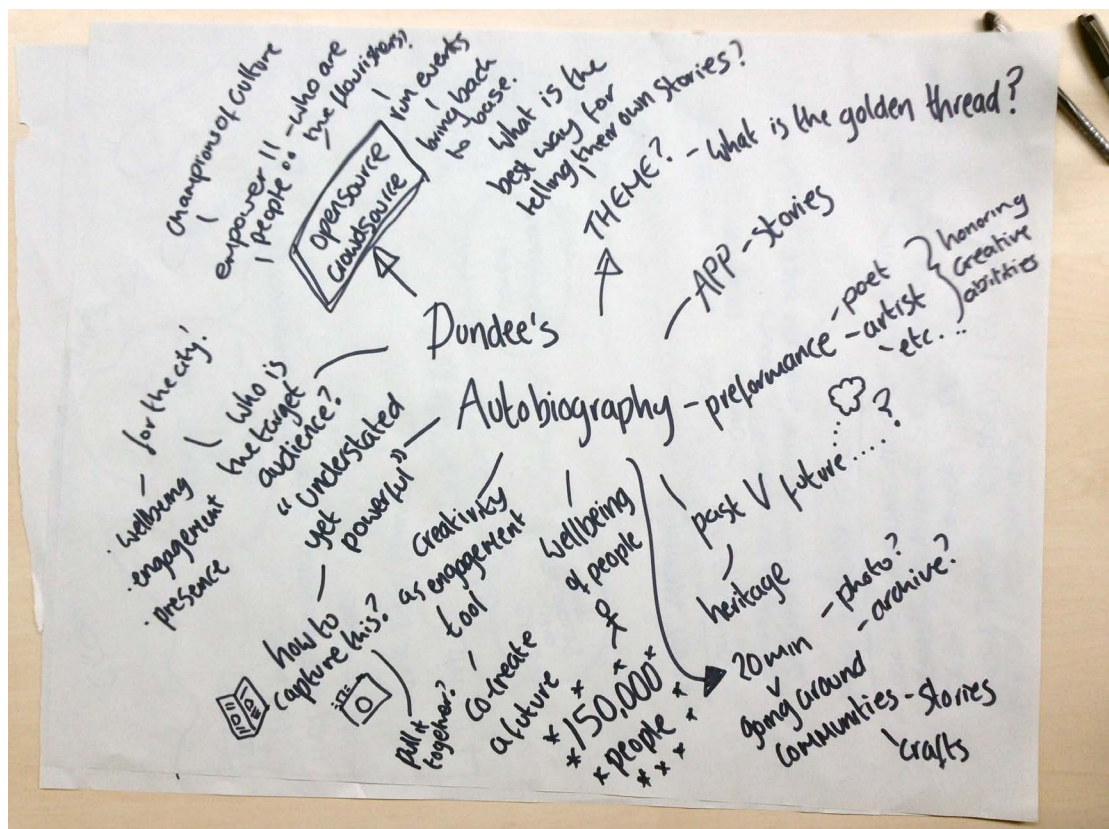


Figure 1: Preliminary scoping for Dundee at DDBlueSkies for 'Autobiography of a city'.

## Storystorm Dundee. Workshop 28 November 2013

### 'How can we build the autobiography of a city?'

Storystorm partnered with BookWeek Scotland, DCA, SerenA (RCUK) and the 'City of Culture 2017' Dundee team to deliver a 1 day workshop at Dundee Contemporary Arts and MacManus Museum.

The event sold out with 35 participants registering and attending for the day.

Storystorm Dundee took was designed to intersperse curated guest speaker presentations (see Schedule below) with facilitated workshop activities (Figure 2). Participants were given the opportunity to and discuss each presentation that centred on contemporary challenges for storytelling, authorship, expertise and implementation.



Figure 2: Storystorm Dundee workshop activities



Figure 3: Dundee Storystorm Badges

## Dundee Storystorm Schedule

09.30	Registration, tea and coffee. Badgemaking (Figure 3).
09.45	Introduction to the StoryStorm Network. Aims and Vision.
10.00	Speaker 1. Matt Locke (Storythings) The Future of Storytelling.
10.45	Activity 1. The Future of Storytelling, a Future City.
11.30	Speaker 2. Gillian Easson (Creative Dundee) WeDundee Crowdsourcing.
12.00	Activity 2. Fictions and Expertise.
12.45	Lunch.
13.00	Speaker 3 Rod Gordon (MacManus Galleries) Oral Histories.
13.30	Activity 3. The Medium is the Message.
14.15	Speaker 4. Nick Taylor Civic Engagement and Social Tools.
14.45	Activity 4. Tools for Communities.
15.15	Break.
15.30	Next Steps and Plans.
16.00	Close.

Links:

<http://www.dca.org.uk/whats-on/talks-and-events/storystorm-creating-an-autobiography-of-a-city.html>

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/storystorm-tickets-5810793239>

<http://www.dundee.gov.uk/event/14131>

Press Release:

<http://www.dundee.ac.uk/pressreleases/2013/november13/autobiography.html>

<http://www.thecourier.co.uk/news/local/dundee/storytellers-to-create-an-autobiography-of-dundee-1.157552>

## Outcomes

Storystorm has been invited to submit our insights from the workshop to the City of Culture team who are delivering signature projects from the bid as part of the city's cultural strategy. Papers and presentation are in development.

### Storystorm York (March 2014)

Scoping is currently taking place for the next StoryStorm network event in March. The second of its events in York is linked to an Arts and Humanities Research Council Connected Communities project 'How should decisions about heritage be made?'. The event will form part of a wider 'Public Inquiry' into the affects of heritage decision making on the lives of people in York through focusing on storming the histories and stories of a 1964 Brutalist-style building Stonebow House. Hated by some, Stonebow House is home to York's only mid-size gig and music venues (Fibbers and The Duchess) and – due to lower commercial rents than other parts of the city – the Job Centre, a bookies and a comparatively affordable supermarket and cafe. Following a recent York City Council Cabinet decision to purchase the freehold of the land and building the future of Stonebow House is now uncertain. We will use a combination of exhibits and workshops to enrich the 'evidence base' which might then inform this decision – we will ask what are the stories of Stonebow House and what might be the stories to come?

Links:

[http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/10918497.Stonebow\\_House\\_may\\_be\\_d  
emolished/](http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/10918497.Stonebow_House_may_be_d<br/>emolished/)

[http://codesignheritage.wordpress.com/2014/01/23/strand-3-york-living-  
with-history/](http://codesignheritage.wordpress.com/2014/01/23/strand-3-york-living-<br/>with-history/)

### Storystorm Manchester (April 2014)

In April the StoryStorm network will hold the third of its events in Manchester as part of the FutureEverything Festival 'Tools for Unknown Futures'. The event in collaboration with Nicky Kirk (architect) will engage with the theme of City Fictions at the former NOMA site in Manchester, where a pop up city will emerge. A workshop will explore themes currently being scoped with the team to engage stories in this site-specific context.

Links:

<http://futureeverything.org/festival/art/>

## StoryStorm Vancouver (DIS June 2014)

### A Collaborative Exchange of Methods for Storytelling

Evaluation of Storystorm events and workshop activities is on-going and this cumulating event will bring data and evaluation together at a workshop accepted at DIS 2014. This facilitated collaborative workshop will present key exemplars from the Storystorm events and a range of evidence based outcomes.

The workshop is organized to articulate findings around the themes of the known and unknown (or unarticulated) storytelling methods emergent and will form the basis of a Storystorm 'toolkit' or lexicon for distribution.

*'The breadth and scope of storytelling within Design has yet to be truly realized and harnessed. Furthermore, much can be learned from other disciplines. This workshop will actively explore this potential, extending beyond the commonplace use cases.'*

#### Workshop Aims

- To identify and map the range of conscious and unconscious storytelling tools adopted in research processes and artifacts, through examples.
- To explore transformational qualities inherent in storytelling e.g. participatory, collaborative practices.
- To explore how digital forms of capturing, crafting, and sharing stories are responding to and generating new configurations of understanding.
- To explore how collaborative storytelling methods can help create ways of working across different perspectives and valuing different registers of knowing (cognitive, embodied, affective).
- To draw on participant expertise to populate a lexicon and craft multilayered, visual methods of encoding storytelling processes as a workshop output.

#### Links

<http://dis2014.iat.sfu.ca/>

The [ACM conference on Designing Interactive Systems in 2014](#) will explore the idea that the design of interactive systems is entering a new socio-technical paradigm around the idea of craft. The theme of the conference is "[Crafting Design](#)".

## Dissemination

### Social Networks

Dissemination of our work is currently being assessed and we have secured a mailing list [storystorm@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:storystorm@jiscmail.ac.uk) for internal communication. A project website will be launched (March 2014) to begin the dissemination of findings from our workshops, we have used eventbrite and twitter #story storm to distribute information from our own and related projects.

### Press

Storystorm Dundee Press Release engaged local press, twitter, city council and participants. The StoryStorm Dundee event was featured on the websites of University of Dundee, DCA, CCN+, Dundee City Council, and a number of event sites as well as a feature in The Courier Newspaper.

### Conferences

We have been successful in our proposal for a Storystorm workshop at DIS 2014 and this will both disseminate project findings and assist the project team in reviewing and evaluating our stated aim to produce a Storystorm toolkit.

## Presentations

- Storystorm Dundee. MacManus Museum and Dundee Contemporary Arts. November 2013.
- Dundee EPSRC Engineering Theme Presentation October 2013
- CCN+ Leeds Symposium September 2013

### Upcoming

- Storystorm Manchester. FutureEverything Festival 2014. City Fictions workshop and presentation.
- Storystorm Vancouver at DIS 2014

## Participants

Participants from the following organisations have attended the first Storystorm event: Storythings, Dundee City Council, DCA, Creative Dundee, Creative Solutions, Dundee Leisure and Culture (Library) The MacManus Museum, Dundee University, Abertay University, St Andrews University, Blether-Tay-Gither (Storytelling Group), City Of Culture Bid Team, Creative Scotland, and Cultural and Heritage Groups.

### Disciplines

Digital Interaction Design, Fine Art, Design for Services, Artists, Games Developers and Designers, Product Design, 3D Visualisation.

Woods. M (2014)

## Appendix A

### PRESS RELEASE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE STORYSTORM BUILDING AN `AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF DUNDEE`

Dundee's submission to be UK City of Culture 2017 included a commitment to create an 'autobiography of the city'. Now the Storystorm project led by the University of Dundee is to start telling Dundee's story.

A workshop featuring experts from across the UK will be held in Dundee Contemporary Arts on Thursday November 28<sup>th</sup> and is inviting contributions from everyone from designers and architects to collectors of Dundee `stuff` and those who simply have a story to tell about the city.

"The Storystorm team is passionate about storytelling, and especially within communities with an urgent story to tell," said Mel Woods, Senior Lecturer at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design (part of the University of Dundee) and project lead for Storystorm.

"In Dundee, we hope to continue the fantastic work that the City of Culture bid team and everyone around that have achieved, by supporting an inclusive, exciting vision for our future city. This workshop, delivered in conjunction with experts from across the UK, will explore the role of storytelling methods in developing, capturing and replaying the significant narratives of a city, its past and future vision.

"If you are a technologist, game maker, from the worlds of design, interaction, architecture, art, film, photography, storytelling, or a collector of Dundee 'stuff' or simply have tales to tell, please come along."

The day will include presentations; workshops and an opportunity to create teams to further develop the project.

Speakers at the event will include:

- Matt Locke (Channel 4, BBC, Storythings)
- Nick Taylor (Dundee Fellow, Bespoke)
- Rod Gordon (McManus Gallery, Dundee's Oral History Project)
- Gillian Easson (Creative Dundee)

Places can be booked via the DCA Box Office or online at:

<http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/storystorm-tickets-5810793239?aff=estw>

This event is part of Book Week Scotland and is funded by RCUK SerenA and EPSRC Communities and Culture Network+

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