



KQED Digital Storytelling Manual

The art, skill, craft, and magic of digital storytelling—
a how-come, how-to guide

UPDATED 2008 VERSION

Welcome to KQED and Digital Storytelling!

This manual for beginning digital storytellers contains KQED's approach to digital storytelling plus tips and techniques to help you achieve impressive results in your productions.

A digital story is an engaging and creative multimedia production in which people or organizations document, preserve and share memorable stories of their lives or significant experiences of a group that are worth repeating. The multilayered process results in a tangible, valuable and lasting record of powerful experiences to save and share.

We hope you find this manual useful, and consult it often throughout your digital storytelling workshop and beyond.

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Introduction to Digital Storytelling

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What is digital storytelling?

Digital storytelling has been practiced since the early 1990s when consumer-level technology, including personal computers, video cameras and scanners, proliferated to make home video production possible. This was a monumental shift in a creative field previously available only to professional video producers at facilities with expensive equipment and specially trained technical staff to run everything. The technical process was complicated in the early years of digital storytelling, and completing a story often required a significant amount of technical (hardware and software) support. A nontechnically inclined storyteller was frequently frustrated, struggling with complex equipment that hampered his/her creative ability to put images to the words in mind.

Thanks to ongoing research, technology continues to evolve, become more simplified and attainable. Today, the tools and process of digital storytelling have been so streamlined that even first-time computer users can achieve excellent results!

From a broad perspective, digital storytelling can encompass many forms of creative expression. However, as an accepted definition, digital storytelling is the modern manifestation of the ancient art of storytelling. Throughout history, storytelling has been used to share knowledge, wisdom and values. Digital storytelling uses digital media to create visual stories to show, share and, in the process, preserve as history. Digital stories derive their impact by weaving together images, music, narrative and voice to give depth and dimension to the narrative. By using the Internet and other forms of digital distribution, digital stories can be seen across distances and boundaries to create new communities through a sense of shared meaning.

The KQED Digital Storytelling Initiative: Helping people find, tell, create and publish the stories of their lives

The KQED Education Network's Digital Storytelling Initiative offers hands-on digital storytelling workshops that teach the principles of multimedia through storytelling. Two-, five- and 10-day workshops are available for teachers, students, community activists and any interested organization. Our participants learn by doing, and they get to create their own stories in an encouraging, fun environment. The goal of these workshops is to provide everyone involved with the intellectual, technical and creative skills necessary to independently create digital stories about their work, school or personal endeavors. The KQED Digital Storytelling Initiative (DSI) comes equipped with a state-of-the-art portable computer lab. Hardware and software configurations are customizable for individual groups or classes.

The DSI workshop process is based on these simple stages:

FINDING THE EXPERIENCE

Story exploration and discovery exercises help participants identify potential story ideas, then narrow them down to a specific focus. Thus, the story narrative begins.

TELLING THE STORY

Workshop participants are taught how to verbalize and visualize their story through scripting and storyboarding. After identifying and collecting supporting audio/visual materials, they digitally prepare all the pieces for the editing process.

CREATING THE PIECE

Students create first versions of their story using video and audio editing software. Revisions are made and enhancements, including titles, credits, graphics, video transitions and sound effects, are added for polish and impact.

PUBLISHING THE WORK

With their movies completed, students now learn how to export their story for play on different media and platforms, such as CD, DVD, VHS tape and the Web. Students also touch on the bigger picture, discussing how the digital storytelling process and curriculum could be used as an agent for change in communities or organizations they care about.

Each of these KQED Digital Storytelling stages and the corresponding technology will be examined in closer detail in the chapters that follow.