



TOOLS AND APPROACHES FOR
**DIGITAL
STORY
TELLIN
G**

A zine for researchers or anyone else!

MORE AT: <https://bit.ly/digi-story-rdds>

WHAT IS IT?

Digital storytelling combines **narrative techniques** with **digital tools** and **multimedia elements** to enrich communication about research and ideas!

It builds on traditional storytelling elements that engage the **imagination, emotions, and intellect**. Some of these include:



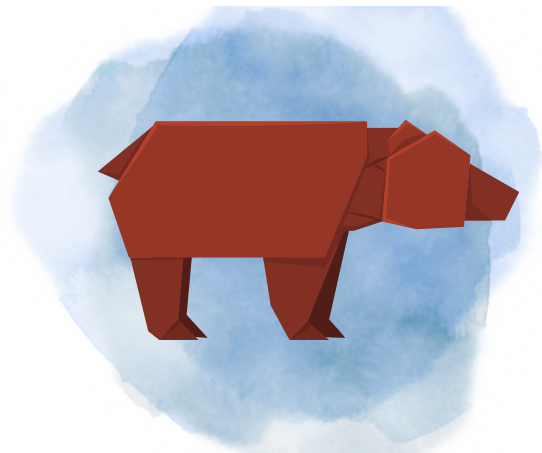
narrative arcs tropes
symbolism audience interaction
emotional hooks anecdotes
calls to action rhythm & repetition

WHY DO IT?

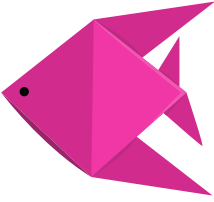
Humans are hardwired to find stories deeply compelling.

Stories can make scholarship outputs more immersive, interactive, and accessible for all kinds of audiences.

They can increase participation and collaboration around research to make audiences feel more involved and invested.



CATEGORIES:



MULTIMODAL PUBLISHING

- Digital publications that usually contain interactive elements like annotation layers, audio and video, or embedded applications
- May be developed as counterparts to analog or print materials as in the traditional publishing landscape, or may stand alone (“born digital”)

TOOLS & PLATFORMS

ArcGIS StoryMaps, Scalar, Manifold, PubPub

EXAMPLES

- “Pancakes & Silver: Historical Map Reading, Data Extraction, and 3D Visualization” (Stanford Libraries)
- “Feral Atlas” (Anna L. Tsing, Jennifer Deger, Alder Keleman Saxena and Feifei Zhou)

CATEGORIES:

DIGITAL ARCHIVES & EXHIBITS

- Gather items into collections and provide contextual information
- May or may not accompany or supplement a physical counterpart



TOOLS & PLATFORMS

WordPress, Omeka, CollectionBuilder, Wax

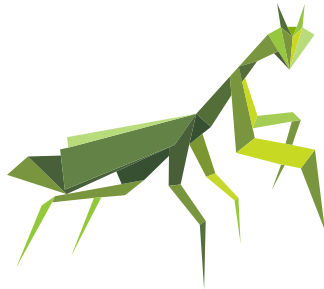
EXAMPLES

- “New Roots/Nuevas Raíces: Voices from Carolina del Norte” (UNC Chapel Hill)
- “Caribbean Women Healers” (Ana-Maurine Lara and Alaí Reyes Santos)

CATEGORIES:

INTERACTIVE MAPS & VISUALIZATIONS

- Put events and stories into context with spatial information or additional data to support an argument



TOOLS & PLATFORMS

[Google MyMaps](#), [Felt](#), [Leaflet](#), [Datawrapper](#)

EXAMPLES

- [“The Wall” Interactive Map Exploring the U.S.-Mexico Border](#) (USA Today)
- [U.S. Gun Deaths](#) (Perisopic)

CATEGORIES:

AUDIOVISUAL PRODUCTIONS

- Audiovisual productions can include podcasts, video essays, animations, documentaries, and much more
- Incorporate additional sensory inputs to enhance the emotional impact of a story



TOOLS & PLATFORMS

Audacity, GarageBand, iMovie, Adobe Creative Cloud software (Premiere, Audition)

EXAMPLES

- The Moth Radio Hour
- “Ghost Dance” by Tommy Orange (StoryCenter)

APPROACHES:

CREATING AN EXPERIENCE

Consider:

- Audience and tone
 - Who do you want to tell your story to?
- POV and perspective
 - Who is telling the story?
- Call to action:
 - What do you want someone to do, think, or feel after they encounter your story?
- Interaction and feedback
 - Is your story a dialogue between teller and listener?
- Choosing the medium
 - What tool will best fit the kinds of content you have to tell your story?

APPROACHES: CRAFTING A STORY

**What are the building blocks of
your story?**

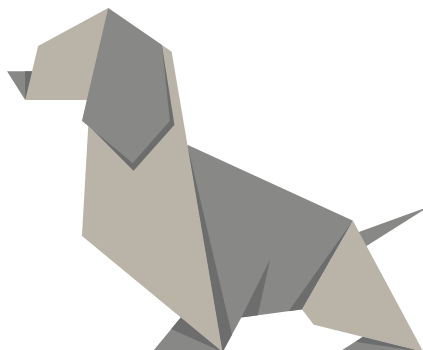
- Characters and settings
- Sequences of actions
- Narrative arcs
- Emotions to convey
- Take-aways

WRITING FOR STORYTELLING

- Keep it short and evocative.
- Eliminate jargon.
- Use headings and other “signposts”
- Give a clear “next step”

LEARN MORE

- Explore the resources in the [Digital Storytelling](#) section of the [Penn Libraries Public Digital Scholarship Library Guide](#)
- Check out the [Penn Libraries Digital Publishing at Penn Library Guide](#)
- Plan your story with a [worksheet](#) from Penn Libraries
- Take a workshop or explore stories from [StoryCenter](#)
- Review “[Nine Steps to Great Storytelling](#)” from Esri StoryMaps
- Tune into some [tips from master storyteller Ira Glass](#)



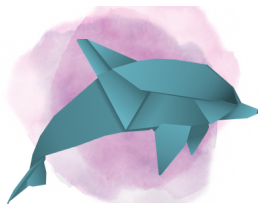
HOW WILL YOU CREATE AND SHARE YOUR STORY?

Take notes here!

ABOUT THIS ZINE

This zine was created by Cynthia Heider, based on a workshop offered at Penn Libraries.

- Download or view it digitally at <https://bit.ly/digi-story-rdds>
- Feel free to print and distribute under the terms of [CC BY-NC-SA](#).
- Preferred citation: Heider, Cynthia. “Tools and Approaches for Digital Storytelling,” accessed [insert date you accessed it here], https://github.com/upenndigitalscholarship/workshop-digital-storytelling/blob/main/2025-Zine_Digital_Storytelling.pdf.



To click through the links in this zine, view it digitally at <https://bit.ly/digi-story-rdds>!



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