



# Introduction to Digital Storytelling, Anthropolis

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## Preface

School of Tomorrow (SOT) is an Erasmus+ project that aims to share ideas, practise and tools to create a more inclusive school and to prevent dropouts. A school where all kind of students, regardless of background, physical and/or psychological difficulties, social groups or similar, will be able to reach their educational goals. To achieve this we need to equip our learners with skills and competences such as creative thinking, inquiry based learning, critical thinking and independent learning.

Within the SOT project teacher and facilitator in the field of education have come together to create a toolbox of various approaches aimed at making learning more efficient and effective in today's globalized environment.



## Introduction

Anthropolis intends to promote the values of cultural relativism, participatory approach, citizens' empowerment and awareness on global issues. In order to introduce global perspective in institutional education and strike up social discourse, Anthropolis has created media and awareness-raising campaigns, educational programs and materials and documentaries focused on the topics of global learning, cultural heritage of minorities, fair trade, migration, gender equality and contemporary slavery.

Global Learning (developing and distributing educational materials, organising workshops and courses for both students and teachers) and Digital storytelling (DST) are the main working areas of Anthropolis. We are one of the main and most active promoters on global learning in Hungary.

Beside global educational activities, Anthropolis applies the **digital storytelling** method in different projects for diverse target groups including students, teachers, people with special needs, professionals etc. We dedicate two websites especially for digital storytelling [[www.storycenter.hu](http://www.storycenter.hu) and [www.storycenter.info](http://www.storycenter.info)].

Anthropolis has been working in the field of education (both formal and non-formal) since 2004. During these years we have built an extensive network of schools and teachers to whom we deliver workshops, promote our activity and involve teachers and educators from all level of education.

## Digital Storytelling (DST) – method and approach

Digital Storytelling is a relatively new term which describes the practice of ordinary people who use digital tools to tell their story (digital narratives). Digital stories are usually 2-3 minutes long and often present in compelling and emotionally engaging formats. One can define Digital Storytelling as the process by which diverse people share their life story and creative imaginings with others. Digital Storytelling offers storymaking and story-distribution services that prioritise the power of individual voices. Beside any individual usage, the method can be perfectly used for professional development, as a reflective practice, as a pedagogical strategy, a vehicle for education, community mobilisation, or advocacy.

Personal narratives can touch viewers deeply, moving them to reflect on their own experiences, modify their behaviour, treat others with greater compassion, speak out against injustice, and become involved in civic and political life. Whether online, in social media, local communities, or at the institutional level, the sharing of stories has the power to make a real difference, to understand, to learn from the stories, from each other. The stories that emerge serve as effective tools for change amidst a world of technology and media overload.

The blended nature of the Digital Storytelling methodology, combining narrative skills with technology's potentiality, makes it a powerful didactic tool that has found application in several fields. Storytelling has always been an integral part of human history; it structures

language, it helps individuals give meaning to the reality surrounding them and it makes communication and exchange possible. It is a practice shared by all cultures and traditions. Autobiographical storytelling helps individuals develop a greater self-awareness as well as an understanding of their life experiences, following a two-way trajectory between the self and other.

Digital stories are usually developed through a group learning process designed to support a range of skill levels and interests. Historically, digital storytelling has emphasised the first-person voice and its role as a purely personal artistic expression. However, the approach has also been used in countless educational, community, health and social services, human rights, environmental, and grassroots activist contexts. The stories become a tool to empower people and to help them to find a voice.

The DST methodology has also found broad application in formal and informal learning. It provides participants an opportunity to work in a group setting to reflect on specific experiences, whether they be major moments of accomplishment, life-changing experiences, or learning moments addressing injustices or socially constructed stigma.

The use of technology allows the translation of oral narration to video or to associate it with an image sequence; as a result, narratives acquire a new communicative power and a greater expressive richness. The practice and methodology of Digital Storytelling can improve the acquisition of new knowledge, the attainment of new skills, and the development of creativity, expressive competencies and a greater awareness of the self and of the other.

The project's main goal was clearly to encourage the use of Digital Storytelling in order to empower pupils, students through the creation of digital stories, as a tool for self-expression and for communication with others, removing cultural barriers and creating access to cultural and social life. The development of narratives and videos allows youth to acquire new technological skills on the one hand, and to expand their creativity on the other; it also fosters youth exchange in those projects where young people are involved.

## The Digital Storytelling Process

There are several methods by which to conduct DST activities but generally speaking, the process follows the path illustrated below:

### Briefing

Often known as the gathering, where potential storytellers are introduced to the concepts, processes and some examples of DST. This is a chance for storytellers to mix with each other and with their trainers. In this session it is important to demystify any issues surrounding DST, like the fear that their ideas for stories aren't very good, or that their skills/confidence are lacking.

- Important areas to cover in the briefing:
- Exploring the elements of a digital story;

- Clear explanation of the process and timescale involved;
- Advanced notification of requirements for the coming sessions i.e. when to write a script, bring in photos etc.;
- Basic but essential legal/copyright advice;
- Introduce the signing-off process

## Writing

Normally the writing process starts with a 'storytelling circle'. This session is designed to bond storytellers as a group and to tease out of them their innate powers of storytelling. The storytelling circle can be tailored to suit variable time slots between two and four hours. The ultimate goal is to get scripts drafted and finalised, ready for voice recording.

The three underlying principles of the story circle are:

- everybody gets involved (including trainers, technicians, observers etc.);
- nobody is allowed to apologise for their lack of understanding, ability or confidence;
- what is said in the storytelling circle stays within the room i.e. is confidential.

There are a number of activities involved in the storytelling circle. These activities can be time-consuming, so trainers tend to pick a selection, depending on the time allowed.

An important part of any workshop is ensuring all participants are happy to share stories with others. The Storytelling Circle introduces story games that are intended to break the ice for any new group and allow people to get to know each other. Some people come to a workshop with no real idea of the story they may tell, or perhaps feel they have nothing of interesting to say. The storytelling circle and games are not only a fun way start to a workshop but also boost participants' confidence and may provide them with an idea for their own story. For those participants that already have an idea for their own story, the storytelling circle gives them an opportunity to not only share their idea with the group but to also pick up ideas from other people's methods of communication, thereby improving their own story.

At the end of the storycircle, every storyteller should know the subject of their story and ideally a first draft should be typed up, ready to read. In the case of any storyteller who has difficulty reading, there are alternative options to consider, like producing an interview-generated narrative. Once again, by the end of the storycircle, these storytellers should be content with the method they will use and the focus of the interview. The final aspect of this phase is the creation of a storyboard for the piece. As an approximate rule, one image per sentence is recommended. This organises the storyteller and highlights any areas in the script where there may be missing images.

Often storytellers find that in their mind's eye they have all the pictures they need to tell a story, but the storyboard quickly tells them they may have several images to cover one sentence, and nothing to cover the rest of the film!

## Recording

This is the point at which the technical aspects of DST begin. Both the technical quality and the 'feel' of the voice recording are vital to the success of a digital story. Included in the 'recording' phase is the capturing of images and the gathering of any music track or sound effects.

Many of the pictures used in a digital story may only be available as photos, so they will need to be scanned, or photographed using a digital camera. It is becoming regular practice to download photos from the internet, from social networking sites and the like, but this should be avoided for copyright reasons and for to assure the authenticity of the story.

## Editing

There are several forms of editing required to produce a digital story:

- the recorded voiceover track needs to be gapped and mistakes removed;
- photographs need to be edited, especially if they have been scanned;
- the edited soundtrack, edited photos and titles are combined to create an edit of the digital story.

It is easy to underestimate the amount of work that goes into an edit. It's predominantly a technical process but the creative aspects are crucial to the production of a successful story. There are some magnificent moments during a DST edit, when the elements start to come together and tiny changes make massive improvements. Once the edit is finished, the digital story is exported as a completed movie file, for sharing.

## Sharing

Storytelling is a multidirectional process, so every story should be shared. Some stories are too personal to be put out to a wider audience but the rest, which accounts for the absolute majority, should be made available for people to see.

Three ways to share stories are:

- Burn a DVD and show family and friends;
- Put them on a website, like Vimeo or YouTube or on social media;
- Hold a screening event for a batch of stories and invite guests to marvel at your work.

## Competences

Digital Storytelling methodology helps participants to develop important competences such as: communication skills (active listening, timing, positivity, working in group), writing skills (ability to express and interpret concepts, creative writing, writing in mother tongue), creative skills, digital competences, learning to learn, social and civic competences, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness and expression.

Digital Storytelling is a highly democratic tool that involves the use of a very simple technology, easily accessible to everyone. At the same time, thanks to its highly communicative nature (digital stories can be easily shared on various social networks), it is also an attractive tool for young people.

## Some digital stories (examples)

For watching, click on the image



Shopping



Boys Night Out



Friendship



New Beginning



A Rosary in my Suitcase



Keep going...





One Day Could Change Everything



Children's Education on the Protection of Nature



The Women of Couffo



The Cyber Nomad



Tinia



Colourful, isn't it



When I grow up...



Ripples