

THE PROCESS OF REMEMBERING WITH THE FORGOTTEN AUSTRALIANS: DIGITAL STORYTELLING AND MARGINALIZED GROUPS

Donna Hancox
*Creative Industries Faculty
Queensland University of Technology
Brisbane, Australia*

Abstract: *Digital storytelling projects have proliferated in Australia since the early 2000s, and have been theorized as a means to disseminate the stories and voices of “ordinary” people. In this paper I examine through the case study of a 2009 digital storytelling project between the Australasian Centre for Interactive Design and a group identifying as Forgotten Australian whether digital storytelling in its predominant workshop-based format is able to meet the needs of profoundly marginalized and traumatized individuals and groups. For digital storytelling to be of use to marginalized groups as a means of communication or reflection a significant re-examination of the current approaches to its format, and its function needs to be undertaken. This paper posits new ways of utilizing digital storytelling when dealing with trauma narratives.*

Keywords: *digital storytelling, memory, participation, social inclusion.*

INTRODUCTION

The human capacity to tell stories is a skill that can be considered both natural and learned. Storytelling and oral history can be found in all human societies; we humans seek to understand ourselves and each other through stories. Individual and collective memories collide in stories, as storytellers and story listeners seek to reconcile and construct what Kansteiner called the “collectively shared representations of the past” (2002, p. 182). Personal narratives form the building blocks for public narratives and, as Harter, Japp, and Beck maintained in *Narratives, Health and Healing*, “narrative is a fundamental human way of giving meaning to experience” (2008, p. 3). As a dynamic practice, storytelling, in all its forms, must be nurtured and developed if it is to contribute to the lives of individuals and communities.

Within the suite of methods for telling stories, digital storytelling has emerged as a useful and efficient way for stories to be collected and shared. As a process, it allows stories to be told in ways that incorporate visual and audio tools to enhance the power of the story. Additionally,

digital stories can be shared widely and quickly through digital technology, reaching audiences previously unattainable for “ordinary” storytellers. Thus far, digital storytelling has been theorized and practiced within a specific set of boundaries, and the limits of those boundaries have not been critiqued in any significant way. As a result, digital storytelling—as a means of connecting marginalized and mainstream communities through stories—remains underutilized, and its flexibility as a medium for disadvantaged groups and individuals relatively untested. Through the analysis of the case study in this paper, I explore the limitations of digital storytelling for particular cohorts. Furthermore, I ask whether the conventional framework of digital storytelling is necessary, and if not, how opening up this process can make it accessible to hitherto unrepresented parts of society.

The recent apologies to groups known as the Stolen Generation of Indigenous Australians¹ and to the Forgotten Australians² have drawn attention to an emerging intersection between the affordances of digital technologies and the recognition of the stories of marginalized people. Researchers have identified the potential of digital storytelling in these contexts as a means for inclusive co-creation to assist in the representation of multiple voices and viewpoints on the part of those affected by these issues (Burgess, 2006; Hartley, 2010; Klæbe & Burgess, 2009). The digital storytelling project that forms the basis for this paper was conducted in 2009 with a group of Forgotten Australians, in the months leading up to an apology delivered in the Australian Parliament in November of that year. In the project, I investigated the traditional paradigm for digital storytelling and its inadequacy at times to reflect the trauma of the participants, and to incorporate the sometimes incoherent narratives they created. However, it became evident in this project that the process of co-creating a digital story could be repurposed and reimagined by some of the participants to build a story that they believed authentically re-presented their experiences. Thus, it pointed to the possibility of using a new conceptual framework for digital storytelling in particular contexts.

Digital Storytelling in Australia

The number of digital storytelling initiatives and projects in Australia has increased rapidly since the early 2000s. The initiatives and projects have been and still are utilized by various public and community organizations for a variety of reasons. A digital story is generally a 2- to 4-minute multimedia story in which photographs, film, and drawings are used to convey a personal story, personally narrated by the storyteller. Hartley and McWilliam (2009, p. 1) defined digital storytelling as “a workshop based practice in which people are taught to use digital media to create short audio visual stories, usually about their own lives.” Digital storytelling can be classified into three broad types: (a) historical (collecting public histories of community and place), which is the dominant type used by museums and public institutions in Australia; (b) aspirational (empowering storytelling, particularly by marginalized storytellers); and (c) recuperative (helping storytellers overcome adversity; McWilliam, 2009, p. 39). Most digital storytelling projects utilize aspects of all these types so that the story comes together in a cohesive, palatable, and enjoyable whole, to which the audience understands how to respond.

Much has been and continues to be written about digital storytelling as a site for participation within a culture and as a means to improve digital literacy in segments of the society traditionally underrepresented as participants in the digital culture (see Burgess, 2006; Hartley, 2009; Hartley & McWilliam, 2009; Lundby, 2008; Meadows, 2003). Within this context, the scope and

definition of digital storytelling are increasingly up for debate. Specifically because digital storytelling fills “a gap between everyday cultural practice and professional media” (Hartley, 2009, p. 122), its potential has been championed extensively, and it has become a site of competing agendas. Nick Couldry (2009, p. 374) suggested that digital storytelling means that a whole range of personal stories now are being told in potentially public form using digital media resources. What this means to the creation of digital stories may be, however, an increased emphasis on appealing to a potential audience rather than in fulfilling the intentions of the creator. As a means of creating narratives, digital storytelling has proven to be a significant mode, due in part to its ability to reach a large number of people relatively easily. The audience for most digital storytelling projects is limited only by the wishes of the storytellers. Stories can be burned to compact discs and distributed or sold within the community, broadcast via a public event, or uploaded onto a Web site, such as the video sharing site YouTube, for wider access. The number of viewers varies, depending on the level of interest in the issues explored within the stories, the cohort creating the stories, and the conditions under which the stories were created. For example, a series of stories created by a large public institution, such as a library or museum, has different potential for audiences than stories created by a small community organization.

Quite rigid conventions have grown up around the model of facilitating and creating digital stories, which add to the appeal of stories for certain groups in society, yet simultaneously detract from the ability of other groups to produce digital stories, particularly those who perhaps would benefit most from the opportunity to tell their stories. Traditional digital storytelling workshops operate on the notion of expert facilitators who co-create the stories with the participants. There is also an assumption that participants arrive with a store—tangible and intangible—of memories and mementos from their lives that they can use to make a digital story, and that they have at their disposal all the necessary accoutrements to tell their story coherently and compellingly.

This form of digital storytelling is described by Jean Burgess as a movement

... explicitly designed to amplify the ordinary voice. It aims not only to remediate vernacular creativity, but to *legitimate* it as a relatively *autonomous* and worthwhile contribution to public culture. In this model of Digital Storytelling narrative accessibility, warmth, and presence are prioritised over formal experimentation or innovative “new” uses for technologies. (Burgess, 2006, p. 141, italics in the original)

The rise of digital storytelling in part mirrors the broad shift toward a more participatory on-line culture that privileges user-generated content and ordinary stories over content from official sources. The origins of digital storytelling lie in a response to the absence of ordinary voices in mainstream media and grew with the increasing affordability of digital technologies. As Daniel Meadows, one of the pioneers of digital storytelling, claimed, “No longer must the public tolerate the media being done to us. No longer must we put with professional documentarists recording us... keeping only the bits that tell our stories their own way, and more likely, at our expense” (2003, p. 192). The potential for social inclusion and participation, along with the promise of self-representation, is implicit in the discourse around digital storytelling. “The ability to express oneself in digital media and in the case of digital storytelling using digital video editing have become a central literacy for full participation in society” (Lambert, 2009, p. 85).

Explicit governmental directives in Australia define the role of digital technology in the efforts to encourage the social inclusion of and participation by marginalized individuals and

groups. The Australian Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy (2011, Digital Media Literacy section, para. 1) has stated, “Digital media literacy ensures that all Australians are able to enjoy the benefits of the digital economy: it promotes opportunities for social inclusion, creative expression, innovation, collaboration and employment.” The aims articulated by Lambert (2009) and the philosophy of digital literacy and social inclusion lay at the heart of the digital storytelling project described in this paper. However, the outcomes and benefits of the participants were much more amorphous.

The Forgotten Australians

In November 2009, the Australian Parliament delivered a bipartisan apology to the Forgotten Australians for the pain and suffering they experienced previously in church- and state-run institutions. The stories of the Forgotten Australians began to make their way into the consciousness of the Australian public through documentaries by Australia’s national broadcasting service and articles in the mainstream media, in the lead up to the apology. Like most large groups, the Forgotten Australians involve diverse demographics: Those identified as part of this group include successful and well-known Australians as well as ordinary Australians, many of whom have struggled significantly as a direct result of their childhood experiences. The now-adults affected by this project were considered to be individuals marginalized quite profoundly within the mainstream society. A number of them lived with mental illness, the majority lacked stable housing, and all had been severely emotionally, physically, or sexually abused as children in state- or church-run institutions.

The apology to the Forgotten Australians was preceded by the public apology to the Stolen Generation on the 13 February, 2008. The apologies to the Stolen Generation and the Forgotten Australians were the result of a number of Senate inquiries, leading to government reports: *Bringing Them Home* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1997), and *Forgotten Australians and Protecting Vulnerable Children: A National Challenge* (Senate Community Affairs References Committee Secretariat, 2004, 2005, respectively) and many years of advocacy and activism by community groups and individuals that included the use of personal stories, the digitization of records and, as the apology drew closer, a number of digital storytelling projects. In this paper, I discuss one of those projects that centered on the Forgotten Australians.

METHOD

The Participants

In August 2009 I was funded by the Australasian Centre for Interactive Design (ACID) to conduct a series of digital storytelling workshops in conjunction with the Micah Projects, a community-building and social justice organization based in Brisbane. Micah delivers services for people experiencing homelessness, runs programs for young mothers, and is responsible for the Historical Abuse Network, which is a network servicing the Forgotten Australians. After some discussion with the CEO of Micah, it was decided that the clients involved with the Historical Abuse Network would benefit most from this project. At the end of the project the stories were burned to DVDs and given to the participants. There also was a

function at the State Library of Queensland for the staff of Micah and the family and friends of the participants to view the stories.

Many of the participants had been involved in the 2003 Senate inquiry into the treatment of children in institutional care. In the intervening years, they had told the story of their abuse many times in official contexts and provided statements of harm for the inquiry. However, for this project, I wanted to encourage the participants to create stories that allowed them some agency in their own lives, and to reclaim some of their story from the official framework of abuse. Digital storytelling was one tool to accomplish this.

I put out a call within the Historical Abuse Network to gauge the number of clients who might be interested and to organize times for the workshops amid an already busy schedule of activities by the Network. Initially 20 individuals expressed interest. Eventually eight people completed stories by the required deadline, with my assistance. The participants—except one—were individuals actively involved in other programs offered by Micah, such as job seeking skills, cooking, yoga, and theatre. The participants were between 45 and 65 in age and divided equally between women and men. The workshops ran two afternoons a week for 12 weeks. For the purpose of this paper, the names of the participants have been changed to ensure anonymity, which was explicitly guaranteed at the start of the workshops.

The Workshops

A number of complexities were inherent in this project, some of which were specific to this particular cohort and some specific to all marginalized individuals and groups. Two of the significant features of traditional digital storytelling workshops are the expectation that the “authors” will bring with them photographs and keepsakes from their lives to use in the stories, and that participants engage in a “story circle” to share stories and refine the narrative they wish to use in their digital story. Many of the participants did not have photographs of their childhoods or of their families; some did not know how old they were (in many institutions all birthdays were celebrated on a single day, and consequently most lost track of their age and birth date), or had not had contact with their biological family for decades, resulting in few keepsakes. These hallmarks of legitimate biography were absent from their pasts as well as their contemporary lives. The combination of these factors meant that, for many, the ability to create a coherent narrative about their lives or to feel ownership over their lives had been seriously compromised. We soon discovered, however, that by using digital technology to create sounds and images for the digital story, we were able to create a materiality out of memory for the participants.

In “Orphaned Memories, Foster-Writing, Phantom Pain: The Fragments Affair,” Ross Chambers (2002) suggested a connection between the state of being orphaned and the fragmenting of a life narrative. When orphaned, the subject is no longer tethered to anything but memory and a phantom pain where the family used to be. Many of those involved in the project had been told that their parents were dead or they had been abandoned by their parents, when in fact they had been forcibly removed from single mothers or disadvantaged families. The process of making the digital stories became, then, as much about *remembering* as about telling their stories. It soon became apparent that remembering was in itself an onerous task, and the participants were not interested (as they may have been initially) in framing their digital stories in a positive or uplifting way. Rather, they began to see the

stories as being about survival and protest; many still felt they were waiting for justice or redress for the abuse they suffered. The date for the public apology had been announced and the participants seemed to feel a sense of urgency to tell their stories as authentically as possible before the apology drew a line under this chapter in Australian history, perhaps providing the “definitive word” on the Forgotten Australians. This meant that the stories of these eight individuals began to move further away from “tales of everyday life as experienced by ordinary people” (Hartley & McWilliam, 2009, p. 3) that comprise the majority of digital stories created in a workshop process, and more toward a digital representation of memory.

Digital storytelling workshops generally begin with a story circle that involves “limbering up exercises ... to tap into the people’s implicit narrative skills” (Hartley & McWilliam, 2009, p. 3) and to hone the stories with the feedback of the other participants. This process proved impossible with the Forgotten Australians. Most of the participants actively resisted sharing their stories with one another even though there was a shared narrative. One factor was that most of the participants were seeking compensation from various government and Church bodies for their ordeals. At the time of the workshops, some individuals had received monetary compensation, and a degree of bad will appeared between those who had and those who had not been compensated. To further complicate this issue, there were also discrepancies in the amount of money people had received. Consequently, one of the fundamental elements of a digital storytelling workshop was unable to be utilized in this project due to mistrust among some participants that the details of their stories would be stolen and used by others in compensation claims. Thus, the prescriptive nature of established digital storytelling workshop protocols proved somewhat unrealistic for this project. As a result, the organizers needed to quickly adjust their expectations regarding two key components: participants being able to provide mementos and willingly taking part in a story circle to polish their scripts. Moreover, I realized that my quite fixed ideas about narrative digital stories and the best way to tell a story seemed to be at odds with the aims the participants had for their own stories.

As it became clearer that the foundation of the stories was memory rather than a narrative arc, it became imperative to embrace the fragmentation, inconsistency, and incoherence of the memories, and to incorporate these aspects into the digital stories. The stories in this workshop had moved further away from the kinds of digital stories typical of state and national libraries or museums that I had done previously. Rather, the stories had much more in common with what is referred to in psychology and health frameworks as chaos narratives. A chaos narrative embodies a sense of disconnected events and is characterized by a lack of closure and the presence of day-to-day uncertainty (Harter et al., 2008, p. 4). Often such stories seem too incoherent to be told and too painful to be heard by others, as was certainly the case with some of the stories created for this project. Kansteiner (2002, p. 192) claimed that the use of visual images in memory construction is due to their “exceptional ability to close, and at times even obliterate, the gap between first-hand experience and secondary witnessing.” In this way, the technology inherent in digital storytelling became an integral part of the memory making for the participants: The capacity to incorporate pictures, sounds, and one’s own voice into the stories added dimensions and authenticity to the stories that were often absent in the written forms. Digital storytelling allowed inexperienced storytellers to intimately convey the nuances of their memories in an innovative way.

Aesthetic and thematic assumptions about the coherency and essential integration of images and words in digital stories abound, arising from the proliferation of digital storytelling projects associated with museums, universities, historical societies, and other mainstream organizations. However, as this project uncovered, digital storytelling also has within it the capacity to produce works that are more unstable and liminal. And although these types of stories may have a more limited audience, they might be more powerful and more useful for their creators.

The Stories

For this section I have chosen the stories of three participants: Simon, Enid, and Tony. These three were selected due to the ways in which they engaged with their own narratives and the technology. Many of the other participant's interest in the process waxed and waned over the 12 weeks of the workshops, but Simon, Enid, and Tony attended every workshop and showed unusual commitment to finding ways for themselves—and challenging me to facilitate their efforts—to express their stories in an authentic way.

Simon, a man in his late 40s, came to this project with a recognized talent for photography and a high level of digital literacy. He was adept at Photoshop, a computer program for editing photographs, and was the editor and designer of the Historical Abuse Network newsletter. He was also the most reluctant to participate and the most vocally critical of the proposed workshop in the first few weeks. Like many of the clients of Micah, Simon had witnessed numerous researchers and community arts workers come through the organization. In Simon's words, they would “put something on—a play or whatever—gets us to tell them our stories and leave again, leaving us with nothing.”³ I assured him that the participants retained ownership of their digital stories, and that my goal was to assist whoever was interested in finding a way to tell his/her story in his/her own words.

In his digital story, Simon used photographs he had taken of the geographic areas where he had worked as a sex worker in his late teens and early 20s. These photographs featured distorted landscapes, broken machinery, and menacing urban streetscapes. The script was a third-person treatise on child abuse and child development. The result was a 5-minute digital story that was extremely disturbing and unsettling to watch.

During the making of the story, Simon said, “I'm not going to make a happy story. You know, one where I talk about how great Micah is, and now my life is ok. So, if that's what you want, I won't bother.” Throughout the process, Simon consciously and deliberately reimagined the conventions of digital storytelling to produce a piece that he believed reflected him and his experiences. Through the images of broken toys, burnt out cars, dilapidated buildings, and a church altar, with a voice-over of Simon speaking about theories of childhood development and brief, unrelated details of his own abuse, it is impossible to not feel uncomfortable. And, in the end, Simon created the most honest and searing portrayal of his life possible with the tools. But more importantly, the viewer is left with an impression, an echo of how Simon remembers his life. Rather than watching a narrative telling us about his life, the viewer instead experiences Simon's memories and, perhaps, a brief glimpse into the suffering and grief he continues to endure. Thus, the story he created was more a digital process (of remembering, sharing, and even healing) than a digital product.

Simon was the most hands-on of all of the participants in creating his story: He produced his digital story primarily independently, with only some periodic feedback from me about images or some assistance with the script. Other participants, such as Enid and Tony, were far more reluctant to engage the technology in any significant way, and consequently pushed into the background the aim of increasing the participants' digital literacy. A regular client of Micah for many years, Enid, in her 60s, had been involved in the Historical Abuse Network since its inception. She (with her twin sister, who died at age 3) was in the care of the Sisters of Mercy from age 2 until she was placed in a foster home at age 12. When we began the workshops, Enid wrote prolifically, filling two large notebooks with stories and disjointed anecdotes. However, she found it difficult and frustrating to distill her ideas into a 2- or 3-minute script for a digital story. On the written page, Enid was able to digress in her storytelling, to write snippets of events that could be threaded together to eventually create a clear narrative. But for the digital story, she was asked to create a short, logical script. More than once during the scripting process, Enid said to me, "Just write the script yourself from what I've written in the notebooks. Make the story up from that." The temptation to take her up on the offer was strong because our scripting sessions often resulted in both of us feeling exasperated. Enid believed the version of the stories she was presenting made sense, although they moved back and forward in time and often seemed to leave important details out. I thought the anecdotes wandered around the story that needed to be told, and worried that anyone watching would become bored and confused.

By the end of the workshops, Enid had made three digital stories; she was the only participant to make more than one story, as well as the only participant to make a story about anything other than her direct experiences of being in institutionalized care. One of the stories Enid made was about regularly catching a bus around the city and, specifically, seeing an elderly Sister of Mercy (nun) on the bus some years ago. Eventually the nun remembered Enid as one of the children who had been in her care at a Catholic orphanage. The nun was able to give Enid a photograph of her and her twin sister when they were toddlers. Until then Enid believed that no photographs of her and her sister together existed. The photograph was quite degraded in quality, but was the only photograph Enid possessed that predated her adult life; we used it as the final image in the digital story. To create the story about the nun and the photograph, she drew a series of pictures that showed the sequence of events: Enid literally storyboarded her memory. The digital story had an almost childlike, whimsical quality that was especially poignant when combined with the very moving, although disjointed, words spoken over the images. Similar to Simon's story, Enid had created a digital story that bore little resemblance to stories found in most digital storytelling workshops, but it was able to evoke feelings and memories in way that a conventional narrative could not. Her story may not have been especially interesting or entertaining to the viewer but it was authentic to her memories and her experiences.

Perhaps one of the most heartbreaking stories was Tony's. In 1956, when Tony was six, his father killed his mother in the family home. For a number of months after Tony's father was taken to prison, Tony and his two brothers lived alone. Eventually, the boys were sent to St. Joseph's Orphanage at Neerkol. When he turned 12, Tony was told he was going to work on a farm. Excited, he arrived at the now notorious Westbrook, a juvenile detention center that came under particular criticism during the first Senate inquiry for its brutality toward children. After years of horrific abuse and neglect, Tony escaped from Westbrook by stealing a car. When he was caught, he was sentenced to Boggo Road Goal, a maximum security adult prison that was

finally closed down in 1996 after an investigation found that the facility, built in 1883 to cater for 40 prisoners, was housing 187. Although the conditions in Boggo Road Goal were nationally recognized as being substandard, Tony stated in his story that it seemed like paradise to him after the years in Westbrook.

Tony's literacy level was quite low; consequently, he told me his story orally over a couple of weeks. I turned our conversations into a short script, which he approved. Because of my involvement at this level of writing, the narrative of this story was the most polished and resembled the dominant form of digital storytelling of all those created in this project. However, when it came to recording the voice-over for the stories, Tony struggled with reading the script, although this improved through practice and coaching. More problematic, however, was that he found it difficult to speak without putting his hand in front of his mouth. It was as though he was constantly unsure of his right to speak and was trying to dilute his own voice by muffling it. The finished story is a hesitant, halting narration over stock images of farms, food, and trains. Tony's voice has none of the warmth or accessibility described by Burgess (2006). What it does have—in every breath, every pause, and every stumbled-over word—is the sheer horror of Tony's life. Like Simon and Enid, Tony was unable, and unwilling, to work within the formal guidelines of digital storytelling. Instead, he and the others used the tools to make sure that their voices were heard, and that their stories could be understood in the context of their own lives.

RESULTS

Scattered throughout the stories created by the Forgotten Australians are ghosts: Ghosts of families lost, the children they used to be, stolen childhoods, caregivers who did not give care, and, most powerfully for these participants, the ghosts of futures they cannot dream because of their past. In retrospect, I see the digital stories as a way for the participants to transfer the loss they feel into a haunting of others (Chambers, 2002, p. 95), so that instead of the abuse they suffered haunting only them, these survivors are able to haunt the consciousness of all those who experience their stories. Many participants voiced a hope that, by telling their stories, the process might ensure that what happened to them would never happen again. This sentiment was made even more trenchant by the fact that the official apology in the Parliament was looming as the workshops were drawing to a close, and a number of the participants traveled to Canberra to be part of it.

The narrator's voice in digital storytelling is the key to the appeal and immediacy of it as a form of communication. Burgess (2006) identified the digital storytelling voiceover as representing what Michel Chion called the I-Voice:

To solicit the spectator's identification, that is, for the spectator to appropriate it to any degree, it must be framed and recorded in a certain manner. Only then can it function as a *pivot of identification*, resonating in as if it were our own voice, like a voice in first person. (1999, p. 67; italics in the original)

This attention to voice recording was another aspect of mainstream digital storytelling that proved difficult to recreate in the project with the Forgotten Australians. The location where the workshops were conducted was noisy and unpredictable because it served as a drop-in center for a number of clients. We struggled to find a place where the participants felt comfortable,

that is, anywhere off-site that was relatively quiet. In one instance, we recorded the voice-over for a story in the toilets of the center to escape a loud argument in the main room.

Another obstacle was the reluctance of any of the participants to practice their voice-overs or to repeat the process more than a couple of times. As a result, several stories contained mistakes and background noise in the finished product. However, such cases absolutely placed the participant and the setting in the mind of the viewer. As a result, rather than creating something universal, the story became utterly individual.

CONCLUSION

In the fields of narrative therapy and life writing, the ability to create a coherent, linear, or insightful narrative of your life and experiences is considered a sign of mental and emotional stability and maturity. According to Pennebaker and Seagal,

Once an experience has structure and meaning, it would follow that the emotional effects of that experience are more manageable. Constructing stories facilitates a sense of resolution, which results in less rumination and eventually allows disturbing experiences to subside gradually from conscious thought. (1999, p. 1243)

This belief that creating a structured narrative of traumatic events in the hope of providing some closure or healing was implicit in my approach during the workshop. Whether or not this belief is legitimate is not the focus of this paper. What I have endeavored to explore are the stories created within this project, and the ways in which their incoherence and messiness were perhaps just as potent and as important as any of the structured, clear, and resolved digital stories created within traditional workshops. This case study revealed that, as a tool for marginalized groups and individuals, digital storytelling remains a process for exploration, to be continually opened up and examined so that it can align with the needs of its users, rather than continue to be constrained by the tropes and models already associated with it. The workshops can be a restrictive aspect of digital storytelling in which participants not only are schooled in the skills needed to make a digital story but also instilled with the expectations of what digital stories “should” look and sound like. On the other hand, those same workshops also can be an exercise in discovering new user-generated approaches to digital storytelling. What this case study also revealed was that digital storytelling holds within it the capacity to produce neat, friendly, and normative stories even when the subject matter may be confronting, and that, as the participants in the Micah project proved, the process has the ability to be deconstructed by individuals to produce truly unique and profound stories of their lives.

ENDNOTES

1. The Stolen Generation comprises the Indigenous Australian (Aboriginal and Torres Strait) children who were removed forcibly from their families between 1909 and 1969, as part of an official government policy. “Under the White Australia and assimilation policies Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were not ‘full blood’ were encouraged to become assimilated into the broader society so that eventually there would be no more Indigenous people left” (Reconciliation, 2012, Forced Removal, para. 3). This aim was carried out by placing Indigenous Australian children in institutions or with white families.

2. As cohort, the Forgotten Australians are defined as children removed from their families or orphaned, or child immigrants from the United Kingdom, who were placed in institutions between 1930 and 1970. A majority of these children were abused or neglected while in institutional care. It is estimated that approximately 500,000 children were placed in out-of-home care during this time. Before the creation of the single parent's pension by the Whitlam government in 1970, children were often removed from single mothers or abandoned by their mothers and placed in church-run institutions. "The child migrants from the United Kingdom were shipped to Australia, Canada and New Zealand. Many child migrants, British boys and girls, were sent overseas by specialist agencies such as the Fairbridge Society, established specifically for the purpose of migrating young children to populate the empire with "good, white British stock." Well known national charities, such as Barnardos, which provided a wider range of child care services, along with the Church of England, the Methodist Church, the Salvation Army, and the Catholic Church, played major roles" (Child Migrants Trust, 2012). The conditions in the overwhelming majority of these institutions were brutal, and the subsequent Senate Inquiry was scathing in its criticism of all parties involved. The UK, Canada, and Australia have all issued public apologies for the roles of their respective governments. For more information, see <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=2531>, <http://www.clan.org.au/page.php?pageID=1>, and <http://www.micahprojects.org.au/categories/view/95/lotus-place>.
3. Comments from the participants were taken from the notes I collected during semistructured interviews held with each storyteller, or from notations made as part of the digital storytelling process.

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All correspondence should be addressed to
Donna Hancox
Level 3, K Block
Queensland University of Technology
Victoria Park Road
Kelvin Grove, Qld. 4059.
Australia
d.hancox@qut.edu.au

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