DIGITAL SEANCHAÍ:
USING DIGITAL STORYTELLING TO ACHIEVE OUTCOMES IN A STUDY ABROAD COURSE

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Seanchaí

- A traditional Irish storyteller/historian
- Pronounced shen-na-kee
- Ireland has a rich history of storytelling, stories were passed down through the generations.

Storytellers at Cnoc Swain, a restored village of cottages from as far back as the 1690s

What is Digital Storytelling?

- Digital storytelling is the practice of using computer-based tools to tell stories

- There are a wealth of other terms used to describe this practice, such as digital documentaries, computer-based narratives, digital essays, electronic memoirs, interactive storytelling

- In general, they all combine the art of telling stories with a variety of multimedia, including graphics, audio, video, and Web publishing

- As with traditional storytelling, most digital stories focus on a specific topic and contain a particular point of view

- Digital stories usually contain some mixture of computer-based images, text, recorded audio narration, video clips, and/or music. Digital stories can vary in length, but most of the stories used in education typically last between 2 and 10 minutes.

- Topics range from personal tales to the recounting of historical events, from exploring life in one's own community to the search for life in other corners of the universe, and literally, everything in between

(Taken from http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu)

Digital Storytelling in the Literature

- Digital Storytelling movement started in the 1980's in Berkley
  - Joe Lambert and Dana Atchley
    - Co-Founders of Center of Digital Storytelling, a community arts organization
    - Created the Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling

- Research
  - Integrating visual images with written text and personal narrative enhances and accelerates student comprehension and engagement (Burmark, 2004; Robin, 2008; Suwardy et al, 2013; Vasudevan et al, 2010)
  - Teachers who are able to create digital stories may find that they are helpful in engaging students in the content and helping to make abstract or conceptual content more understandable because of the infusion of personal narrative (Burmark, 2004, Robin, 2008)

Digital Storytelling in the Literature

Table 1
The Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling

Center for Digital Storytelling's Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling

1. Point of view	What is the main point of the story and what is the perspective of the author?
2. A dramatic question	A key question that keeps the viewer's attention and will be answered by the end of the story.
3. Emotional content	Serious issues that come alive in a personal and powerful way and connects the story to the audience.
4. The gift of your voice	A way to personalize the story to help the audience understand the context.
5. The power of the soundtrack	Music or other sounds that support and embellish the storyline.
6. Economy	Using just enough content to tell the story without overloading the viewer.
7. Pacing	The rhythm of the story and how slowly or quickly it progresses.

Figure 1. The convergence of digital storytelling in education.

Summer Study Abroad: Ireland

- Equine Study Abroad
    - 17 Days
    - Multiple locations in Ireland
        - Galway, Dublin, Cork, Kilkenny, etc.
    - 16 undergraduate students
    - 50% cultural/historical focus, 50% equine focus

Digital Storytelling Assignment

- Create the digital story video from a <u>narrative perspective</u>
  - First person
- 7-10 minutes in length
  - Pictures, Videos, Narration
  - Capture YOUR experience in Ireland!
- Use the program of your choice (ex. Windows Movie Maker, Camtasia, etc)
  - MUST be accessible and viewable on a campus computer

Desired Learning Outcomes

- Cultural Worldview
  - demonstrates understanding of other cultures in relation to history, values, politics, economics, communication styles and/or beliefs and practices
- Intercultural Curiosity
  - Asks questions about & seeks information about other cultures
- Intercultural Empathy
  - Readily identifies & interprets experiences from the perspective of more than one cultural worldview

Note: Students were not given these precise learning outcomes. The students were given guiding questions which are explained further next.

This allowed for the students to be creative and other themes to emerge.

Digital Storytelling Assignment: Guiding Questions Given to Students

- How has the experience changed you and your perspectives?
  - How has your overall perspective of the horse industry changed through this experience?
    - Similarities and differences between US and Irish Horse Industry
  - How has your overall perspective of different cultures changed through this experience?
    - Similarities and differences between US and Irish cultures
      - Was there time you found the intercultural part of this trip to be difficult? Explain.
        - Language barrier?
        - Cultural norms
        - Differing practices from US
- What were the most memorable parts of this trip? Why?
- What have you gained from this experience that you will bring back to your everyday life or future career path?
- What was the most challenging part of this trip for you?
  - Did you overcome this challenge?
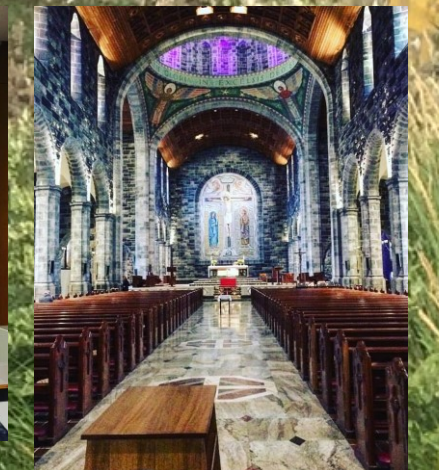
Digital Storytelling Assignment

- Students, upon completion of the trip had two weeks to use all of the "data" (videos, pictures, media) in order to create a 7-10 minute narrative video.
- Students were instructed that this was not to be a "trip recap" video and that we wanted to see what this trip had afforded them.
- After 2 weeks had passed, the trip teaching assistants, Emma Allen and Elise Lofgren, thematically analyzed all 17 videos and some interesting themes emerged.
  - Videos were watched and listened to first, taking note of the visual data in the presentation.
  - Then, audio was transcribed (by the REV transcription system) and words were used to relate to the codes found in the visual coding.
  - Both TA's coded all 17 videos separately to afford intercoder reliability.
  - Since the TA's built relationships with the students, transcripts from each video were given a random letter in an effort to prevent bias.

Digital Storytelling Assignment: Themes that Emerged

Learning Objectives:

Cultural Worldview

demonstrates understanding of other cultures in relation to history, values, politics, economics, communication styles and/or beliefs and practices

Intercultural Curiosity

Asks questions about & seeks information about other cultures

Intercultural Empathy

Readily identifies & interprets experiences from the perspective of more than one cultural worldview

Themes:

Cultural Worldview

demonstrates understanding of other cultures in relation to history, values, politics, economics, communication styles and/or beliefs and practices

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AND

Personal Relationships with American cohort

Personal Relationships with our Tour Guides

Personal Growth

Examples of Themes Related by Student Quotes:
Cultural Worldview

"They're more open to strangers than the U.S. is. And they are very passionate about their history which we are ….but probably not to the level they are. They also respect their history a lot more than the U.S. does. Once we were driving along, and Paul says 'Do you see those rocks on the hill over there in the middle of all the sheep grazing?' We're like, 'Yeah.' He says, 'Do you see that it is blocked off?' We said, 'Yeah, what is it?' He said, "Well, you know, Im not really sure but I know it was used for a religious practice of some sort. It might not have been Catholicism but we like to preserve the history even not of our own religion' I just thought it was really cool!"

Examples of Themes Related by Student Quotes:
Cultural Worldview

"Perhaps the most surprising passion of Ireland is their love for American politics. They have a Bill Clinton statue, a Barack Obama shopping plaza, and a John F. Kennedy park, just to name a few. It took me awhile to figure out why they were so interested in what we were doing in the U.S, but finally our bus driver told us how small their army and navy divisions are, and how its critical for them to have good relationships with large countries such as the U.S. because if they were ever to go to war again they would most definitely need an ally if they were going to stand a chance."

Examples of Themes Related by Student Quotes:
Intercultural Curiosity

"I'd be interested in spending more time on Irish farms to understand how they use what land and space they have to achieve these fantastic horses year after year, for hundreds of years."

"Every farm we went to on this trip provided me with new knowledge….I've always had a love for horses and always wanted to learn more about them and this trip provided me with both a stronger love of horses and knowledge about horses that I had been seeking."

Examples of Themes Related by Student Quotes: Intercultural Empathy

"Even after visiting Inishere (a small inhabited island that is very isolated from the Irish mainland), I still wonder how early Irish settlers were able to live on such small islands like this. Experiencing the remoteness, and seeing the close-knit island community living in the shadow of this ancient castle makes me think just how differently countries like Ireland and the U.S. came to be."

"There wasn't even electricity in that (Cnoc Suain, a rural village restored to its historical roots) area until the 1980's, where I grew up with electricity my whole life. The woman wo lives in the cottage now told us how they used to dance and carry home milk back home every day after she was done with school, which was very different for me because all I had to do was open my fridge for milk."

Examples of Themes Related by Student Quotes: Personal Relationships with American Cohort

"The whole trip was a life changing experience for me and I created everlasting memories with some amazing people. The most memorable part of the trip was meeting the people I went with because every single person on the trip made it worth going on."

"I never imagined that I would meet some of the most amazing people and I never thought I would get as close with them as I did in such a short amount of time."

"This trip was one of the most amazing experiences of my life and I met some of my greatest friends during the trip, which is awesome because I've never been a social person."

Examples of Themes Related by Student Quotes: Personal Relationships with Tour Guides

"The most memorable thing that happened to me wasn't a place but a person. Well, two. Paul and Tom. These two probably made the most memorable part of the trip for me because the minute they met us they took us under their wing and they never thought twice about it, They made sure we had everything we needed…they would stop just so we could get the best picture"

"I…made some awesome memories. But, by far the ones I will hold on to the most were those made with our bus drivers, Ray, Paul, Tom and Ken. Ray was a spitfire and made the beginning of our trip unforgettable. Paul was most definitely a storyteller at heart and he made the history of the land and folklore of each region come alive. Tom basically adopted the 19 of us and went above and beyond for us time and time again. He even took us to the beach on his day off!"

Examples of Themes Related by Student Quotes: Personal Growth

"This trip ignited a love for diving into other cultures that I hope will definitely guide my career goals. It will also translate into my personal career development, in that, with this new drive to travel the globe. I hope to take the best from each culture and mold them into a better individual, which is me!"

"I learned that I am a person full of passion for the horse industry, people, and making the earth a better place. That my fear of falling off the edge of a cliff can be masked by a breathtaking view, and that my fear of bridges can be overcome with just enough bravery to take the first step, and that the reward of that bravery could take my breath away. I learned that not having a set routine won't kill me, and that the most amazing adventure could be just a bus ride away if I'm willing to explore."

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