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## Expanding Learning Opportunities with Transmedia Practices:

### *Inanimate Alice* as an Exemplar

Laura Fleming

Library Media Specialist, Cherry Hill School, River Edge, NJ, USA

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#### Abstract

The proliferation of digital and networking technologies enables us to rethink, restructure, and redefine teaching and learning. Transmedia storytelling takes advantage of the rapid convergence of media and allows teachers and learners to participate in rich virtual (and physical) environments that have been shown to foster students' real emotional engagement with the process of learning. Transmedia learning applies storytelling techniques across multiple platforms to create immersive educational experiences that enable manifold entry and exit points for learning and teaching. By utilizing constructivist and connectivist precepts in the application of these techniques, we can create pedagogies that are transformative on many levels. Encapsulating these notions in the concept of the Transmedia LearningWorld (TLW) allows educators to combine the exciting affordances of the digital technologies with real-life experiences and truly learner-focused pedagogies to produce profoundly productive and powerful learning experiences.

In the US, the advent of Common Core State Standards is pushing schools and districts across the country to consider carefully the requirements for digital learning, including aspects of personalization, interoperability, taking our understanding of eLearning beyond a narrow focus on digital content, and encouraging significant shifts in pedagogical thinking and practice. The application of transmedia techniques and, in particular, the recognition of the power of the TLW give teachers tools that allow them to reach every child, including otherwise "reluctant" learners, and indeed that allow children themselves to drive their own learning. The digital novel *Inanimate Alice* is a proven example of a transmedia resource that can immerse students in an intense and motivating learning experience over time. Transmedia techniques leverage the power of collective intelligence in learners, and they enable educators to weave the narrative of curricula through media in a seamless and wholly interactive and participative fashion.

*Keywords:* transmedia, storytelling, K-12, media literacy

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#### Introduction

Transmedia storytelling exemplifies learning in the twenty-first century. As a school library media specialist, I have realized the profound implications for effectively producing and consuming content across media platforms for both educators and learners. As an educator, I have come to recognize the place of transmedia in learning and how it applies to our instructional practices. This includes, amongst many others, the eternal power of storytelling, literacy in the digital age, the shifting locus of control in education from teacher to learner, the need now to consider a spectrum of transliteracies for our young people, and the merging of storytelling with the current crop of digital and networking technologies.

In the era of media convergence, transmedia (cross-media/cross-platform/multi-platform) narratives are catering to users who are willing to immerse themselves in their favorite entertainment content. The inherent interactivity of the Internet and the emotional

engagement of story can lead to innovative pedagogies in media rich environments. My perspective and work has focused on transmedia storytelling as a pedagogical practice, with the digital novel *Inanimate Alice* (2005) at the forefront of my investigation.

Technologies have allowed us the opportunity to rethink, restructure, and redefine instruction in order to best advance media literacy education for all. A transmedia pedagogy allows learners and content to flow fluidly across media platforms. Students can enter their learning in a way that meets their needs and educators can draw upon the strengths of and maximize the power of individual platforms. Transcending content in this way allows for the collaborative sharing and proliferation of knowledge across the globe.

#### Transmedia Learning

The inherently interactive nature of the Internet, in tandem with its capacity to meet our learners where they are ready to learn, can lead to groundbreaking

pedagogies in media-rich environments. The pedagogical practice of transmedia storytelling offers some compelling possibilities for education.

Transmedia storytelling exemplifies learning in the twenty-first century by merging the concept of storytelling with that of the listener-learner and the resulting emotional engagement with the pervasiveness of media. We might define *transmedia learning* as: the application of storytelling techniques combined with the use of multiple platforms to create an immersive learning landscape which enables multivarious entry and exit points for learning and teaching. It is the unifying concept of the learning environment that is important since that can become a landscape for learning that has few, if any, boundaries. With philosophical underpinnings in constructivist and connectivist theories, a transmedia pedagogy uses technology in an integrated way that allows learners and content to flow seamlessly across media platforms. Education across multiple media allows for great continuity in learning. Every piece of the puzzle works to engage the learner. Transmedia techniques, when responsibly and effectively applied in an educational context, immerse students in their own learning and, as a happy corollary, advance media literacy education for all.

At the same time, we can view transmedia learning as a spearhead. Traditional learning models today struggle to meet our learners where they are ready and willing to learn. As Buckminster Fuller once said, "You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete" (Gabel 1999, par. 2). Transmedia techniques in particular are helping to propel the traditional educational model into the twenty-first century by reaching out to learners on their own terms, creating, enhancing and spreading content in a rich and fruitful way, and creating opportunities for exploration, interpretation, and expansion. When we combine transmedia with a pedagogy that is transformative, that shifts the locus of control in learning firmly from the teacher towards the learner, we begin to morph the concept of StoryWorld, familiar to transmedia producers, into something that is powerful for learning in the digital age, the Transmedia LearningWorld (TLW). This new model of learning goes beyond the confines of a classroom, and instead creates a TLW that allows content to flow fluidly across the curriculum and from one media to the next. If, for example, we take the pedagogical principles from constructivist and connectivist learning theories, we can

start to build frameworks for transmedia narratives that enable the learner to take charge of the narrative and then to shape it to their own learning needs.

A TLW is a paradigm for learning that combines the capabilities of ubiquitous technologies, real-life experiences, and learner-focused pedagogies, making for profoundly productive and powerful learning experiences. This dynamic ecosystem allows for the creation of a synergy between varieties of learning models and a range of pedagogies that will take students and teachers around the world into new realms.

The United States Department of Education (2011) has recognized the power of using a transmedia approach in learning by declaring that it presents children with multiple entry points to learning, and that it enables educators to use individual media for the functions for which they are best suited. (<https://www.ed.gov/oii-news/why-use-transmedia-early-learning>). In 2007, then MIT studies professor, Henry Jenkins, developed the concept of transmedia storytelling as "a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience" (par. 3).

Although transmedia can claim considerable success in the entertainment world, as well as in aspects of business generally, it can be argued that the real roots of transmedia in fact lie in education, as teachers have long sought out diverse resources and strategies to reach and engage their students. But what has simply been a long-held practice for teachers is at the forefront of discussion because of the all-pervasive knowledge-building and collaborative possibilities that come with the ever-expanding digital technologies. Transmedia learning combines the capabilities of ubiquitous technologies, real life experiences, and learner-focused pedagogy drawn from a rich ecology of content and media. As Marshall McLuhan said, "Anyone who tries to make the distinction between education and entertainment doesn't know the first things about either" (Prensky 2002, 7).

No matter the particular mix of media deployed, transmedia storytelling is a learning tool that possesses the power to motivate, persuade, entertain, and educate. In partnership with the United States Department of Education, PBS and their work has offered a fascinating perspective on the benefits of transmedia and learning. PBS immerses children in their favorite entertainment content by proliferating it across different media platforms and has managed to bridge entertainment and

education. Through a “Ready to Learn” grant, PBS has been the perfect capstone to demonstrate that children’s learning is enhanced by educational media, particularly when it is used in combination with one another. As PBS itself says:

PBS and our member stations are America’s largest classroom, the nation’s largest stage for the arts and a trusted window to the world. In addition, PBS’s educational media helps prepare children for success in school and opens up the world to them in an age-appropriate way. (par. 1)

School Librarians, such as myself, have been among the first educators within the school system to recognize the shifting nature of knowledge and literacy, and have been at the forefront of attempts to leverage most effectively the new technologies to reach students. Librarians have created a Transliteracy Group to extend conversations, receive support and resources, improve practice, and increase learning opportunities for learners through the development of transliteracy skills and the effective use of transmedia techniques. This group encourages all educators to continue to strive to find the most effective techniques to pull in existing and emerging educational technologies to forward learning and instruction. The high level objective is to develop a strategy that will give teachers and librarians the tools and the confidence to create teaching opportunities that enable each layer of instruction to reach students at multiple touchpoints, drawing them deeper into their own learning. As educators, we cannot and must not be fooled by the technology-readiness our students show us—the fact is that young people, while they are natural and instinctive users of digital technologies, are by no means inherently expert at using them. The digital native is real, but the accepted definition of a digital native is wrong. So we need to be able to equip them with the skills they need to be effective users and consumers of content and information across all media platforms, while providing for them participatory learning experiences that meet them where they are ready to learn. This is a set of skills and competencies that, as yet, too few teachers can claim to have, but it is an area of teacher development that is by now no longer optional. Our young people need these skills, and we as teachers have a responsibility to see that they are able to develop them with our support.

### **The Shift to a Digitally Delivered Education**

Most states in America have by now adopted

the Common Core State Standards and are at various stages in the process of implementation. An explicit driving force behind this reform has been the need to better equip children in grades K-12 with the skills and knowledge deemed necessary to prepare them for success in college and in the workforce. As the Common Core State Standards Initiative website states, the standards:

define the knowledge and skills students should have within their K-12 education careers so that they will graduate high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and in workforce training programs. (2013, par. 4)

Those states that are pushing the Common Core hardest are very clear that the higher levels of critical thinking set forth in the standards can only be grasped fully through the deployment of a range of digital learning strategies. Discussion and debate are already taking place across many forums about the myriad issues that schools and authorities need to consider in their planning for digital learning: personalization, interoperability, taking eLearning beyond mere digital content, shifts in pedagogical thinking and practice, and many other topics are lighting up the national conversation around Common Core. And in addition to the pedagogical and curricular impetus for the use of technology in schools, many standardized assessments will require to be administered digitally. Districts across the country are therefore required to prepare their schools with technology sufficient enough for their students to take what will be entirely online, computer-based, high-stakes tests. Students are expected not only to know how to use the technology in order to take such tests, but also they are required to be able to think and communicate effectively across all forms of media.

The State Education Technology Directors Association (SETDA) (2013) is addressing these challenges on behalf of schools nationally by seeking to: “Ensure readiness for next generation computer-based assessments, [i]mprove curriculum and instruction aimed at college and career readiness, and [l]everage technology to achieve better results and cost-savings” (2013, par 3). Of course, while we strive to meet the Common Core requirements and to prepare our students for the demands of standardized testing, we can also see this overall development as an opportunity to transform our schools into places of twenty-first century learning. We are at a digital inflection point and a window of opportunity exists right here and now for us to rethink,

restructure, and redefine instruction in order to pull American schooling emphatically into the Knowledge Age.

None of this is easy though. Teachers must be given the support they will need to prepare for the concomitant shift in instruction; they will need help to make sense of the new kinds of content that will make their way into the classroom; they will need encouragement to change their approach to teaching and to learning accordingly; and they will need support in how to effectively weave and integrate technology into their practice. The effective use of digital learning can help school districts meet these educational challenges, including, as we have noted, implementing college and career-ready standards for all students, as outlined in the Common Core. Educators need to come to see technology as intrinsic to their instructional practices. Rather than envisaging a process in which technology is merely embedded into the curriculum, an attitude that so often relegates the technology to an afterthought or just one amongst a range of motivating techniques, it should be about the seamless integration of technology into every aspect of teaching and learning through transmedia practices. Technology tools should be so much a part of learning that the friction is removed because of educators and learners do not waste energy thinking about how it works, instead becoming an essential component of all that goes on in the classroom.

The world can now be our platform for learning. In a sense, of course, it always has been—learning has always been, or should always have been, simply a core part of what it means to live—but the opportunity now exists for us to take advantage of the vast multiplicity of media now readily available to us in new and powerful ways. Whether educators recognize it or not, our young learners are very aware of the new media that surrounds them. Students, sometimes consciously, often unconsciously, know that learning extends beyond the four walls of a classroom; they know that we are a part of a greater global community, and they see themselves as learners in ways that go beyond the notion of the institutionally-bound student. Most children participate actively in this networked society through social networking applications, but many also engage through the use of the likes of wikis, blogs, and the many other Web 2.0 tools available to them. Effectively consuming and producing content across multifarious media platforms is a basic life skill for the twenty-first century. Transmedia learning is flexible and can happen anytime, anywhere. Our kids know this instinctively.

As a result, we as educators now need, urgently, to extend our notion of literacy skills way beyond print (but always continuing to include print, of course). We need to consider a broad spectrum of transliteracies for our young people and change our teaching practice accordingly.

### **The Paradox**

At a time in which standards, data, and testing are driving educational change in our country as well as across the world, there exists a paradox at the heart of these changes. Perhaps despite such changes, and maybe even because of such changes, there sits alongside them an identifiable process of de-institutionalization that is happening in education at the present time, and it is a process that has profound implications for schooling as we know it. The paradox lies in the fact that, at the same time that political and economic forces are pushing the agenda of standardization with some determination, the social-technological environment that we now inhabit is pushing education in the opposite direction. In a real sense, learning is breaking free from the tradition model of education—with school as the central paradigm in that model—simply because the walls of the school can no longer contain all the knowledge and content and desire to learn that is now flowing freely across the ether and intermingling across borders without constraint. While the traditional learning environment of the school remains a very powerful component in the overall educational eco-system, learning is nonetheless being freed from restriction and is embedding itself into everyday settings and interactions, distributed across the widest transliterate sense. In a very real way, the locus of control in learning is shifting decisively from teacher to learner, and from institution to individual. The paradox does not necessarily indicate that these divergent trends are mutually exclusive. Indeed, through emerging technologies, teachers are gaining new opportunities to design innovative lesson plans and assignments. Teachers who can see the opportunities opening up know the interactivity and connectivity of transmedia techniques can bring learning to life by maximizing engagement, stimulating learners' minds, and allowing learning to happen organically.

We now live in an age in which learning can take place across multiple media platforms. The expansion and improvement in the practice of media literacy in the United States is shaped not only by the decisions of policy makers but also increasingly from the bottom through by the decisions made moment-to-moment by

learners themselves. The digital explosion has leveled the playing field, making everyone both a consumer and a producer. The plethora of free tools allows everyone to create. Students can now enter their learning in ways that meet their needs (we know, for instance, that young learners today are much less willing to submit to rote learning than students in the past) and educators can draw upon the strengths, and maximize the impact, of individual platforms. Young people today are committed (although not necessarily skilled) multi-taskers and are happy to take on different roles in their learning either as a student or even as a teacher themselves. Information is easily accessed and immediately applicable.

### Literacy Across Platforms

The Common Core Standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers. The standards have been developed with a number of purposes in mind, one of which is to seek something fundamentally different from education than has been sought in the past in order to prepare all students for success in a complex and hard-to-predict future. With the global economy increasingly becoming a knowledge economy, creating the need for a skilled workforce able to transform information into meaningful and useful knowledge, and to apply that knowledge effectively, the US education system needs to make some meaningful and robust changes to what has gone before. As educators, we must grapple with questions of appropriate and relevant curriculum content, material, and resources that better prepare students to be competent, lifelong learners and therefore good and productive citizens in the digital age. Digital learning is an essential preparation for the kinds of college and career readiness mentioned above. More and more, teachers are seeking out high quality, digital literacy materials that address their specific curricular objectives. Teachers need tools that allow them to reach each child and to provide rich, relevant learning opportunities that meet each student's needs and ensure that all students have the opportunity to drive their own learning. The digital novel *Inanimate Alice* (2005) exemplifies reading in this era of participatory and collaborative learning. This born-digital, transmedia story, when I first came across it, made me think anew what it means to be an educator in the twenty-first century. *Inanimate Alice* is an aggregate of micro-learning experiences that marry literature, learning, and personal development. This new form of media

agglomeration and augmentation immerses students in their learning like never before by offering a truly holistic learning experience.

*Inanimate Alice* creates an experience for a learner that is akin to a digitally-induced synesthesia, the sound and vision combining to assail all the senses, immersing the reader in the complexity and the emotional journey of the story. Combining digital and multimedia elements, *Inanimate Alice* is a non-linear story that is connected across different media platforms<sup>1</sup>.

Navigating through *Inanimate Alice* is like a puzzle. This is partly deliberate, of course, but it is also partly due to the complexity of the multilayered story itself as well as the transmedia outreach aspects. The core narrative of increasingly complex and interactive episodes grow the story from a solid foundation on the home website, while further adventures appear as outreach experiences elsewhere. As Alice's journey progresses, new storylines appear elsewhere providing more details and insights, enriching the tale through surprising developments. Available in English, French, Italian, German, and Spanish, and with a following in over one hundred countries, this multi-lingual story connects technologies, languages, cultures, generations, and curricula within a sweeping narrative accessible by all. This new form of storytelling has redefined what it means to have a digitally literate classroom and it sets the benchmark for all future transmedia properties to match and surpass in education.

The power of *Inanimate Alice* lies in the organic connection that is made between the story and the medium along with the innovative use of design and structure. The story unfolds in a game-like world that makes readers direct participants in helping the story to unfold across multiple platforms. With hours of interactive audio-visual experience built in, a gripping mesh of games, puzzles, sights, and sounds embellish and enhance the storyline. The interactivity and narrative are not distinct from one another. In the case of *Inanimate Alice*, the interactive elements simply cannot be separated from the story. Whether it is controlling Alice's Baxi (her handheld gaming device) or communicating with Brad (her virtual friend on the Baxi), the embedded technology enhances the narrative and helps it to unfold in manifold directions under the reader's impulse. It is this that makes Alice a truly unique digital reading experience.

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1. [http://www.inanimatealice.com/film\\_hd.html](http://www.inanimatealice.com/film_hd.html)

The Common Core State Standards are designed around a model derived from the concept of the spiral curriculum, espoused by Jerome Bruner (1960), who wrote that the spiral curriculum: “as it develops should revisit this basic ideas repeatedly, building upon them until the student has grasped the full formal apparatus that goes with them” (13). The concept promotes the notion of deploying instructional content that has been encountered previously but at the same time increasing the depth and complexity of this content. *Inanimate Alice* uses the same fundamental concept. Each episode in the series increases in complexity, enabling learners to visit and revisit with the story at appropriate times and places within their learning development. The goal is for teachers to work with the title over the years and to collaborate with other teachers who teach different subjects and ages. Offering a curriculum driven approach to media literacy, *Inanimate Alice* is aligned impeccably with the Common Core and fully supported by lessons that include connecting the story with its multimedia components as well as lessons that allow the series to be used on an interactive whiteboard, offering real, hands-on experiences. After experiencing *Inanimate Alice*, my own fifth grade students were connected and engaged with text like never before as demonstrated by their standing ovation at the end of episode one.

### **Technologies and Literate Behavior**

In his white paper, *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education in the 21st Century*, Henry Jenkins (2009) identifies transmedia navigation as the ability to follow the flow of stories and information across multiple modalities. As a result of my own teaching with *Inanimate Alice*, I began to think of the implications that transmedia storytelling has for young readers and writers. I came to the conclusion that it is not merely in the consumption of content that transmedia comes to the fore—it is about so much more than merely navigation, although that remains a critical component of what transmedia can achieve. It is also in the opportunities and the motivation for students to create content that they are able to derive immense benefits from the approach. A transmedia approach to learning offers a new and highly involved way to learn. The shared sense of purpose that storytelling concepts create, along with opportunities to call upon individual strengths and abilities, as well as the transcendence of media creates an immersive learning environment that all are able to benefit from. Students are placed at the center of the learning process by collaborating,

engaging interactively, and co-creating content. In addition to transmedia being a content delivery system, it seamlessly drives learning to extend beyond schools long after the story is told. With roots in Bruner, Piaget, and Vygotsky, transmedia learning emphasizes the active role of the learner in creating information and in knowledge-building.

Around the world, many innovative collaborative teaching and learning methodologies are coming to the fore. The Web is now the *de facto* platform for learning, and users are able (or should be able) to make use of whatever web-based applications they wish to deploy for their own learning. In the case of *Inanimate Alice*, students have engaged in the participatory practice of creating their own next episodes of the series, extending their learning out from the material itself in myriad new directions. As is the case with transmedia properties and their ubiquitous nature, the creative process is made transparent. Readers of *Inanimate Alice* often do not even realize the technologies that are employed, simply because they are innate to the storyline. The technology itself is vitally important to the reading experience and should be closely examined if one is inspired to create one’s own transmedia iterations. The creators of *Inanimate Alice* have embarked in part on reverse engineering the storytelling process. The stories are presented in their final form and then are broken down into photostory pages (like a graphic novel), the individual frames (screenshots), and the scripts. Teachers and students are provided with worksheet assets, the music tracks, and the comic book art. All of this enables the students to mash up the resources and to enhance it with their own photos, drawings, text, and so on, allowing them to co-create in the widest transliterate sense.

As co-creators of content, our students actively participate in and take control of their own learning. As echoed by the United States Department of Education, the rich, fictional worlds of transmedia tend to create a greater level of social interaction that can inspire children to create their own stories and media products and to share them with each other. The experience of reading is changing. In a transmedia learning experience, reading is now simultaneously an individual act and a social act. Similarly, students can be individual producers but are also able to engage on collaborative sharing, joint creativity, and proliferation of knowledge across the globe.

*Inanimate Alice* is a bridge to literacy that offers a game-simulated, multi-tasking environment

that today's young learners inherently connect with and understand. Readers go to the story for inspiration, creative writing, and multimedia text analysis. It offers engaging materials enmeshed with educational guidance to be delivered across structures in a variety of formats. Teachers are facilitators for learner-centered instruction. Technology has changed the act of reading, allowing readers to engage with ever-growing stories in which they can become part of the narrative in a seamless and organic fashion. The transmedia experience of *Inanimate Alice* allows teacher/librarians to use technology and resources in a unified way to immerse students into a storyworld.

### Social Benefit Storytelling

Stories can be powerful forces helping us to understand the world and how we should live our lives. In education, we can tap into the power and potential of these forces to create positive health and social change by designing stories to educate and engage people on a wide range of issues, and ultimately even persuading them to take action. We have seen success in changing behaviors through an education entertainment approach, but we now have the immersive and participatory nature of transmedia storytelling in which to deploy. By bringing the two together in powerful combination, we can create world-changing experiences for young learners.

The digital and networking technologies are making knowledge available to everyone and turning everyone into a creator as well as a consumer of knowledge; the same technologies also enable us to spread that knowledge across the globe in an instant. In this context, we can make social benefit storytelling available, adaptable, and accessible for all.

We can see some elements of this in *Inanimate Alice*, which has served as a very effective bridge for many reluctant readers to engage effectively with literacy:

- Students were able to connect with Alice's multicultural life and friends
- It is a quality narrative with a very strong central character (female, which is still quite rare)
- It engages all students, even those who might usually be labeled "reluctant readers"
- It encourages a sense of global citizenship, as Alice travels the world and encounters a range of cultures and issues.

As teachers and students explore the series,

they find that *Inanimate Alice* touches upon endless educational and social emotional aspects. An example is episode four, in which the main theme is one of peer pressure and bullying. Other social and emotional themes abound in the series. For instance, it is easy to come to the conclusion that Alice is a lonely kid, just talking to her handheld device all the time. But when you think about all of the places she visits in the course of her tale, the people she comes across, you can see that in fact she is a citizen of the world. Within the classroom, considering the experiences of other places and cultures helps make our young learners more aware of who they are themselves and, possibly, more considerate human beings.

*Inanimate Alice*, and other transmedia properties, can encourage teachers and learners to step beyond the immediately provided materials to explore some of the things as they relate to them in their environment as adults, as children, as citizens, as social beings. Learners can be encouraged to share their findings and thoughts deriving from the story and from extension work with each other, and indeed with others across the globe via social media and other channels.

*Inanimate Alice* has proved to be a powerful tool in generating empathy in students—everyone, for instance, feels lonely and isolated at some time. Arguably, this is the main purpose in storytelling.

### Leveraging the Power of Collective Intelligence in Children

Just as learning is turning transmedia, it is also becoming dominated by a kind of collective intelligence. The dictionary defines intelligence as "the ability to learn or understand or to deal with new or trying situations" (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/intelligence>). The usual connotation is that intelligence relates to self. However, the constant flood of new technologies is forcing us to consider intelligence in relation to the collective. Wikipedia (2013) defines collective intelligence as "a form of intelligence that emerges from the collaboration and competition of many individuals" (par. 1).

At even the earliest of ages, we as educators lay the foundation for harnessing the cognitive powers of a group through cooperative learning. Cooperative learning sets the stage for a more sophisticated, collaborative pooling of information in collective intelligence. Whether educators recognize it or not, our learners are already influenced by this concept, since the media that surrounds them makes students aware that

learning extends beyond the four walls of a classroom and that we are a part of a greater global community. Many children take it upon themselves to participate actively in this networked society in the form of wikis, blogs, or many of the other Web 2.0 tools available to them. As students prepare to enter the workforce, where, of course, the need for collective intelligence dominates, it is the responsibility of all educators to create a classroom where knowledge is acquired not by a learner memorizing facts and data, but by a collective group—or more accurately, by a constantly shifting matrix of collectives—working towards a common purpose. According to Henry Jenkins, transmedia storytelling is the ideal aesthetic form for an era of collective intelligence (2007). Implemented effectively, transmedia learning expands learning and connects learners around the globe, and therefore leveraging the power of the collective.

### Conclusion

My experiences as an educator along with my journey with *Inanimate Alice* have made it clear to me that we have reached a tipping point with educational technology—our instructional practices will never be the same again. Technology and learning are inextricably linked—one can no longer perceive learning as happening without it. Teachers have unprecedented access to high-quality digital content that offers students the capacity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in exciting and stimulating ways. Preparing all students to succeed in this global economy requires a shift from teacher-centric instruction to a learner-centered culture. Learners prefer to construct their own learning, assembling tools and information from a wide variety of different sources. A transmedia model of learning poses new challenges to learners and requires us all to attain a broader spectrum of media literacy skills in order to be competent learners in the digital age. We need to ensure that our students are skilled consumers and producers of digital media and that the transliteracies learned through experiences, such as *Inanimate Alice*, should be a part of our instruction.

Educators now have to consider weaving the narrative of curricula through media in a seamless and fully interactive fashion. A transmedia methodology can help shape our educational delivery. With content proliferated across different media platforms, we can seek success with all learners, no matter their starting point. It helps students to construct knowledge and to convey complex messages through meaningful,

challenging, technology-enhanced experiences. This dynamic ecosystem allows for a synergy to develop across different varieties of learning models and pedagogies that will take students and teachers around the world into new realms. Effective storytelling, combined with the use of transmedia techniques, creates opportunities for exploration, interpretation, and expansion. Leveraging the power of transmedia will fully immerse and engage the students in their learning. If executed effectively, the curriculum and the technology become one, and at the core is the interaction between technology and story, creating a deep, rich LearningWorld.

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