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Asian Creative Transformations

Talking Turkey: Digital Storytelling Goes to Ankara in 2013

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Everybody has a story to tell, and listening to other people's well-crafted stories can help to make the world a better place. This is the driving philosophy of the international digital storytelling movement.

Digital storytelling describes a particular storytelling method that was pioneered and refined by the [Center for Digital Storytelling](#) in Berkeley, California in the mid-1990s. Amateur storytellers collaborate with experts, usually in a workshop setting, to develop, tell and produce their own personal stories using a recorded script and still images put together in a movie making application. The method has been taken up and adapted for use in a range of contexts and for a variety of purposes, including community cultural development, health, poverty reduction, citizen journalism, public history, education and digital literacy.

In the last fifteen years digital storytelling has come to stand for considerably more than a specific form of collaborative media production. It is also an international network of new media artists, creative practitioners, curators, scholars, and facilitating community media organisations.

In May this year the movement will converge on [Ankara](#), Turkey for its Fifth International Conference and Exhibition. The event will draw together key adopters, adapters and innovators in community-based methods of collaborative media production from around the world. Researchers from the [Queensland University of Technology](#) will lead a delegation that will include key players in the Australian digital storytelling movement.

Digital storytelling was first used in Australia by the [Australian Centre for the Moving Image](#) (ACMI). Based at Federation Square in Melbourne, ACMI has worked with a huge variety of community groups, government and non-government agencies to produce hundreds of 3-5 minute digital stories, a selection of which can be viewed on the [ACMI website](#). ACMI also hosts an online collaborative educational space called [Generator](#), where media students and teachers can learn about screen production. The site includes an extensive collection of [copyright-free materials](#) that can be used in student productions, and that students can also contribute to.

Through its [Community Partnerships](#) program, the Australia Council for the Arts has also been a major source of support for digital storytelling. It has assisted independent community-based media arts organisations to work with a range of communities to create hundreds, if not thousands, of compelling personal stories.

Brisbane-based [Feral Arts](#) has developed a map-based digital storytelling software system that provides a communication and publication platform for a diverse range of local and international storytelling projects. [PlaceStories](#) participants create and publish their own stories directly to the PlaceStories map. They can start their own PlaceStories projects or join one of the many public PlaceStories communities.

Based in Sydney's Western suburbs, [ICE \(Information Cultural Exchange\)](#) uses digital storytelling to build the creative and entrepreneurial capacity of the region's diverse population in new media. [ChangeMedia](#) in the Adelaide foothills, has collaborated extensively with remote indigenous communities to create more very moving, and beautifully produced stories. So too has Tasmanian-based [Big hART](#).

Indigenous media organisations have also been making use of the digital storytelling form. [Goolarri Media Enterprises](#), provides a community radio service and narrowcast television service in the remote Western Australian town of Broome. It also runs a local music development program and is a major events organiser in the region. Goolarri is presently working with Australian researchers to adapt digital storytelling for use in its Kimberly and Pilbara Girl programs. These programs offer young indigenous women of north-western Australia unique and highly sort after personal and professional development opportunities.

Community radio stations have also been making innovative uses of digital storytelling techniques. [FBI](#), based in Sydney's eastern suburbs, used digital storytelling to create a new digital radio form as part of the Graphic Festival in November 2012. Tickets for the Radio with Pictures live broadcast from the Sydney Opera House were sold out and so the event was relayed to a digital radio 'listening party' at another venue to meet this demand.

[CuriousWorks](#) is another Australian-based community media arts organisation to come to life on the crest of the digital storytelling wave. So too is [EngageMedia](#), with a particular focus on social justice and environmental issues in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Even the Australian Broadcasting Corporation is now making use of digital storytelling methods to engage audiences and create new original local content in regional and remote communities through its [ABC Open](#) initiative.

The digital storytelling movement recognises that most people will probably never use digital media to tell their own stories unless they are supported to do so. It uses digital media to create

opportunities for creative expression where they are otherwise limited or non-existent. For this reason, digital stories are often qualitatively different to the much celebrated user-generated content of the Web 2.0 world.

Even though many digital stories are professionally finished, they are in the main, amateur media content. This is a big part of their appeal, energy and the source of surprising new insights they can open up to audiences. It is also a reason why most digital stories don't travel far or well, and why you may not have heard about digital storytelling before now. Creating contextually appropriate settings in which to watch digital stories is important to maintaining the integrity of stories, and also a matter of considerable concern to practitioners, including those from Australia and around the world who will be meeting in Turkey in May 2013.

More information about the [Fifth International Digital Storytelling Conference and Exhibition](#) is available at the conference website. People interested in digital storytelling at QUT can also visit our link [here](#).

BIOGRAPHY: Dr Christina Spurgeon is a Senior Lecturer in Journalism, Media and Communication in the Creative Industries Faculty at the Queensland University of Technology. Chris has practiced, taught and researched co-creative media production methods, including digital storytelling, in a variety of community and corporate contexts. Her book, *Advertising and New Media* (Routledge 2008) considers the implications of end user agency for commercial media and culture. Dr Spurgeon is presently leading a major investigation of the role of community arts and media organisations in enabling population-wide innovation through the use of collaborative media production methods such as digital storytelling. This project is supported by the Australian Research Council's Linkage with Industry Program as well as the Australia Council for the Arts, ACMI, Goolarri Media Enterprises, Brisbane Community TV 31 Digital, and the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia.