When words are infused by the human voice, they come alive. - Maya Angelou

Do your students sigh with anguish when asked to perform another seminar/tutorial presentation? As an alternative to the traditional 'stand and deliver' approach, why not suggest to your students that they use their own technologies to create a livelier, more engaging presentation.

Digital storytelling combines different media to help tell a story. A simple comic book style story introduces this article. Digital storytelling is being used at every level of education from school to
post-doctoral studies. With the growing ubiquity of personal media devices (mobile phones, cameras, iPods, etc.) people have greater media sophistication in their pocket than an early television station. This situation means that creating multimedia digital narratives is a realistic and achievable possibility.

A digital narrative or digital story is usually a short (3-5 minute) movie which uses images, voice, and music to tell a story.

Pictures, video and audio are captured, downloaded to a computer and edited using software such as iMovie or Moviemaker. As we know from recent surveys of Curtin students, the vast majority own mobile phones, many of which are smartphones that have video and audio capabilities. They may also have access to digital cameras or video cameras. Students can use these handheld devices to create digital narratives that they can then share with fellow students.

Why create digital stories in university?

Digital narratives emphasise the personal voice or point of view. They can be an excellent vehicle for the affective domain of learning which addresses a learner's attitudes, interest, attention, awareness, and values related to a learning experience or concept. As an example, the Youth and Society unit from Griffith has many YouTube examples of undergrads sharing their experiences in coming to university.

Digital stories can be:

- Stand alone as an expression of content in their own right;
- Created to be teaching devices - teacher or student will develop a richer connection with the topic when they need to explain it to others;
- Used to give life to any type of ePortfolio;
- A means of translating synthesis of understanding into visual metaphors;
- Used as evidence of collaboration;
- Developed as a documentary;
- Created as a record of progress.

How do we get started?

A fun way of introducing the process of creating a digital narrative is to have students work in pairs and, using props such as children’s toys, create a number of scenes to shoot. This is a useful exercise that can model the processes involved in digital storytelling within a very short space of time (less than an hour). It’s a good idea to plan the task by firstly asking students to create a simple storyboard or sequence of events and dialogue for their story. Here's a really simple example:
The basic steps are:

1. Determine the story you want to tell or the question you want to explore
2. Gather your media - text, images, audio, video
3. Choose the software to manipulate and assemble the images and sounds.

**Examples**

Here’s an example of a digital story that was created by a postgraduate student studying adult education in an Australian university: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kcQ3-Q73hjE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kcQ3-Q73hjE).

The task was to produce a digital narrative that would assist the student in teaching a particular concept to a group of adult learners. The student worked with migrants studying to pass the US citizenship test. The narrative was created using a Palm Smartphone and the final product was uploaded to YouTube to share with her fellow students. *The technical quality of the digital story itself is of less interest than the intellectual effort and learning required to master the technology and content presentation.*

**Other digital storytelling resources**

Alan Levine (CogDog) from the New Media Consortium has a field day with his 50 Web 2.0+ Ways to Tell a Story - he transforms his original Dominoe story and provides some links and guidelines on these entries in his blog:

- Finding Media for your story - [http://cogdogroo.wikispaces.com/StoryMedia](http://cogdogroo.wikispaces.com/StoryMedia)

You may also like to look at this FREE How-to-Guide Digital Storytelling Tools for Educators by Silvia Tolisano.