StoryStorm: Communities with an urgent story to tell.

Communities and Culture Network+ Final Report.

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STORYSTORM CITYFICTIONS

HERE
EVERYDAY

hope is renewed

Contents

1. Executive Summary

The Storystorm network aimed at bringing together communities of practice and interest to enrich and develop shared network understandings o new forms of storytelling. Our engagement through storytelling with heritage, history and everyday life, in turn, generated new collaborative research insights. The approach for the network was to scope issues, initially with CCN+ focusing on the role of storytelling in narrative, memory, identity and expertise. Then, by working directly with 'communities with an urgent story to tell' we delivered a series of national and international workshops in partnership with a range of projects and stakeholders. Finally we held methods based workshops primarily within the academe where we recorded key issues, mapped the range of storytelling tools, and demonstrated a new storytelling method.

2. Aims and Objectives

- 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.

3. Process

The network scoped and delivered four community engagement workshops, and four research driven knowledge exchange and dissemination events. Each event created partnerships with appropriate projects; agencies or organisations, leveraging the CCN+ grant award and building capacity by expanding into other projects and networks. The partnership approach increased audience exposure for Storystorm, enabled access to additional resources such as marketing and workshop space and brought in a high level of expertise to the Network.

4. 'Communities with an Urgent Story to Tell'

In each of the community led workshops Storystorm created a prior dialogue with each location, with each workshop addressing different questions borne out of those communities. The format of each workshop was adapted to suit the audience and particular questions, however all issued an open call to attract a range of participants including: citizens, academics, storytelling experts, professionals from the cultural and heritage sector. The four locations and questions and partners are mapped in figure 3

City, Date	Issue	Attendees (Reach)	Partnership
Worksh0p 1 Dundee November 2013	*'How do we create an autobiography of a City?'.*	Citizens, Industry Experts, Cultural Leaders, City Council, Academics, Citizens (36)	City of Culture 2017, BookWeek Scotland, 'SerenA' (RCUK).
Worksh0p 2 York March 2014	*'What are the stories of Stonebow House and what might be the stories to come?'*	Citizens, academics (45)	'How should decisions about heritage be made?' (AHRC).
Worksh0p 3 Manchester April 2014	*'CityFictions'* *'Propose and create new ideas for the future at City Fictions''*	FE Festival and Exhibition attendees, General Public, Public and third sector. (100+)	FutureEverything (FE) Festival (2014)
Worksh0p 4 Cambridge March 2015	*'use storytelling to anticipate future events in the city, and draw connections between people, practice, design, innovations, themes and goals'*	Microsoft employees, RTD conference attendees, General Public (100+)	RTD Conference and Exhibition (2015)

Figure 1. Table indicating Storystorm workshops, issues, locations, participants and partnership working.

4.1 Workshop 1 Storystorm Dundee (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. A consultation process revealed a number of issues and opportunities for storytelling. The theme 'how do we tell the autobiography of a city' emerged from this event.

Figure 2 shows a mapping in consultation this event and the communities present identified the question of creating an 'autobiography for a city'.
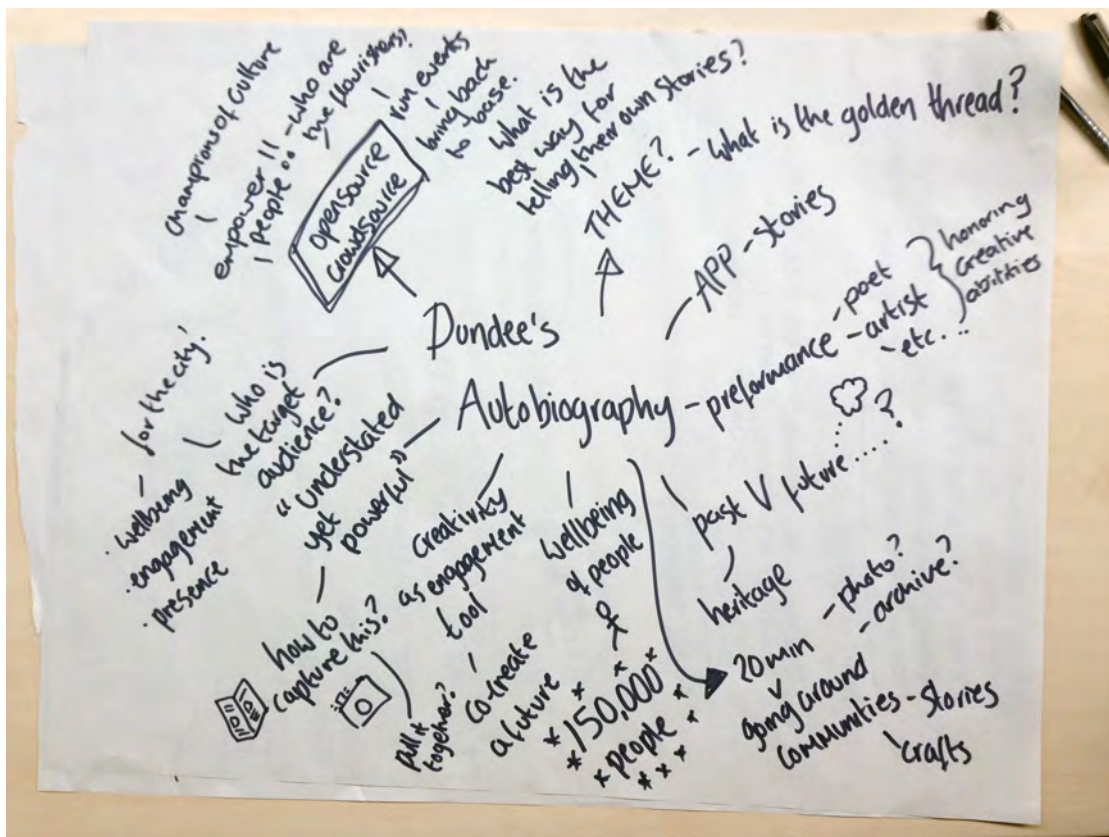

Figure 2: Preliminary scoping for Dundee at DDBlueSkies for 'Autobiography of a city'.

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 was the kick off event for the CCN+ network and was delivered in conjunction with Bookweek Scotland. It explored the role of storytelling methods in developing, capturing and replaying the significant narratives of a city, this issue being derived from the earlier scoping exercise described above. The workshop itself was designed to intersperse curated guest speakers with facilitated workshop activities (Figure 2) and participants were given the opportunity to discuss each presentation. Each speaker reflected on contemporary challenges for storytelling, authorship, expertise and implementation for the City, it's past, present and future. Presenters Matt Locke (Storythings) gave a talk about 'The Future of Storytelling', Gillian Easson (Creative Dundee) presented 'WeDundee Crowdsourcing', Rod Gordon (MacManus Galleries) revealed the issues and opportunities for 'Oral Histories' and Nick Taylor (University of Dundee) spoke about 'Civic Engagement and Social Tools' to support storytelling and insight gathering.

Figure 3: Storystorm Dundee workshop group activities.

4.1.1 Outcomes

Storystorm submitted insights from the Dundee workshop to the City of Culture team, who wrote this signature projects into the bid as part of the city's bid to be City of Culture. Subsequently the 'autobiography of a city' and use of storytelling was developed a commitment for Dundee Cultural Strategy 2015 —

2025 to underpin resilience, ensuring Heritage has a place in it's future.

Dundee's Cultural Strategy, and reference to the 'Autobiography of a City' project can be found online:
http://www.dundeecityofdesign.com/downloads/Dundee%20Cultural%20Strategy_online.pdf

4.2 Workshop 2: Storystorm York (April 2014)

The second event will formed 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?

Issue: Stonebow: Past, Present and Future

On 12th April 2014, 45 people came to explore the histories, present use and potential futures of Stonebow House. Stonebow House is often cited as York's least favourite building. Alongside a general and unofficial sense that it is 'ugly' and 'a monstrosity', it is also listed as a detractor in the Conservation Area Plan, which states Stonebow should be 'replaced by [a building] that better responds to the Conservation Area's characteristics' (2011, p. 467). In January 2014 the City of York Council bought the freehold of the land Stonebow House sits on, so it seemed some kind of decision about Stonebow House was likely to be coming.

The Stonebow event intersected with another research project, 'How should decisions about heritage be made?' funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council's Connected Communities programme. Early in 2014 it was becoming clear through the York strand of the project – called York: Living with History – that another key context for Stonebow House was the widespread sense of the failure of 'consultation' as a means of institutional engagement with the public. Far from increasing a sense of involvement in decisions facing the city, our mapping the lived experience of decision-making we conducted through drop in at York library and on public stalls, suggested that consultation was largely counterproductive, assumed by a vast majority to be a 'fig leaf' for decisions already made. These were the two urgent contexts for the York Storystorm.

As such our interest lay in how developing a complex account of Stonebow might open up more participatory decision-making. The aim of the event was to brining together different kinds of storytelling. Histories using the 1911 consensus of what was the Hungate area were develop by Martin Bashforth – from York's Alternative History. Photos of the area were gathered by Richard and Lianne Brigham through York Past and Present facebook. During the event itself these histories were shared and linked to stories people wanted to tell about the building today. The participants came with a with range of different stories to tell from those who were regulars at Fibbers and the Duchess, the live music venues in the building, to those who shopped at Heron Foods, a cheap supermarket to those who lived near the build and disliked the loud voices of revelers leaving after gigs had finished.

At the end of the April event there was a strong sense that more work needed to be done to develop the stories shared into something that might meaningfully engage with any future decision-making. Out of this event we devised a follow up event – held in July 2014 – the focus of this event was to think less about 'opinions' often solicited in consultation but to think instead of 'arguments' and people being exposed to other peoples and testing and developing their own.

Figure 4: Stonebow House, built in 1964. Credit: York Mix

4.2.1 Outcomes

https://livingwithhistory.wordpress.com/2014/08/06/stonebow-house-not-exactly-yes-or-noat-our-last-event-there-was-a-lot-of-grey/

http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/10918497.Stonebow_House____may_be_demolished_/

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4.3 Workshop 3: Storystorm Manchester (2014)

The StoryStorm network held the third of its events in Manchester as part of the FutureEverything Festival 2014 as part of 'Tools for Unknown Futures'. Prior consultation on the role of storytelling in this context was undertaken in collaboration with the festival team, and curators, who themselves were engaged with representatives of the city including citizens and decision makers. The curatorial approach taken was one of a future city, a 'pop-up urban experiment', where visitors took part in collaborative storytelling around a 'City Fictions' site. The physical site was at NOMA, a group of buildings to the north of the city centre that were formerly occupied by the Co-Operative Group. The aim was to bring playful ideas of near-future city institutions to life, and explore peoples responses and reflections on these though storytelling.

'What hopes and dreams do you have for a city of the future?

Storystorm Manchester happened in over the course of two days from 29th – 30th March 2014. The event saw the team adopt a new conceptual approach and method for workshop delivery in order to engage participants in collaborative storytelling activities. The team adopted personas of tour guides, and presented Storystorm as a forum for citizens and groups to try out or respond to any area of civic future. A futures facing institute 'The tourism and heritage working group' to help guide a series of tours in order to commemorate important local events, many of which resided in the future.

Figure 5: Storystorm 'desk' with map, index of plaques and Storystorm

participants complete a nano-story on a blue plaque prior to placing in location.

The audience was invited to leave a trail of spontaneous messages and help propose and create new ideas for a future city at City Fictions. The Storystorm team were on hand to help and guide participants through the site on tours, which ran on the hour throughout the Festival. A new storytelling 'boundary object was introduced to facilitate this interaction, the Storystorm 'Blue Plaque'. Storystorm plaques and storystickers were available from a Storystorm hub, and were used to record personal events, such as 'here is a good place for a first kiss', share wishes 'here everyday, hope is renewed', commemorate a new 'park for a weekend', or dystopian visions such as the Mass Brainwave of March 31, 2020, when 'citizens of Manchester participated in a mass neural prosthesis experiment to control patterns of thought'. Plaques were placed around the site. And updated to a site map (Figure 5). By taking part, people collaborated to tell the story of the future city.

4.4 Workshop 4: Storystorm Cambridge (2015)

StoryStorm presented a novel method that draws on the specific cultural context of Blue Plaques to generate reflective, nano-stories. English Heritage Blue Plaques pepper the UK landscape expounding officially validated narratives celebrating past events, people, and buildings. The 'Guerrilla Blue Plaque Method' helped to articulate issues through telling stories of the near future. The team had adopted the Blue heritage plaque previously in Manchester and this workshop and exhibit refined the idea of co-creating stories set in the future. The stories themselves were co-created, focused but emergent, with themes and near future issues influenced by the RTD conference and exhibition, research at Microsoft, the history, issues and culture of Cambridge, and news in general. The plaques populated the environs of Research Through Design Conference, for example Figure 6, and the city of Cambridge.

Figure 6. 'Orwell Lived Here 2020- 2029, Robot, Poet, First Robot Rights Advocate'. Plaque at Microsoft Research, Cambridge, UK.

4.4.1 Outcomes

New digital platform for sharing Storystorm blue plaques with expanded descriptions contributed people outside the conference. http://storystorm.herokuapp.com/

Sketchnotes and Papers in section 7.2

5. Storystorm Research Workshops

In order to engage the academe, the storystorm team ran academic facing workshops for researchers to explore the role that storytelling plays in research, the approaches and technologies that support it. These are broadly outlined in the Figure 7. Evaluation of Storystorm was brought together at DIS 2014 where a collaborative workshop was organized to articulate findings around the themes of the known and unknown (or unarticulated) storytelling methods.

City, Date	Activity	Partners
Edinburgh 30th April, 2014	The workshop explored and mapped the variety of ways that stories are currently used during the research process, from hypothesis and scenarios to design fictions and prototypes. Researchers shared approaches to storytelling across disciplines, and suggested strategies and technologies for future consideration. (40)	RIDERS (EPSRC) and CIRCLE Networks
Glasgow Digital Design Studio 5th June, 2014	The workshop focussed on stories about heritage research and the value, challenges, opportunities and questions raised when we tell stories about our past. The workshop explored some of the innovative technological methodologies being used to tell heritage stories, allowing participants to map out their own use of digital storytelling methods, exchange knowledge and ideas, and identify some of the on-going barriers to telling the stories that researchers want to tell. This event captured researchers needs as storytellers and researchers for future developments in this area.	Glasgow School of Art
Vancouver, Canada 2014	The Storystorm team presented key exemplars from the Storystorm events and a range of evidence based outcomes. Participants contributed position papers, and artefacts, and the workshop drew on this expertise to	Designing Interactive Systems (DIS) 2014

	populate a lexicon and craft multilayered, visual methods of encoding storytelling processes as a workshop output.	

Figure 7 Table expanding on research workshops location, focus and partnership working.

6. Key Findings

Scoping and consultation with Communities was a form of Inquiry, and new approaches to identifying issues and challenges with communities were identified. The transformational qualities inherent in storytelling e.g. participatory, collaborative practices were vital in this process. Digital forms of capturing, crafting, and sharing stories are responding to and generating new configurations of understanding and value, particularly moving from the push paradigm of broadcasting to pull i.e. sharing, collaboration and co-creating content. New collaborative storytelling methods can help create ways of working across different perspectives and valuing different registers of knowing (cognitive, embodied, affective). Additional points emergent from research workshops are as follows:

- Past, present and future is contested. Everything is everywhere.
- Constructing, revealing and reflecting on 'life moments' are prominent in the way people are telling their stories. Sharing takes place both online and off.
- Stories need not be complex to be powerful, they create memory.
- New digital platforms are moving away from broadcasting, stories are made for sharing.
- Collaborative and co-created stories give rise to new value.
- Physical and digital prompts with simple methods are very useful approaches to collaborate with people who have not worked together previously.
- The future cannot be predicted, but it can be invented through storytelling.

Sketchnote of key insights from Storystorm DIS (2014) position papers
https://www.flickr.com/photos/makaylalewis/14300320889/in/photostream/
https://www.flickr.com/photos/makaylalewis/14300298580/in/photostream/
https://www.flickr.com/photos/makaylalewis/14486931855/in/photostream/
https://www.flickr.com/photos/makaylalewis/14483555651/in/photostream/

7. Dissemination, Papers, Presentations

7.1 Dissemination

Dissemination of the work centered on a project website, Flickr, eventbrite and twitter #storystorm for the distribution of information from our own and related projects. These are listed and linked below:

Storystorm website
https://sites.google.com/site/wearestorystorm/
Flickr
https://www.flickr.com/photos/130160395@N02/sets/72157650082509419/
Twitter
https://twitter.com/hashtag/storystorm
Sketchnote
https://www.flickr.com/photos/makaylalewis/14300320889/in/photostream/
https://www.flickr.com/photos/makaylalewis/14300298580/in/photostream/
https://www.flickr.com/photos/makaylalewis/14486931855/in/photostream/
https://www.flickr.com/photos/makaylalewis/14483555651/in/photostream/

Storystorm Dundee Press Release engaged local newspapers with a feature in The Courier Newspaper. The StoryStorm Dundee event was featured on the websites of University of Dundee, The List, DCA, CCN+, Dundee City Council, and reached a number of event sites such as A-N, WIRED.

http://www.dundee.ac.uk/pressreleases/2013/november13/autobiography.ht ml
http://www.thecourier.co.uk/news/local/dundee/storytellers-to-create-an-autobiography-of-dundee-1.157552
http://www.wired.com/2014/02/futureeverything-manchester-march-27-april-1/

https://www.a-n.co.uk/news/futureeverything-review-city-fictions-data-facts-tribal-rituals

7.2 Papers

Maxwell D, Woods M, Abbott D. StoryStorm (2014) A collaborative exchange of methods for storytelling *Proceedings of the Conference On Designing Interactive Systems: Processes, Practices, Methods, and Techniques, Dis.* 207-210. DOI:10.1145/2598784.2598800

Woods. M, Maxwell. D (2015) The Blue Plaque: Co-Creating Design Fictions in the Wild. *Exhibition and Proceedings of the Conference Research through Design.* http://dx.doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.1328000

7.3   Presentations

Woods. M (2013) Storystorm Dundee. MacManus Museum.
Woods. M (2013) Storystorm Dundee Engineering Presentation. EPSRC Swindon,

Woods. M, Graham. H (2013) Storystorm, Communities with an Urgent Story to Tell. CCN+ Leeds Symposium.

Woods. M, Maxwell. D, Abbott. H (2014) Storystorm Research. Vancouver at DIS 2014

8.   Funding Awarded (updated)

Storystorm workshop theme and project was included in the City of Dundee Cultural Strategy, which in turn was a part of the UNESCO City of Design application. Dundee was subsequently awarded City of Design Status in 2014.

Seannachies: Storytelling Addressing Social Isolation' SUII 'Scottish Universities Insight Institute, Note of Interest. In Collaboration with GSA, ECA. £20,000

Making Sense. H2020 CAPS ICT 10a, Collective Awareness Platforms. In collaboration with WAAG, JRC, IAAC and PEN Euro 1.3 Million

GROW. H2020 Citizen Observatory. Led by University of Dundee. 18 Partners Euro 5.2 Million

Woods. M (2015)