

Fields, Anne & Diaz, Karen. *Fostering community through digital storytelling: A guide for academic libraries*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2008. 114 pages. \$42.00 (ISBN: 978-1-59158-552-7)

Fields and Diaz define digital storytelling as “brief multimodal digital videos that, in the case of the academic library, engage libraries in personal conversations with their communities.” What is important to understand about digital storytelling is it connects with the audience on a personal level in which they can relate to the library more directly.

Rather than telling about the importance of your library with statistics and hard data, the authors’ suggest to *show* how the library affects lives of the community with its unique services; *show* the “library’s present condition and future directions” which better illustrates the library is evolving with the rest of the information world.

Authors Diaz and Fields discuss the process of digital storytelling as a social process. This “transformational” experience is not only for the participants but the audience as well. Hearing an individual’s experience strengthens the bond with the campus community and the greater outlying community.

Digital storytelling creatively markets the library and its services, collections, programs, and projects. By raising the public’s awareness of the library’s impact, it may also be an effective fundraising tool. For example, a digitization project of rare photos in the library collection could warrant a generous response from a patron who might otherwise not know that treasures of rare, culturally significant photos are in their library.

Digital storytelling can have an emotional impact on the entire campus, and even the community in which the campus resides. Stories help to relate experiences and can inter-relate to one another’s life events. The stories “inspire empathy that informs our sense of identity.” Authors Fields and Diaz share their ideas of how to gather diverse points of view, capture stories using multi-media devices and how to share them with the library community. The authors explain that focusing on the point of view determines the effectiveness of the story.

The authors provide the theory and philosophy behind digital storytelling and also useful practical applications of the process. They suggest the video be 3-5 minutes in length. This will require succinct storytelling, poignant video images and appropriate music if desired. The hope is to engage and inspire, not bore the audience. Other ideas come from using stories from your faculty, using digital storytelling in the classroom as an assignment or to stimulate conversation meeting students’ unique and diverse learning styles.

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