**Newcomers to Europe sharing their Untold Stories –
Digital storytelling using Web 2.0**

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Abstract: *This paper explains the role and approach of the Untold Stories project (Lifelong Learning Programme, Grundtvig 2007) in providing informal learning tools for the migrant communities in Europe with the focus on the use of Digital Storytelling and modern ICT together with engagement of cultural institutions as the obvious informal learning providers.*

Introduction

Digital Stories are rapidly becoming globally acknowledged powerful tool for learning, integration, preservation of the past, creativity, and culture. They transfer knowledge of the past generations, reveal new experiences and help to discover ethnical heritage existing in different countries. Historically, experiences, rituals, traditions, stories were passed from generation to generation by simple use of words and objects. Many of them got lost along the way, others remain and became important part of our culture. Modern age allows us to express ourselves, share experiences, and preserve our unique life-stories using digital technologies.

BBC has defined digital stories as following: "A digital story is a short film made from a script that tells a personal story illustrated with pictures from your photo album." (http://www.bbc.co.uk/tellinglives/what.shtml)

Digital Storytelling gives a unique opportunity for informal learning, creativity, integration and preservation of the diverse experiences, cultures and life-paths. It is a powerful tool for learning, integration, cross-cultural exchange and understanding of citizens' backgrounds.

Untold Stories Project: Background and Rationale

Untold Stories sets out to enable and demonstrate how individuals and groups from migrant communities in specific regions of four different countries of Europe (the Czech
Republic, Denmark, Germany and Greece) can create, store, promote and share Digital Stories which reflect their life and experiences in their adopted country.

To achieve this Untold Stories has made available to members of these communities an easy-to-use approach to Digital Storytelling, using popular technologies, such as Web 2.0.

The project makes use of the potential of cultural institutions, principally public libraries and museums, to provide new, informal and accessible learning opportunities. Library and museum staff in the four regions have been trained to train and support groups of individuals from migrant communities in the art, skills and technologies involved in the creation of Digital Stories.

The deployment of Digital Storytelling holds a particular potential and new opportunities for migrant communities, providing a channel for the recording and sharing of personal experiences in a digital format which can be widely shared, encouraging mutual understanding and tolerance among the ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups represented in all societies.

A major practical output of this work is to establish and implement a process for the creation of 'libraries' of Digital Stories which can be discovered, accessed and shared

on the web and which will eventually be made open to contribution by other groups and individuals across Europe.

Project Approach

The main work of Untold Stories is to enable the creation by individuals or groups from a migrant community of a short 'digital movie' or 'photostory' integrating images, text, and sound with narration using easily available software programs which are available to support Digital Storytelling. Untold Stories enables migrants to create stories in their native languages, as well as those of their 'host' country.

Through the Web 2.0 applications integrated by the Untold Stories platform, previously passive recipients of content are encouraged to engage with and comment on the Digital Stories created. A Creative Commons approach to the assignation of rights will make the stories available for re-use by others.

Untold Stories is using the two years of the project to follow a well-defined process according to the following stages:

1. Develop a technical toolkit suited to the needs of end-users in creating Digital Stories;

2. Train the staff of participating libraries and museums to use and train others in the use of the toolkit. A staff training workshop in Dachau, Germany during May 2008 involved staff members from all participating libraries and museums, in order to impart full familiarity with the technologies, processes and content to be deployed. A major goal was to enable the participants to cascade training to the end-users from migrant communities in their region so that they in turn are able to create Digital Stories;

3. Engage a user test bed from the specified migrant communities, resulting in an initial user base of 25 people per region interested to create Digital Stories. In at least two of the participating regions (Germany, Greece) the creation of an initial user base of this size is being achieved by a multi-step iterative process in which the regional workshops (below) were the first activity;

4. Train and support them through and after workshops, which have been held in each region in the period September-November, 2008 to create a first group of 10 stories per region (minimum);

5. Make the stories available through a sustainable web environment for a contributory Digital Storytelling library, now available at www.untoldstories.eu.

6. Evaluate the first stories created in this way, alongside their learning impact on the users: an evaluation approach has been designed which provides an assessment of project progress to date on the technical, process, content creation, learning outcomes and other levels, to be used as a basis for correction and modification of future activities. As part of this process, the first stories will be analysed and categorised by subject, by 'emotion' and by other aspects. This

approach will, among other things, assist in helping users of the site through enhanced discovery and navigation facilities.

7. Adapt and extend the model to a wider user group and thereby create 'critical mass' for a library of 100 Digital Stories freely available for anyone to view and for any citizen to comment upon or annotate, as basis for future expansion;

8. Evaluate the learning impact on the story creators and users;

9. Disseminate the outcomes more widely across Europe to policy makers and practitioners;

10.Ensure the expansion of the approach across Europe and sustainability of the library of digital stories created.

Project Outcomes & Results

The project has made available through its web environment access to the Digital Stories toolkit for story creators and also the training workshop resources and evaluation materials for cascading to long term beneficiaries: migrant communities, all adult learners with a story to tell, cultural institutions and other interested informal learning providers.

Contributors can upload stories to the website simply and directly using Flash-based tools.

The evidence derived and compared through implementing and testing the Untold Stories approach among different migrant communities from varying country, cultural and linguistic environments across Europe is enabling the project's results and evaluation to be enriched in ways which will support the demonstration of wide applicability
and the potential for replication and mainstreaming.

Project's specific outcomes:

- Organization of dissemination activities on a European scale, including a final conference for policy makers and leading practitioners, Untold Stories will create high visibility and capacity to create policy impact, emulation and take up.
- Enabling an environment for response and contribution between migrant communities with related interests and concerns. Untold Stories will contribute to the creation of European communities of interest for collaborative learning.

The key issue to be address by the Untold Stories project is the extent to which this kind of process has an impact on individual learning, motivation and engagement. Among the basic learning outcomes expected are the following: better writing, better reading, better communicating, more effective collaboration etc.

However, a number of other important issues are raised and to be addressed, including:

- under which conditions do people take ownership of their Digital Stories?
- what are the benefits of developing digital stories as perceived by informal learning providers, policy makers, migrant community leaders/stakeholder groups
  and individual learners?
- what are the obstacles to implement Digital Storytelling and how can they be overcome
- in which contexts and in what way can the project be used in a local historical perspective?

Local Historical Interest

The local history aspect is significant, which is evident from the stories that have been produced and uploaded to the Untold Stories website (www.untoldstories.eu). All four participating regions have demonstrated importance of digital storytelling for the preservation of the local history and a cross-cultural exchange on local level. Below is the Danish example which illustrates this.

Since the 1970s, the population of the western part of Aarhus included a large group of people with the Turkish background. On several occasions, this group has drawn attention to the fact that it felt neglected compared to the other bicultural communities in Denmark. Citizens with Turkish origins came to Denmark as so-called 'guest workers' and, as the term implies, were expected to return to Turkey once finished their employment. Thus, the group did not receive the necessary Danish courses or other offers that different refugees and immigrants have benefited from.

Approximately ten years ago a medium-size Danish provincial town carried out successful work with the Turkish segment of the population and thus collected quite a lot of history from the group.
In connection with gathering refugees' and immigrants' history it is important to be aware that some are unable to speak or write the language of the new country, and have as well very limited school education from the countries of origin.

Throughout years, Gellerup and Hasle Libraries have held the basic IT-courses for citizens where the duration of such classes was 12, 24 or 36 hours. On several occasions elderly citizens participated in the courses and through their new competences have increased the capabilities for acting in a local society.

As an example could be one elderly man participated in a course on developing the basic IT-skills. Per completion of the course, the man became enthusiastic about his new knowledge and started to attend the library on a daily basis to continue using the new skills. His interest increased even further when he found that he was able to search for relatives and descendants who had settled in other parts of the world. He has now established contact with many relatives and has started digitizing both new and old photos.

In the context of the digital storytelling It is important to consider the target group that the above man represents. Enabling older people to reveal their stories and create them digitally

based on old photographs and other evidence gives a new dimension to both genealogy and local history.

Partners

The Untold Stories consortium has been formed by several organisations active and successful in the provision of new learning services by cultural institutions.

- MDR (UK) has a well established track record in management and co-ordination of major European activities in this area over the past decade, including the PULMAN and CALIMERA networks of local cultural institutions under IST FP5 and 6, of which it was the Scientific Co-ordinator.

- Dachau-AGIL (Germany) is a newly-formed association which brings together a wealth of experience in the education sector and a strong knowledge of Digital Storytelling applications in practice. Its project leader is an experienced participant in projects linking libraries and museums.

- Gellerup (Denmark) and Veria (Greece) have excellent achievements in the provision of innovative and creative services through their public libraries to their citizens on an inclusive basis and in the employment of state of the art popular end-user technologies for these purposes. Gellerup is part of the Aarhus public library network, a previous winner of the Bill and Melinda Gates Annual Access to Learning Award for public libraries. Veria Public Library has recently completed its co-ordination of the LIGHT Operation project, under InterregIIIC, to demonstrate the value of Cultural Heritage on the Internet for regional development priorities such as learning and skills development.

- Cross Czech (Czech Republic) is an innovative SME which represents its Ministry of Culture in various international activities and has a strong history of engagement with museum-based activities nationally and at European level.

Activities across this strong, fit-for-purpose consortium have been distributed according to the particular strengths, expertise and location of each participant.

A key partnership area for Untold Stories is between the cultural partners involved and organisations which represent migrant communities or which support the development of ICT skills in those communities such as:

International Organization for Migration (IOM), CZ

IOM works to help ensure the orderly and humane management of migration, to promote international cooperation on migration issues, to assist in the search for practical solutions to migration problems and to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, including refugees and internally displaced people.

Ukrainian Initiative in the Czech Republic (UICR), CZ

UICR is a non-profit association, which develops Ukrainian culture within the European and Czech communities, assists cultural activities, helps Ukrainian citizens living in the Czech Republic, cooperates with other Czech subjects wondering about relationship between Czechs and Ukrainians and takes care of historical monuments important for Czech and Ukrainian heritage.

Both organizations became familiar with the technologies and processes used in the project. They were retrained in order to train the end-users from migrant communities so that they in turn were able to create Digital Stories. Another task was to find 25 people in migrant communities for training to create their own digital stories, which was the responsibility of both organizations. Last but not least, all cooperating organizations took a share in preparation and organization of workshops, training and communication with migrants and preparing digital stories for uploading on the project web site.

Community of Markt Indersdorf, DE

Markt Indersdorf is a municipality in the district of Dachau in Bavaria in Germany. It is responsible for various activities with refugees and immigrants in the region. In July 2008 it was a host of an important refugee meeting. This community also participates in various projects in order to improve the integration of the immigrants. A number of trainings were organized in this community within the frame of the Untold Stories project.

Community of Karlsfeld, DE

Karlsfeld is a municipality in the district of Dachau in Bavaria in Germany.
This municipality has organized various long-term projects focused on the integration of the immigrants. Current project work is in such fields as integration of the young immigrants into the local labour force and removal of political barriers negatively effecting integration.

Community of Vierkirchen, DE

Vierkirchen is a municipality in the district of Dachau in Bavaria in Germany. This municipality is involved in various projects dedicated to integration of young people. It has created "interest groups" which aim to bring young people together not according to their place of origin but rather their interests.

IT Guide Association, Gellerup, DK

The IT Guide Association is a multi-ethnic, apolitical, non-religious and democratic association. The association has a double objective: to form a community of people with an interest in IT and to share the members' combined knowledge with citizens lacking IT-competences through free IT-courses. IT Competence Upgrading was instrumental in Aarhus Public Libraries being awarded the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's highly estimated library prize "Access to Learning Award" of 500,000

USD in 2004.

In connection with Untold Stories, members of the IT Guide Association are providing workshops in Photostory and Moviemaker under the Danish AMU-system.

Citizen Involvement: Danish Experience

At Untold Stories project Gellerup Library was assigned a responsibility for the citizen involvement methodology development based on practical experiences gained during a number of years of continuous work with migrant communities.

In frame of Untold stories project, the library offered 8-days training classes under the Danish AMU-system to the members of the IT-Association AMU-courses are qualified as certified education, and therefore, could be used for personal carrier development by the individual participants. The strategy behind offering the courses to the members of the IT-Guide Association had two objectives: one was to advance the qualifications of existing members of the association, and the other, to recruit new members. At the same time, the course aimed to generate a team of teachers, who subsequently could take responsibility for consecutive courses in Photostory and Moviemaker.

However, practical implementation at a later stage of the project added some corrections to the initial plans. From the total AMU-class of 18 participants, a group of six volunteer teachers has been established. This group together with the library staff helped to realize the trainings of the migrants.

Subsequently, the contact has been made to various groups of migrants with the purpose of offering the learning courses. Such courses included:

- for the senior citizen-category: *'The Project for Elderly Immigrants: Time for the Family'*, http://www.tidtilfamilien.dk/

- for various women's' groups: *'Role models from the Women's Museum'*, http://www.rollemodeller.dk/EVENTS/UmbNewsEventDetalis.aspx?umbnewsid=31, the Women's Museum in Aarhus http://www.khaa.dk/, and Inter-cultural Women's Association http://www.icwo.org/

- for young people: contact has been made to the graduating classes in the district's municipal schools through the school librarians. Together with their computer teachers, the classes participated in *The Day of Digital Storytelling* on 16 May 2009.

The trainings have demonstrated that the main challenge was to keep people interested and dedicated to learning. At the stage when the project idea is described and classes are announced, there is a rather significant enthusiasm from the migrant communities. However, once the actual registration for trainings is required, the feedback is significantly more modest.

Thus, the initial strategy for citizen involvement has been adjusted and now includes closer work with personal networks and group leaders (e.g. the invitations are now sent to women, who all belong to the same personal network). Apart from the social dimension , such courses can make a 'break through' effect and allow to hold more open courses in the future.

In connection with the project, the following tips for citizen involvement have been produced:

10 great tips for citizen involvement – before the meeting
- Prepare a network matrix of cooperation partners
- Prepare a list of people to invite - invite those, who are most likely to accept the invitation, first
- Prepare a personal invitation for participants
- Find ambassadors who support the project and will recommend it to others
- Ensure a dialogue with the people, who are to be involved in the project, before invitations are sent out
- Ensure that invitations are sent out well in advance of the meeting
- Make sure that you are well prepared, so you have time to greet participants in order for them to feel welcome
- Start early in order to create a secure, inspiring and pleasant environment – if possible invite participants for a meal – otherwise serve coffee/tea and fruit, decorate the room with flowers, perhaps play soft background music for stimulation
- Mix potential users to create interaction between different sections of the population
- Make sure that evaluation tools have been prepared

10 great tips for the meeting with citizens – when citizens arrive
- Make sure you greet participants in a way that makes them feel welcome
- Create a secure, inspiring and pleasant environment – if possible invite participants for a meal – otherwise serve coffee/tea and fruit, decorate the room with flowers, perhaps play soft background music for stimulation
- Ensure an inspiring presentation of the project
- Make sure that participants recognise that by sharing their stories, the stories will become more relevant
- Ensure options for dialogue, which will help participants get a grasp of the story they want to tell
- Let participants tell their stories more than once – perhaps to the other people at the table during the meal and later for all participants
- Make sure that the schedule is not too tight
- Ensure that members of staff assist citizens in their choice of media during the first meeting in order to select the media, which best supports the story
- Ensure that agreements have been made before bringing the meeting to an end
- Show respect – remember it is the untold stories of the citizens we would like to hear

10 great tips to get started on your story – advice for citizens
- Consider the story you want to share – write down catchwords if it helps you focus – for instance share childhood memories, a special experience, a good friend, your wedding, your first child.
- Share it with different people in order to select which elements you want to include
- Focus on the important and central elements of the story

- How will you tell your story digitally? Through photographs – new/old, video, stills, or paintings/drawings?
- How will you present the text: through speak or recitation?
- What language will you use: Danish, your mother tongue, or English?
- First, prepare a board, then prepare a text manual: full text or catchwords
- Determine what you can do yourself and what you need help from the staff for
- Prepare a schedule – possibly together with the staff
- Remember that the story can only last between 5 and 7 minutes

Challenges

The below challenges were drawn up based on the experiences of the Gellerup library, however, they are relevant to all partner regions and have been noted by the whole team.

During the lifespan of the project the team faced several challenges related to the motivation and engagement of the citizens, as well as the targeting only one specific group - migrants. In most cases, the desire to tell a story has been evident, however, there was not enough dedication to move through the whole training procedure and enrol in training courses. In some other cases, a group of people was ready to enrol, but did not belong to the target group. At the same time, some groups went through the basic IT-courses and expressed their interest to learn more and later attended courses in Photostory and Moviemaker as an obvious opportunity to continue their learning.

When working with the modern ICT it is important to establish a synergy between citizens with IT-skills and citizens with an interest in telling stories. As an example, Gellerup library had to reject a group of senior citizens with the Vietnamese background, as they did not posses the necessary basic IT-skills.

Throughout the project, Gellerup library noticed interest coming from both ethnic Danish citizens and citizens with bicultural backgrounds. Similar situation was in all four regions participated in the Untold Stories project .

The project clearly needs to be extended beyond the current two years. IT workshops showed that many potential storytellers do not have the necessary IT-skills in order to create a proper digital story. Thus, the initial interest in creating a story drops with the understanding of inability to proceed with learning beyond the project's lifespan. Ensuring the continuity of the learning process and a proper uptake of the project methodology and results by the cultural institutions are essential elements for success.

Plans for the Future

A comprehensive evaluation of the outcomes of Untold Stories will be conducted, in co-operation with migrant community representatives, focusing on the impact of the work on lifelong learning outcomes on migrant communities and individuals, on the impact on the staff and operations of the libraries and museums involved and on the implications for their future strategies and activities. In addition the technical efficacy

and usability of the toolkit will be assessed and conclusions made on the need for future development and improvement in the light of emerging innovations (e.g. in the Web 2.0 environment).

Untold Stories has a major potential for dissemination of rich results gathered from its participating regions and for enabling comparatively rapid take-up and mainstreaming of its outcomes.

The Digital Storytelling movement is now gaining momentum across Europe. The role of cultural institutions in mediating this type of learning and creativity is growing and becoming manifest in one form or another in countries such as Norway, Portugal, Romania and the United Kingdom.

A Final Conference will be organized in Germany on 26 September 2009. It will be open to 100-150 participants, including leading practitioners and policy makers as well as ICT tool providers from the industrial and collaborative community sectors, in the cultural and adult learning sectors from all over Europe, to disseminate and promote the results of the project. This will be accompanied by a publishing a Final Report.

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Olga McHenry: Since 1999 actively involved in the European Commission projects as a project manager, expert, researcher. She has significant experience in the cultural heritage and ICT fields and works closely with the cultural institutions of different levels. She is a member of the European Centre for Women and Technology.

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