

ABSTRACT: SILVER STORIES INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Sacred stories: digital storytelling to preserve the stories of vocation and calling of retired nuns

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Abstract

Background: Communities within the EU are aging. For some religious communities this is not just a demographic effect, but one influenced by changes in recruitment rates to the order. As communities age, the tacit knowledge and experiences members carry within them – the stories of vocation and calling – are amongst those most vulnerable to loss, and yet also some of the most valuable and powerful delineators of what it is to be ‘community’. This paper describes a project intended to help the members of a retirement community of nuns in northern England recollect and share their stories.

Methods: The Patient Voices Reflective Digital Storytelling process was adapted to suit the needs of the group, using experiences gained in working with elderly patients and service users in health and social care settings.

Results: A set of some twenty stories was created with members of the community, in several workshops. Ages of participants ranged up to 101 years. One storyteller returned several times to tell four stories over a period of some years. Several adaptations to the process were needed to fit it to storyteller profile.

Conclusions: With appropriate adaptation and support, digital storytelling can be an effective process through which elderly sections of religious communities can preserve and share stories of vocation, calling and life experience. These stories can then provide valuable resources for reflection within the broader part of that religious community, and have common ground with stories told by groups within health and social care.

Keywords: Digital storytelling, elderly, nun community.



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