

Digital Storytelling Project

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Abstract

For our final project in Communication Technology & Social Change, we were asked to use new media that can be classified as a form of “digital storytelling”. This project demonstrates our groups knowledge of new media and previews both previous and acquired skills. By using new media and engaging with an audience we were able to actively engage in digital storytelling. This paper will go into detail about the process for this project, the knowledge gained from this experience, and it will demonstrate how course concepts were applied.

Keywords: digital storytelling, new media, audience

Description

In order to incorporate digital storytelling into the form of new media, our group decided it was best to do so in a blog format. This way, our platform could be easily accessible either through a link or even an internet search. The target audience were prospective, current, and first year students at St. Norbert College. The primary purpose of this blog was to be used as a guide for college students. Our aim was for St. Norbert affiliated students to have a guide, whether they are locals or not. The locations consisted of De Pere, Green Bay, and Ashwaubenon. There were three general categories that our posts were structured around; food, entertainment, and activities. Each post was personalized and told from the perspective of the individual authors. Posts were based on personal experience and recommendations. Again, the aim was to encourage

readers to venture out and form their own opinions. This blog was not just aimed towards students affiliated with St. Norbert College. The demographic was mainly inspired by 18-22 year olds. Although it can be accessed by anyone, we still encourage readers to try these things for themselves, no matter who they are.

Overall, our group was satisfied with the end result. There weren't any expectations of this reaching a large audience or gaining a substantial amount of influence through the platform. If given the opportunity to continue this project our group did come up with a few ideas. More in depth descriptions of each author in order to showcase personalities and backgrounds in order for readers to get a better understanding would be a key change. We also discussed eventually posting updates on whether or not our opinions have changed or any feedback we have received containing personal experiences from friends, families, or readers. Finally, in order to gain a larger following we would provide links throughout our social media, use personal accounts to update individuals or provide information, and spread the word.

Inspiration

The inspiration that we had for this project was thinking back to our own freshman year experiences. Whether we were from right down the road in Green Bay or all the way from New Hampshire, we were coming into an area of unfamiliarity and didn't know what to expect. We

wanted to mainly take experiences that we have had here in this little town with many hidden gems and pass it along to the next generation to hopefully make their experience a little more adventurous than they were thinking. Whether it be a bowling alley, a hike, or a little hole in the wall mexican restaurant, if our experience is able to help them to become more social with a friend group and find their place, then it is worth it.

Obviously we can look to other media sites that are out there, such as trip advisor or yelp, to get information on what there is to do around a certain area. But when it comes to small towns like De Pere and the area surrounding Green Bay, it is almost better to take a little help from the “locals” that have been around longer. We have found that sometimes a friend’s suggestion goes a long way over that from a stranger, and while these other sites do a great job at gathering suggestions from anyone and everyone, our goal was to give the “friend” recommendations that you won’t get from those sites.

Experiential Learning

Throughout this project there have been a couple of new skills that have needed to be learned in order to put the best product forward that we could. Our group did have some experience using a platform like this to create a blog or run a website, but we had not imagined it as digital storytelling. We all have past experience telling our side of a story when it comes to face to face interactions with our friends or maybe even just somebody we have recently met, but

when it comes to telling it to an audience that we cannot see and don't know how they will view what we are saying, the task suddenly becomes unfamiliar. Learning how to describe what it is that we experienced in these locations and include the small details that even we may not have seen has been a challenge, but also a rewarding one at that. Going back and explaining what it was about the tacos at the little hole in the wall place actually let us appreciate these sites that we were recommending more and more. Overall, we have gained new ways of thinking and appreciating things in a way that we wouldn't have before. We have gained skills that would be applicable after our college careers come to an end, and we have most importantly gained a new perspective of looking at content that is being produced in today's society and what it is trying to say.

Digital Storytelling

When looking at what fundamentally makes something a form of digital storytelling, it has to contain some elements of 5 essential principles. The first of these being a serial structure, or how we arrange certain content as separate iterations over a period of time. With our blog we have been able to give recommendations that would vary among different age groups, as well as, if we were to continue to do this project, it would differ during the different seasons that Green Bay experiences. The aspect of having a personal presence, where the audience is given a second person character or they see our experiences first hand, is evident throughout our platform. It is

clear that we are almost having a conversation with someone in our project and giving them recommendations through this site in a first person manner. The concept of a social framework, or how we can interact with an audience is going to lend itself well to the way that Wix has allowed us to set up our blog postings. By including comment boxes and having different points of view for the locations that we are recommending, the audience can give accurate feedback and even suggest different places on their own, thus allowing the site to continue to grow even if we aren't the ones posting. This concept of our social framework can also be lumped together with the idea of platform affordances as it is described in the way of what our website allows people to do on their own as a way of interacting with it. Through the use of the four aforementioned principles, I don't see how you wouldn't classify this project as a form of digital storytelling. The only principle of digital storytelling that has not been addressed by our blog, in its current form, is that of multiple proscenia, or being available through multiple platforms of social media.

Given the small audience that we currently have it made sense to have the site be accessible by one location in a blog style manner. However, if we were to continue to work on this project, we would perhaps promote it on our own personal social media posts through links in our bios on instagram or even making a hashtag for people to follow. This could take form in many different ways, but for now it is only available as one simple site.

Engaging Audiences

By utilizing a blog as our form of showing our understanding of digital storytelling we were able to engage with our audience through the posts. Although we told our posts from our own perspective, we encouraged readers to form their own opinions. By readers going out and experiencing the things we wrote about first hand they are then able to actively engage, rather than take our word for it. We heavily encouraged the readers to expand their horizons, have a guide with helpful information, and most importantly make memories while in college. The audience was also able to engage by subscribing, commenting on the posts, and were given access to reach out to our group.

References

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