

Digital storytelling Manual

State Library of Queensland

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Digital Stories

Digital stories are short videos that generally run for two to four minutes. They can use images, sound, music, narration, animation and video to tell a person's story.

A digital story is a fun and creative way of sharing a story with other people. Digital stories can be shown in several different ways. With the final digital file, the story can be watched on a DVD player, played back locally on a computer, be viewed online or even played on a mobile phone.

As well as telling an interesting story, a digital story can give people in the future a way to look at how things were when the story was made. It can become a part of history.

The State Library of Queensland is committed to helping people create and share their stories, while also acting as a repository, a safekeeping place where one generation's story can be discovered by another.

A finished digital story is composed of images and sound. The pictures can be still images or moving video, or a mixture of both. The sound is mainly the sound of the story being narrated, but may include background noises, sound effects and even music.

If you use any images, sound or video in your story that does not belong to you, it is essential that you get written permission from the rightsholder. For copyright reasons, you cannot copy music from a popular CD without permission and put it in your story. There are many sites now that offer content under Creative Commons licenses. Under these licenses, creators put their works online and specify how other people can use them.

If you interview anybody for a digital story, it is important that you get clearance to use the sound or video recording of them.

Telling the Story

Here are some ways of practicing telling a story which you can do with a group of people. You might find these techniques useful when you come to write a script for your digital story.

The Icebreaker

Each person starts by saying 'My name isand on my way here today.....' They then tell a 2-3 minute story about what happened to them. It doesn't even have to be true!

The Postcard

Each person brings along a photo. Put the photo face up on the table and then everyone picks someone else's photo. Write a made-up short story (half a page) about the photo you chose (doesn't have to be true) and then read it to the group. It can also be good for the real owner of the photo to then tell the real story behind the photo as well.

The Story Circle

This is the beginning of writing the script for your digital story. Think about the pictures and video that you have got with you and write a first version of your story (write it by hand or type it into a computer and print it). Keep the story to one page or less if you can. This should take about an hour. When you've finished, sit in a circle and read your stories to each other. Everybody should make comments and suggestions about each story. This will help you to make the story better. The first version is often too long. Half a page, or 200-250 words is usually enough for a 2-3 minute digital story.

The story should have a strong **focus** to make it interesting. This is a single idea about which the story is about. Stories often contain a problem or something to be overcome, such as 'I wasn't sure if I'd be able to complete the bushwalk, but I was going to give it my best shot'. This can give the story some drama and interest.

There is nothing wrong with the story not containing a problem as long as there is a strong focus on one subject.

It is very helpful to write one sentence what your story is about. Share this summary with the group before you read your story and they can help you judge how well you have got the point of the story across.

The Equipment (hardware)

Computer

You will need a computer to make a digital story. It can be either Windows or Macintosh. It doesn't need to be the latest or greatest machine, but should have sufficient memory to store your media files and enough processing power to handle the video files you will be creating. This will make loading files quicker and mean you spend less time staring at a progress bar.

The computer must be able to play sound, either through speakers or headphones.

Digital Camera

A digital camera is a great way to get pictures to use in your digital story. It doesn't matter how many pixels your camera is, the pictures will still look good enough on a computer screen.

Film Camera

If you don't have a digital camera or prefer to use film, you will need to scan the prints to use them in your digital story. You can do this yourself with a scanner or a commercial photo shop can do this for you and put them on a CD.

Video Camera

Digital video cameras make it fairly easy to get your video onto the computer just as long as the computer is fairly new and powerful. Older (non-digital) video cameras are more difficult because you need to use a capture card to get the video into the computer and the quality won't be quite as good.

Digital cameras can also be used to take videos. The quality is not usually as good as video cameras but can be good enough for a digital story.

Even mobile phones can take still and moving images and it may be possible to put these in your story as well! The files from the phone will usually have to be converted using software from the Internet.

Scanner

A flat-bed scanner can be used to convert printed pictures into digital pictures for your story. Remember that you must have permission to use any images that don't belong to you.

Audio Recorder

There are a few ways of recording sound into a computer. Some computers have a microphone socket that you can plug a small microphone in to. Digital sound recorders are designed specifically to capture audio. Specialised sound recorders (for example high-end oral history recorders) will yield higher sound quality. Many devices, including iPods and MP3 players will record sound which can then be copied to the computer, using a USB cord similar to what you use with a digital camera.

The Software (computer programs)

Sound

Audacity

If you are recording sound directly into the computer you will need some recording software. Macs usually have a program called Garage Band which does the job. If you have a Windows PC you can download a great free program called Audacity from <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>

Audacity will allow you to record directly into the computer using a microphone as long as your computer has a microphone socket.

If you use a digital sound recorder you probably won't need any audio software on the computer.

Pictures

GNU Image Manipulation Program (GIMP)

Once you have your digital pictures loaded into the computer you may wish to resize, reshape and alter them in other ways. The best free program for doing this is called GIMP, available from www.gimp.org

Adobe Photoshop Elements

Another program for doing this is Adobe Photoshop Elements. This program comes free on CD sometimes when you buy a scanner or digital camera or to buy it from a shop costs about \$100. This is the program used on the laptops in the State Library's Mobile Multimedia Lab.

There are dozens of other programs which can edit digital photos including Corel Photopaint.

Digital Video (Putting the digital story together)

Windows Movie Maker

This program comes free with Windows XP and Vista. This program can be used to create the digital story. It is a very simple to use program that enables you to make basic digital stories. For many people, Windows Movie Maker satisfies all their digital storytelling needs. If you want more control of the look and feel of your story and want more options for how it is arranged, a higher-end program such as Adobe Premiere Elements may suit you better.

Using Windows Movie Maker, you can put your digital photos, video and sound together and create the final video.

Adobe Premiere Elements

This program does much the same thing as Windows Movie Maker. It takes a little longer to learn but lets you be more creative with your movie. A license generally costs \$100-125. It has far more features and once you get to know it, it is actually just as easy to use as Windows Movie Maker. However, both programs will make a perfectly good digital story! There are dozens of other good digital video programs, for examples include Final Cut and Adobe Premiere Standard.

Putting the Digital story together

This information is intended to help you put a digital story together using any equipment and software you choose to use.

For specific help on using the software of your choice, don't forget the help menu which comes with all programs. Also, the internet is an amazing source of help with just about any program. You can find lots of forums on popular video editing programs.

File Management

This first bit is a bit boring, but very important (nearly as important as getting permission to use pictures or sound which belong to someone else in your digital story).

If you don't know where the files are on your computer, you will soon get into a terrible mess and maybe even have to start your digital story again!

The following explanations refer to Windows but the same ideas apply to Macs.

The Hard Disc

The hard disc (or hard drive) is where files are stored on your computer. It is usually called the C: Drive but can be any letter.

When creating a digital story you will have quite a lot of different files (pictures, sound and others) which make up the story. It is important to create a folder on your hard disc which is just for your digital story. It is a good idea to name the folder with the name of your story. If you share the computer with others perhaps name it like this: **My Bushwalking Story by Joe Bloggs DO NOT DELETE ph. 8765 4321**

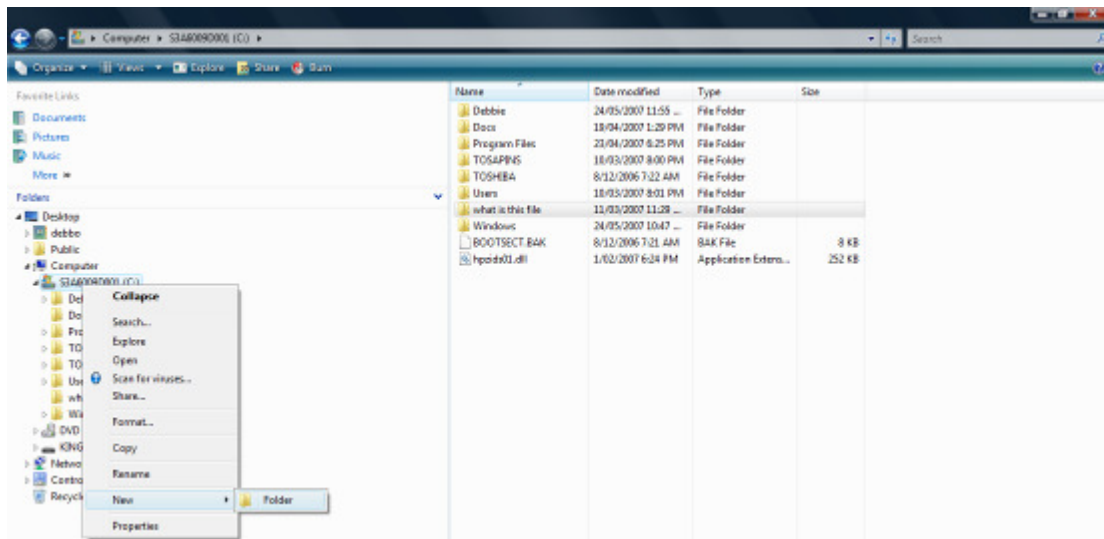
Make a separate folder on the hard disc for every single digital story (don't put more than one story in the folder).

To create folders and subfolders in Windows:

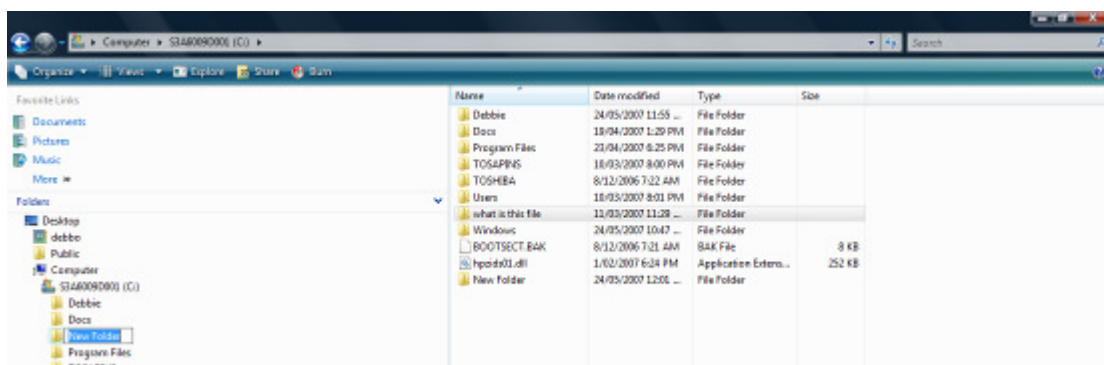
1. Navigate to Explore by right clicking on the start icon (located bottom left of the screen and clicking on **Explore**.



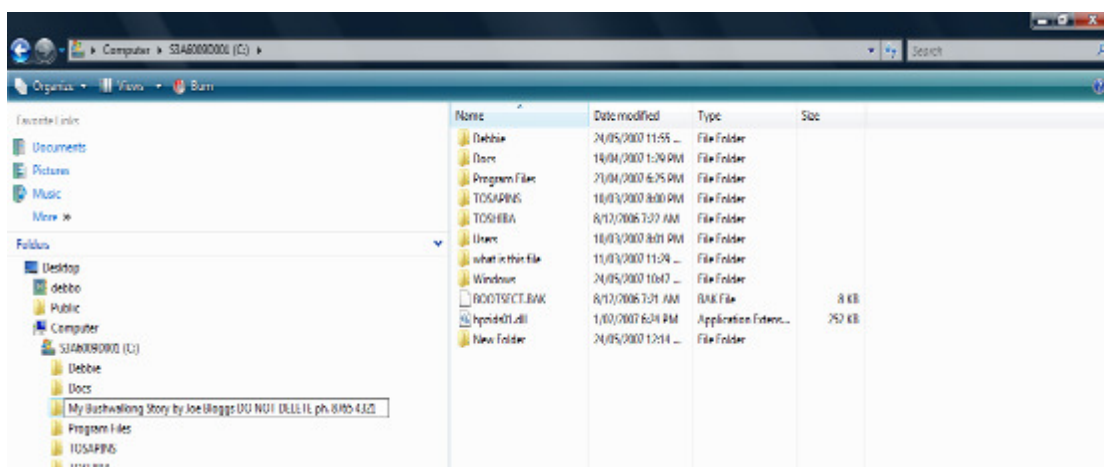
2. Go to the hard drive where you plan to save your folder and subfolders (I am using the C: drive), highlight the drive, right click, and navigate down the menu to select **New** and then **Folder**. (The method of creating folders will differ depending on what operating system is running on your computer.)



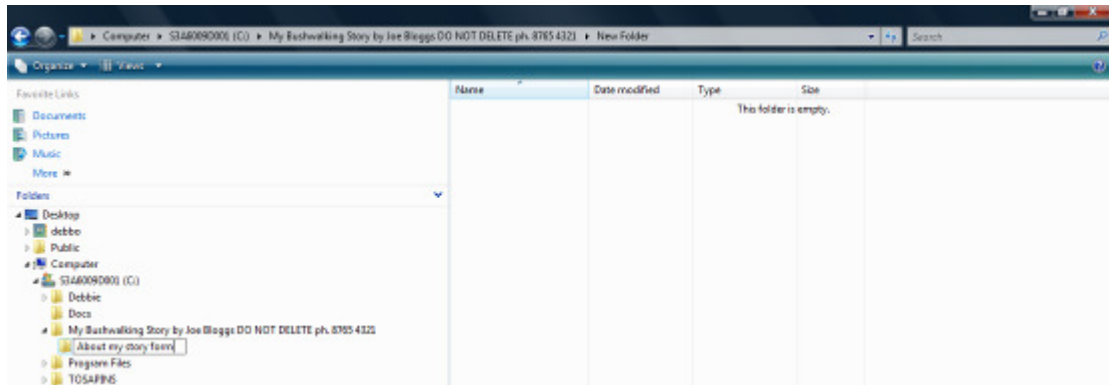
3. A new folder is now created and can be named.



4. Type in the name you wish to use for the new folder.



5. You can create subfolders within this new folder by following the procedure outlined for creating folders. That is, highlight your new folder, right click, go to **New** and select **Folder**. Name your new subfolder.



For more information on how to create and name folders see Windows Help.

Inside the main folder create 'sub'-folders where you can keep the different types of files tidy and separated (this makes them much easier to find). It doesn't matter what these folders are called as long as they make sense to you.

You may have the following subfolders:

C: My Bushwalking Story by Joe Bloggs DO NOT DELETE ph. 8765 4321

- Images (containing the images used in your story)
- Audio (containing recorded audio file of your narration)
- Script (containing a transcript of your story)
- Project files (containing files associated with the story created using your video software, eg. Adobe Premiere Elements)
- Video (containing final AVI file of your rendered story)

If you are using Windows, don't let Windows tell you where to put your files. Don't save things to My Photos, My Sounds, My Documents, etc., or your files will get very lost. Put **everything** in folders that are inside your main folder for the story. Remember to make a main folder for every separate digital story.