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About the Kit and StoryFaire Project

Every day someone walks into your library with a story to tell. They have experiences that deserve an audience – an idea that a part of their story could connect to others, could make a difference, could heal someone else.

While the library is a place to carry out a story in the form of a document or recording, it is also a gathering place for the exchange of life stories.

Whether it be the formal process of an oral history interview, an informal sharing around a table, a do-it-yourself creative project about an event in the person's life, or just a space for conversations between friends or strangers, libraries have made themselves the living room for their community.

This kit is meant to provide a series of practical and easy-to-use programming activities for branch librarians. The focus is on personal storytelling, the kinds of stories that can awaken insight and belonging.

Each activity is described in detail, with considerations about the skills and capacities, the audiences, and the time needed for implementation.

The kit is provided as part of a one-day professional development activity called the StoryFaire. This is an opportunity for the programming librarian and other staff to get a hands-on experience of each activity.

We hope you find this experience both practical and inspiring and we look forward to your feedback as you bring these new approaches to story-gathering to your community.

California Listens

In 2016, Berkeley-based non-profit StoryCenter was invited to work with the California State Library to develop a program of training in contemporary story-based engagement activities for libraries. The focus was a tour of StoryCenter's well known Digital Storytelling Workshop to collect short video stories by groups of 8-12 participants who met in a dozen

libraries across the state. The emphasis was on creating a permanent [archive of digital stories](#) for California. The program became known as [California Listens](#).

Upon completing our program in 2018, we will have traveled to 50 libraries, and facilitated around 400 stories. We have also established a network around the oral history and recorded conversation tool we created specifically for California Listens, the [Listening Station](#). Nineteen of the libraries in the network have received Listening Stations, and a number have developed programming using the tool. And finally, several participating libraries have developed their own version of story-based engagement practices, inspiring us with their innovative ideas and approaches to bringing story to their communities.

Using the Kit

This publication and companion website were designed for programming staff to first propose, and then implement, practical engagement activities from 1 hour to multiple days in duration. The kit breaks down five specific activities to be considered, with a broad overview for library directors and programming librarians to consider purpose, impact, and resource allocation; and a specific, step-by-step guide in producing each activity. In addition, the kit will be a general resource for information about digital storytelling and creative projects using narrative and storytelling. Finally, the kit is meant to be a “laboratory” for innovations and new approaches to story-based activities, and will seek out case studies and examples by library professionals.

Guiding Perspective

The StoryCenter approach is built on six guiding principles:

- 1) Everyone has many stories to tell.

The ritual of sharing insights about life can be immensely valuable both to those who speak and to those who bear witness. People who believe they are mundane, uninteresting, or unmemorable possess beneath this mask a vivid, complex, and rich body of stories just waiting to be told.

2) People need to be heard.

Being heard meets a deep-seated human need for connection. The simple yet critically important act of being acknowledged, being listened to – truly being heard – often changes everything. It can create trust and enduring relationships between the person being listened to, the people listening, and everyone connected to these people.

3) Listening is hard.

Most people are either too distracted or too impatient to be really good listeners. In some parts of the world, this has resulted in a profusion of individuals who get paid to do the emotional labor of listening.

Researchers, therapists, social workers, and others often play this role, yet anyone can learn to listen deeply. When this listening is offered, space is created for the storyteller to journey into the heart of the matter at hand.

4) People see, hear, and perceive the world in different ways.

This means that the forms and approaches they take to telling stories and representing important community issues are also very different. There is no formula for making a great story – no prescription or template.

Providing a map, illuminating the possibilities, outlining a framework – these are better metaphors for how one can assist others in crafting a story.

5) Creative activity is human activity.

From birth, people around the world make music, draw, dance, and tell stories. As they grow to adulthood, they often internalize the message that producing art requires a special and innate gift, tendency, or skill. Many

people simply give up and never return to creative practice. Others are shut out from opportunities to produce art. Confronting this lack of resources and sense of inadequacy and encouraging people in artistic self-expression can inspire individual and community transformation.

6) Technology is a powerful instrument for creativity.

Many people blame themselves for their lack of technological savvy instead of recognizing the complexity of the tools and acknowledging that access and training are often in short supply.

But it's important to remember that new information and communication technologies will not in and of themselves improve our lives or make a better world. Developing thoughtful, participatory approaches that truly engage communities, particularly typically marginalized or "othered" communities, in the use of technology is essential.

6) Sharing stories can lead to personal and social change.

Personal stories can touch viewers deeply, moving them to reflect on their own experiences, modify their behavior, treat others with greater compassion, speak out about injustice, and become involved in civic and political life. Whether online, via social media, in local communities, or at the institutional/policy level, the sharing of stories has the power to make a real difference in supporting a more equitable and just society.

These principles also inform much of your work in the library sector. Providing access to information, encouraging creativity, listening to and sharing stories in a democratic and non-judgemental way, are all vital to your mission and purpose as a librarian. Work in story is a specific mechanism to enliven these principles with your constituents, which can be integrated with many of your programming and community efforts.

We would assume you are keeping these principles in mind (and others that inform your work) as you consider activities for your library.

Story Activities: Brief Descriptions

The eight activities below range from 1-hour to day-long workshop activities, and from those requiring very basic facilitative approaches and technological/media skills to those requiring more advanced skills.

While we understand the 21st Century librarian should feel confident to work in “media makerspaces,” to know the basics of digital photography, audio and video recording, and video- and image-editing, we believe these skills should grow out of engagement with the issues, concerns, and lives of local residents who find themselves using the library to make sense of their world.

We realize many libraries and librarians have already jumped on the digital media bandwagon, but there is still a need to assist small, medium, and large libraries to develop those capacities, where audiences young and old can explore their digital creativity through story.

Each activity is described below first as the essential requirements, followed by more specific descriptions of what, who, and how each activity can be executed. We imagine these activities will be modified and adjusted according to local conditions, but we also provide you with templates and support materials for each activity to be used “out of the box.”

1. StorySeeds

Prompts and Process

Essentials

1-Hour Storytelling Event

Participants - 5 to 10

Staff Needed - 2

Space - Seating for 12 around a table

Technical Experience - Easy

Tools Required - List of Prompts or StorySeed Cards, recording device

Supplies Required - Release forms, 4X6 index cards, pens

Post-Production - None

Post-Production (if recording takes place) - 2 Hours

The Idea

Where do stories come from? Many of us don't know where to start when asked to choose a powerful and important story from our lives. While the invitation to just talk through an idea might lead to a more concise and specific concept, writers and storytellers often use brief writing prompts to tease out a powerful story, to dive into a theme or a moment related to a theme, and just see where our thoughts lead us.

This short writing session can then become the basis of projects that participants choose to make into other kinds of stories including many of the ones explored in the programming options below.

What Happens

StorySeeds workshop is a prompt-writing session for people to explore three pieces of writing, and then to voluntarily share one or more of the pieces of writing at the end.

The facilitator reads an example, discusses how to approach short writing prompts, then provides 2 to 3 writing prompts and 8 to 10 minutes of thinking and writing time. After the writing session, participants are asked to share one or both of their efforts.

Audience

Medium to high literacy audiences that are interested in exploring their writing voice at the beginning of a process.

Activity Agenda

Introduction 5 minutes

Writing Prompt 1 8 minutes

Writing Prompt 2 8 minutes

Writing Prompt 3 8 minutes

Sharing 30 minutes

Facilitation Approach

While providing the prompts and managing the writing and sharing process is straightforward, the approach to assisting people in jumping into a writing prompt takes some practice. Many people find writing prompts difficult, and they need to be encouraged to step past their reticence and just write whatever comes into their mind. The idea of three prompts is that at least one will lead people to feel they might have something to share, and of course people learn from even one session what to expect and improve their ability to explore writing.

Outcome/Publication

It is optional to record the sharing, but many times wonderful pieces of writing and performances come out of writing prompts and people feel comfortable having their stories captured. The captured stories can then be shared as audio, or become part of a collection.

2. StoryCircles

Essentials

2 to 3-Hour Process

Participants – 5 to 10

Staff Needed – 1 to 2

Space – Seating for 10 to 12 around a table

Technical Experience – N/A

Tools Required – None

Supplies Required – Release forms, 4X6 index cards, pens

The Idea

Being listened to and appreciated can be a powerful experience in any context. The invitation for a group of people to share stories in an equitable and safe context creates connection and builds trust.

StoryCircle process in the StoryCenter approach, can be a precise and highly facilitated series of methods, but the fundamentals are easy. Everyone gets a chance to share, everyone gets the opportunity for feedback, everyone has an equivalent amount of time during the StoryCircle. The facilitator's job is to lead others in being present to the needs and expectations of each storyteller, while managing the dynamics of a group process.

We encourage using these gatherings as initiations during many of our workshops, but they can be an end in themselves, just a chance for a group to work through their story ideas.

What is also important is *intention*. StoryCircles function best when the end goal for the participants is clearly defined at the outset, such as: refining a piece of already-drafted writing or a potential performance script, revising a larger story into a smaller text, exploring a shared theme, telling a story about an image or series of images, or developing a story about a set of objects or artifacts. Defining where the storyteller wants to end up at the end of the process helps ensure the dialogue and feedback are specific and geared to the storyteller's needs, instead of a broad discussion about the ideas, issues, or shared experiences within the group.

What Happens

The facilitator introduces the purpose of the process and shares an example of the kind of story being considered, and providing some specifics of what might be considered as appropriate feedback and areas of discussion. They then describe the ground rules for participation (see Appendix X - Facilitating StoryCircles).

Each participant is given a fixed time between 10 and 20 minutes to share their idea and get feedback.

At the end the facilitator thanks the participants and suggests steps forward.

Audience

The general public at all levels of literacy or interest.

Activity Agenda

Introduction and Ground Rules	15 minutes
Story Sharing (depending on group size)	10 to 20 minutes per person
Summation	10 minutes

Facilitation Approach

The principal role of the facilitator is to act as host, timekeeper, and “chair” of the discussion. The facilitator also insures that the ground rules are respected, and that people are assisted in remaining comfortable and safe during the process. Storytelling from life experience can feel quite vulnerable, and storytellers need to know that every person’s participation in listening, sharing, and providing feedback is highly valued.

Outcome/Publication

StoryCircles are not usually recorded in any way. Instead, they are used as an activity that leads to further writing, recording, and/or performance of completed stories.

3. Listening Station

Essentials

4- to 8-hour Event

Participants – 5 to 10 Individuals, 5 to 10 Pairs

Staff Needed – 2

Space – Quiet office or study carrel for 2 to 3 people

Technical Experience – Beginner

Audience Level – All levels of literacy or background

Tools Required – Listening Station or similar tablet for recording, tripod, and microphone

Supplies Required – Sign-in sheet, release forms

Post Production – Depending on output, 15 minutes to 4 hours per recording

The Idea

In many locations, the recording and archiving of oral histories has become an important part of local library activities. Whether to capture local history, or to delve deeper into contemporary issues and topics of interest to the local community, giving people an opportunity to share their thoughts and stories can be a powerful and useful experience, and having those recordings or transcriptions of recordings available to future audiences is an appropriate focus of library resources.

What Happens

Depending on the intent of the interview process, participants are scheduled for 15-minute to 1-hour interview sessions. The facilitator/interviewer(s) and participant place themselves appropriately for the recording session. The facilitators work through a series of pre-arranged questions until finished or until the time expires.

About the Listening Station Approach

Listening Station is a unique iPad-based recording station and app designed by StoryCenter as a new approach to low-cost audio and video recordings and to managing oral histories, conversations, and interviews.

The Listening Station Plus App enables users to distribute, organize, transcribe, and edit recordings in a seamless workflow. Listening Station events enable library staff to interview specific people, but they can also be set up as a do-it-yourself process for library audiences.

Set Up

The recording space should be reasonably sound separated, and comfortable for 3 people (two respondents and the Listening Station operator) to sit across from each other during an interview. Lighting and the background/backdrop of the recording in video should also be considered. See the Listening Station manual for more information. One person should welcome each person or partners, having them sign waivers/releases and prepping them regarding the questions they might want to discuss (if this wasn't done in a pre-workshop conversation), while the other person carries out the interviews and operates the Listening Station.

Audience

Whether you are focused on documenting well-known local leaders and characters within your community or capturing the stories of ordinary citizens and their lives for posterity, this project is meant for anyone in your community.

Activity Agenda

Listening Station recordings can be for any duration, although typically scheduling people for a 30 to 45-minute interview or conversation is best.

Listening Station events can also be done as part of a group process, or for training in the interview process (see the StoryCenter Question Set Exercise).

Facilitation Approach

Interview techniques and the operation of the Listening Station should be practiced prior to the session. The environment should be friendly and supportive, and questions should balance between engaging people in important and meaningful events in their lives, and allowing people to choose what they prefer to disclose or discuss.

Outcome/Publication

The station automatically stores the recordings in the cloud-based archive after review, and automates the delivery of all recordings to participants and project administrators.

Besides existing as primary source recorded documents, Listening Station recordings can be transcribed, and material can be automatically sent to the cloud-based video editor WeVideo.com to be processed into excerpts or edited into documentary videos.

4. These Hands - Template Writing and Photo Exercise

Essentials

1-Hour Storytelling Event

Participants - 5 to 50

Staff Needed - 2

Space - Seating for 5 to 50

Technical Experience - Easy to Medium

Tools Required - “These Hands” writing template handout, smartphone with camera (usually also asking the participants to use their own smartphones for photography), portable microphone (for larger groups), audio recording device for the facilitator (see Appendix X, Tips for Audio Recording)

Supplies Required - Release forms, 4X6 index cards, pens

Post-Production (image assembly and recordings for a montage or mosaic)
- 1 hour for every 6 people engaged

The Idea

Over the years, many of us as storyworkers have used template writing as a way to have people learn about each other and each other’s backgrounds. Template writing asks the participants to fill out a form “Mad-lib” style, choosing specific words, phrases, or descriptions to explain unique elements of their past. The “These Hands” poem has been used by our

Center and by other teaching professionals as an icebreaking or orientation process for small or large groups. The project adds an interactive photo and audio recording process to the writing, allowing for the creation of a simple media project involving the entire group.

“These Hands” can be done as a follow-up to a StoryCircle regarding a special object or artifact that participants have brought to share, or it can be done as a standalone experience.

What Happens

After a welcoming, participants are handed the “These Hands” template writing sheet and given 8 to 10 minutes to fill it out. Next, they are asked to take out an object or artifact that has meaning to them. (This can be a spontaneous choice of something they carry with them every day--such as a key or photo, or it could be an object they shared during a StoryCircle session.) The object does not need to be directly related to their poem. Working in groups of four, participants read their short poems aloud then take turns photographing one another’s hands holding their object. In smaller groups, everyone then shares to the larger group and the sharing is recorded. In groups of more than 10, one person from each group is invited to share their poem with the larger group. All the photographers/smartphone users then email the images to the facilitator to create an image montage of the hands to go with audio recordings. (This montage is displayed later in the day or after Post-Production.)

Audience

General audience. The prompt can be adjusted to various language groups.

Note: Not everyone has a smartphone, but these days in most communities, one in four people do; this activity is organized to take advantage of the broad use of phones with good cameras.

Activity Agenda

Introduction of Concept	5 minutes
Writing	10 minutes
Small Group Sharing and Photography	10 minutes
Large Group Sharing	30 minutes
Emailing Images	5 minutes

Facilitation Approach

Most of the support by the facilitator is in assisting with the photographic process. In smaller groups, the facilitator could act as both photographer and audio recording person. In larger groups, the facilitator would move around the room to each group of four, recording the one participant that chooses to share.

Outcome/Publication

The images and recordings could be shared just with participants, or become part of a montage of images (see Appendix X for an example) that is shared or published online. Creating an audio file with the image for every participant would involve approximately 10 minutes per participant to complete.

5. StoriesSeen

Essentials

6-Hour Storytelling Event (or three 2-hour sessions)

Participants 6 to 8

Staff Needed - 2

Space - Seating for 10 around tables

Technical Experience - Medium to Advanced

Tools Required - Computer for each participant, audio-recording device for the facilitator (see Appendix X for audio-recording tips and tools)

Supplies Required - Release forms, post-its

Post-Production (video editing) - 30 minutes per story

The Idea

While the emphasis of most story-based projects is on finding a script or performance of a story as the first step, and then developing and editing a visual treatment, in a StoriesSeen workshop the emphasis is developing a small collection of images as a visual narrative, and then deciding whether to add words or a voiceover component to the piece.

Many people are drawn to images to express complex feelings or ideas, where writing or articulating those ideas might be difficult or impossible for them to express. This workshop provides an alternative approach to story that favors visual learners and visual communicators.

The project borrows from various approaches by multimedia educators, including our own StoriesSeen and iOStory iPhone Photography multi-day workshops, as well as the [Five Card Story](#) of Alan Levine, who in turn borrowed a [concept](#) from comic book artist and educator, Scott McCloud.

What Happens

The facilitator chooses a theme for the workshop (such as difference, discovery, change, home). As the workshop begins, the facilitator shows an example or two of a 6-image StoriesSeen video, and ideally a set of 6 still images used to make that video (see Appendix X for a sample StoriesSeen project).

Next, the facilitator introduces participants to the concept of the photo safari and shares specific instructions regarding the locations they'll be exploring (within or around the library) and basic photographic techniques or strategies to employ (establishing/medium/closeup/extreme closeup shots, transitions/borders/edges, light-dark, bright-muted, reflective surfaces, etc.). Participants are given 30 to 45 minutes to take photos, with the suggestion they limit their total photos to thirty.

After the photo safari, they return and work in pairs to select and discuss 6 of their recent images they believe to be significant or meaningful in relationship to the theme. They then present their images and story idea to the larger circle for discussion in the StoryCircle format.

Based on the feedback, each storyteller then writes what they consider a sufficient 50- to 150-word script to pull the story together as a reflection or poem. They assemble the story in a powerpoint or a video editor as a basic slideshow and present their story, while being audio-recorded, to the larger group.

Audience

This experience is aimed at participants who have medium to advanced creative experience, although it is possible many people would find the exercise interesting, particularly if done in connection to a compelling theme or community site (see the Ten Corners example of a StoriesSeen documentary project).

Agenda (assuming 8 people, a 6-hour Schedule)

Intros	15 min
Story examples, Theme Selection and Discussion	30 min
Presentation of Basic Photographic Strategies	15 min
Photo Safari	45 min
BREAK	45 min
Image Selection Pair Work	30 min
StoryCircle	90 min
Writing/Organizing Material in PPT or Video-editing Software	45 min
Presentation/Recording	30 min
Closing	15 min

Facilitation Approach

This workshop assumes one facilitator has familiarity with basic composition and design issues within photography, graphic design, or visual communication, as well as experience assisting in visual education, as well as some basic technology experience (image editing, file management, video editing, Powerpoint/GoogleSlides). The second facilitator could be more familiar with assisting with writing and group management, supporting people through a creative process.

Outcome/Publication

These stories could be shared informally within the participant group, or turned into short videos for broader distribution.

6. Snapshot Storytelling

Essentials

3- to 6-Hour Storytelling Event

Participants 5 to 10

Staff Needed - 2

Space - Seating for 12 around a table

Technical Experience - Medium

Tools Required - Scanner, Audio recorder, one laptop

Supplies Required - Release forms, 4X6 index cards, pens

Post-Production - 10-minute video edit per story

The Idea

Every picture tells a story, and many of us have an image or small group of images that we hold particularly dear. The stories that come out of our collection of images, whether they hang on our walls, sit on our mantles, are stored in albums or boxes, or reside on our computers and phones, are usually as powerful as the images themselves. Capturing even a brief story about each image can deepen our connection to the image and preserve the stories for future generations. The project can be built around any theme or period of time, from recounting local history, to addressing larger social

issues, to documenting important moments or milestones in the lives of the storytellers.

What Happens

In this 1-day project, we ask participants to bring one to three meaningful pictures with a great story behind them. If more than one, the pictures should related in theme or subject. Participants will then work to create a 150- to 250-word narration, audio-record themselves telling the narration, and have their image(s) scanned.

At the end of the workshop, everyone shares their story with the group.

After the workshop, staff will create short one-picture video stories, in the style of StoryCenter's [Snapshot stories on our Youtube Channel](#), or our [All Together Now Snapshot Stories around Civil Rights](#).

Audience

General Public

Activity Agenda (assuming 10 people)

	3 Hour Session	6 Hour Session
Intros	10 min	15 min
Story example and approach	15 min	15 min
StoryCircle	45 min	2 hours
BREAK	15 min	45 min
Edit your story	30 min	1 hour
Scan your image	5 min	15 min
Record your story	30 min	1 hour
Share your story	30 min	30 min

Set Up

The event should be in a general use room or meeting room with sufficient tables and chairs for a group of 12 people to sit. Ideally, there should also be a quiet office or study carrel where people can record their voices.

However, people could record their stories in the same room.

Audience

This workshop works best with medium to high literacy readers and writers working in a single shared language. While there are ways to integrate lower literacy approaches to the workshop, the use of prompts and this short-form of writing privileges those who can interpret examples and compose relatively quickly. Additional facilitation support for multilingual or low literacy participants would be required, either by adding staff or reducing numbers.

Facilitation Approach

Half-day and one-day story workshops require a high amount of positive reinforcement for all participants and whatever comes out of the story sharing process, and more hands-on assistance in finishing the 150- to 250-word scripts. The emphasis should be on celebrating the process of group sharing of the participants' images and stories more than on production refinement.

Workshop duration depends on two factors: encouraging the use of a limited writing period (similar to prompt writing), and immediate feedback by facilitators. In the short version the StoryCircle is simply a group concept sharing process (4 minutes per person); in the longer version, a more typical a sharing and feedback session occurs (12 minutes per person).

Outcome/Publication

Snapshot Stories require very little time to edit, essentially 10 minutes or less per story, so 1 to 2 hours of editing time in WeVideo would be required. The output is a video that can be shared on a website, YouTube, or other

social media. The scripts, videos, and images documenting the process would also be publishable as artifacts of the workshop experience.

7. ShoeBox Stories

Essentials

3 to 6-Hour Storytelling Event

Participants 5 to 10

Staff Needed - 2

Space - Seating for 12 around a table

Technical Experience - Medium

Tools Required - Scanner, audio recorder, one laptop

Supplies Required - release forms, pens

Post-Production - 10-minute video edit per story

The Idea

Why do we keep things? Why do we collect? Keepsakes are part of our life process, and the items we cherish become a part of our legacy and of our family's identity. Another version of the Snapshot-like story is built around objects as memorabilia, where you invite folks to bring a "shoebox" sized collection of 3-dimensional objects as well as images and documents.

As with Snapshot Stories, the project can be built around any theme or period of time, from collections and hobbies to cherished items passed down from ancestors, to the odd and quirky stuff we assemble and put meaning to along our life's journey.

What Happens

In this one-day project, participants are invited to bring a shoe box full of memorabilia, or a single object that has stayed with them over a lifetime.

In a StoryCircle process, the tellers describe 3 to 4 objects in their box and decide upon a story related to one item, or the interrelationship between the items.

Participants then work to create a 150- to 250-word narration, record the narration, and have images taken of the objects.

At the end of the workshop, everyone shares their story with the group.

After the workshop, staff will create a short Shoebox Story video similar to those found on the [BBC Capture Wales series of Shoebox Stories](#).

Audience

General Public

Activity Agenda (assuming 10 people)

	3 Hour Session	6 Hour Session
Intros	10 min	15 min
Story example and approach	15 min	15 min
StoryCircle	45 min	2 hours
BREAK	15 min	45 min
Write your story	30 min	1 hour
Scan your image	5 min	15 min
Record your story	30 min	1 hour
Share your story	30 min	30 min

Facilitation Approach

Half-day and one-day story workshops require a high amount of positive reinforcement for all participants and whatever comes out of the story sharing process, and more hands on assistance in finishing the 150- to 250-word scripts. The emphasis should be on celebrating the process of group sharing of their images and stories more than on production refinement.

Workshop duration depends on two factors: encouraging the use of a limited writing period (similar to prompt writing), and immediate feedback by facilitators. In the short version the StoryCircle is simply a group concept sharing process (4 minutes per person); in the longer version, a more typical a sharing and feedback session occurs (12 minutes per person).

Outcome/Publication

As with SnapShot Stories, Shoebox Stories require very little time to edit, essentially 10 minutes or less per story, so 1 to 2 hours of editing time in WeVideo would be required. The output is a video that can be shared on a website, YouTube, or other social media. The scripts, videos, and images documenting the process would also be publishable as artifacts of the workshop experience.

8. StoryJams

Essentials

Staff Needed - One or two

Space - Seating for 30 in circle

Technical Experience - Easy

Tools Required - Wireless microphone, speakers, timer

Audience Level – All levels of literacy and backgrounds

Supplies Required - None

The Idea

As your community's interest in storytelling grows, the prospect of finding an active group of storytellers willing to participate in these kinds of story sharings will also grow. The popularity of *The Moth* events around the United States, particularly among millenials, demonstrates the appetite for people sharing personal stories directly to an audience.

This event is different than the traditional StorySlam or *Moth* events in that it does not involve a random selection of a small group of participants

before a much larger audience. The spirit of the StoryJam is that everyone can participate, and everyone is also the audience.

We encourage you to look at the [Mill Valley Library's Naked Truth Live Storytelling Kit](#) for even more specifics for building a program around the StoryJam concept.

What Happens

The StoryJam is 1- to 2-hour public storytelling/open mic event where a group of community participants are invited to share a short 5- to 10-minute stories from their life experiences. The stories can be impromptu or rehearsed but storytellers are encouraged not to use notes or a written script; each event can adjust to the preferences of community members.

During a given 2-hour event, 10 to 20 people may share, but the audience is only as large as the circle of chairs that can be assembled.

Set Up

Based on reservations or sign-ups, the room can be arranged with chairs in a circle just large enough for the expected audience. The emcee and storytellers may need a microphone--a wireless microphone would be best.

Audience

While this event is open to a broad public, it will tend to attract participants who feel comfortable with stand-up storytelling or open mic situations. Part of the strategy behind theming StoryJam events is to encourage different kinds of audiences with different experiences.

Activity Agenda

Pre-Show - Open doors 30 minutes prior to allow folks to mingle and connect

Introduction - Present the event's overall approach, including the theme, ground rules or guidelines, and how timekeeping will be managed

Sharing - 5 to 10 minutes each

Closing - Thank you and recognition

Facilitation Approach

Depending on circumstances, there may have been a pre-event communication about the approach to subject matter (ex: in PG-rated or R-rated stories, no commercial or political marketing, no fictional stories). The emcee/facilitator would review these qualifications, as well as basic ground rules for the audience (ex: no cell phones, no heckling or interruptions, no photography or videography). During the event, the facilitator's main task is time-keeping, using a light gong or bell as a 30-second warning, then a stronger sound to indicate time is up. All participants should be reminded of these cues.

Outcome/Publication

Stories can be recorded as audio or video, but of course this changes the expectation of the storytellers to some degree. These recordings could be shared on the web as part of a collection page like the Mill Valley Library's [Naked Truth collection](#), as part of a blog post, or as part of kiosk or Listening Station exhibition.

Planning A StoryKit Project

Like all programming projects, getting an early start is essential to success. Recruiting participants remains the single most complicated part of the project, and the more preparation time, and the more publicity, the greater success for the project is insured.

We suggest calendaring the event(s) 3 to 6 months in advance, and releasing the flyer, press release, and email campaigns 8 to 6 weeks in advance for most activities. We also suggest you focus on web and email with online registration emphasized, but also provide reference desk copies of sign-ups and materials. We provide samples of email, flyers, and press materials for each event below.

Most libraries count on volunteers and allied community organizations and institutions to succeed with their public programs. This work is rich with opportunities for building bridges to other groups, and for engaging your volunteers in fun and rewarding activities.

Local Chief Listener/Project Lead (Roles and Responsibilities)

We will start with the role of the Chief Listener or project lead for a StoryKit event. Besides setting a date and confirming facility availability, the organizer would also be responsible for coordinating all outreach and recruitment, day of logistics and set up, documentation, and post-production and follow-up. This could include the coordination of committees of local representatives and volunteers, should you decide to expand the scope of community participation.

A good producer has a simple rule: any challenge can be overcome if you are willing to make 12 visits, phone calls, or direct contact emails to find the resource or person who can address the challenge, and any event, even small ones, usually has at least a dozen challenges. That's a lot of organizing, and a lot of chutzpah to keep going. And troubleshooting isn't always solving a problem; it is often finding a way to work around the challenge yet still accomplish the objective. So think smarter; don't work harder.

As Chief Listener, your real job is to hear the story of potential supporters and participants, and link your reasons, your story, for why you are producing an event, to their needs and interests. You are finding common ground, and that means listening with sensitivity to their perspectives across culture, gender, identity, class, and current context. If you make those connections, then people will connect with your project as if it is their own.

Staying on schedule and keeping your eye on deadlines is also a critical asset for organizers! You should know that you have hit planning milestones for your PR, for your recruitment, for the logistics planning, for

hosting the day, and for the follow-up, and be ready to step up when those deadlines are looming with the extra effort that assures success.

Local StoryCircle/Project Teams (Roles and Responsibilities)

The majority of these activities are meant to take advantage of existing library staff and their interests and skill sets. No other staff might be needed to execute one of the lower impact events. That said, it would be wise to make any story event into a larger community experience, bringing in participants and volunteers from local organizations, schools, historical societies, visual and performing arts organizations, and civic and activist organizations. Engaging other organizations is also a way to insure diversity of interest and investment in the process of making the stories more broadly and successfully distributed. Additional event planning, media production or editing expertise, public relations support, and group facilitation skills might also come from organizations and individuals outside your library that would enjoy being part of planning and delivering one or more of these workshops.

Your Local StoryCircle team responsibilities could include:

- Recruiting participants via email and distributing press releases, flyers, and other PR material
- Providing snacks or meals for participants, staff, and volunteers
- Gathering materials and technology needed for the event
- Distributing and collecting release forms
- Arranging translation support for multilingual participants
- Assisting with day-of-event logistics including handing out parking passes, greeting people on arrival, setting up food and refreshments, assisting with AV set-up, and gathering materials
- Documenting the event with photographs, or writing a blog piece about their experiences
- Helping to collect and archive the materials created by participants

StoryCenter Role and Support

StoryCenter intends to continue to support local libraries and partners here in California as well as nationally with the development of their StoryKit projects and, when possible, with on-site support for implementations. We are continuing to seek support and funding to provide technical assistance for story work in the library field. Our staff and contractors have years of experience in small and large scale activities, curriculum development, and technology-centered media projects. Please consider us always available for your questions, and eager to support you when and where resources are made possible through our or your efforts.

The Listening Station is a formal project of StoryCenter, independent of our library-centered efforts with the StoryKit, and we plan to expand and improve our support of all partners who decide to join the Listening Station network. See storycenter.org/listening-station for more information on that project.

Model Programs

Approaches to Partnerships and Collaborations

Each activity leans in a direction that is more likely to attract particular partnerships and collaborations within your community. Below are some thematic programming suggestions for each activity along with lists of potential partners. As these ideas are explored, amended, and built upon by our community, we will share them with you.

StorySeed-Athon

Young Authors Explore Flash Non-fiction

As part of supporting the development of young authors in your area, host a StorySeed-athon event where writers commit to a series of writing prompt sessions to see if they can complete 20 or more prompts within a fixed duration, like a weekend, and then have a peer-judged sharing event with

the best pieces to come out of the prompt writing sessions. Provide awards or recognition.

Potential Partners - After School Writing Centers, YMCA/YWCA youth programs, local high school or community college writing programs, local storytelling or *Moth*-like organizations.

StoryCircles for Reconciliation

Organize a series of story sharings as a form of dialogue around issues or concerns within the community that have a legacy of conflict or confrontation. Purposely reach out to people you believe to have differences of opinion, but focus the StoryCircles on more general prompts, like giving thanks to our mentors, decisive moments in our lives, or finding something we had lost. Make an effort to have people practice appreciative inquiry into each other's stories and connect around our shared human experience.

Potential Partners: Mediation organizations, Dialogue and Deliberation organizations, youth civic leadership organizations (like Koret Fellows or Americorps), Planning and Development offices and city planners.

Sound Recovery

Listening Station Interviews Post-Crisis or Disaster

Offer the library's resources to host interviews with survivors of events like fires or other natural disasters, civil or human rights violations, shared health issues or crisis, and struggles with dependence. Stories would not always be part of a public event, but would become part of people working through and creating an artifact about their experience, or just to talk through where their life has gone since the events, diagnosis, or process of recovery.

Potential Partners: Processes like these require collaboration with counseling and mental health professionals, but many agencies, such as County or City Mental Health and Support professionals, university-based

Public Health and Social Work researchers, social work agencies, school counseling and support services, and substance abuse support professionals, have clients or groups of clients that are in stages where sharing their story as a semi-public or archived narrative is something they are seeking as part of their recovery experience.

These Hands Built This Town

Create a special “These Hands” event for people involved in construction, architecture, city planning, maintenance, sanitation, utilities, and other jobs responsible for the built landscape to connect and appreciate the many roles played by these sectors. Create an online map of the stories to show projects where contributions by each person can be found.

Potential Partners: Businesses, civic organizations, trade societies, and individuals who self-identify in these fields; artists and historians of place/architecture in the area.

10 Corners - One Hour

StoriesSeen Documentation Project

Invite to 10 participants to choose one corner in the larger neighborhood, remaining in that space for 1 hour, taking 30 photographs without leaving that intersection. Challenge them to document what changes in an hour-- from the quality of the light, to the businesses, to the relationships of people to the street, to the cars going by, and the movements of the natural world. Ask them to write about the experience and what came up as they hung out for one hour with a camera in one location.

Potential Partners: Photo clubs, local history groups, arts organizations.

All Together Now

Civil Rights SnapShot Stories

Invite participants who have a history of engagement with social change and social justice issues to gather at your library. Ask them to bring one

image arising from that work and invite them to share a story from a prompt about how their experiences changed their perspective, along with a specific moment that inspires or troubles them, or conversely to share a story about their experience with a bully of any kind, in any part of their life, and how that story represents an aspect of their commitment to social justice. Share the stories as part of a remembrance of local campaigns or histories on related topics.

Potential Partners: civil rights, activist, social change, and justice organizations from specific communities (racial, women's, disability, LGBTQ, environmental, etc.), or as part of a local history effort from diverse community perspectives.

Hidden Treasures

Shoebox Stories from Collectors

Ask local collector clubs--such as stamps, small glass or pottery work, antiques, jewelry, baseball or other trading cards, comic books, fabric, stones or seashells, or any other collectible item that would fit in a shoebox--to bring their treasures and create an exhibition of the objects with their stories as the "curatorial statements" for each object in the library for a month.

Potential Partners: Local businesses interested in supporting collectors; small clubs or groups of people who share a specific collecting passion.

StoryJammin'

Stories Set to, or Accompanied by, Music

As you gather writers with some experience in live performance, have them experiment with a partner who is a musician to either set one of their written stories to music, or join them on stage to accompany them ambiently or in an improvised interaction with music.

Potential Partners: Arts and Music organizations, after school writing programs, local schools.

StoryFaire (Agenda, Staffing, Logistics, Equipment, Floor Plan)

The StoryFaire is a one-day professional development event that we intend to develop and expand into an ongoing program to bring to libraries around the country (as well as other organizations) to inspire them to look at story-based engagement as part of their ongoing activities. We imagine programs organized just for local constituencies, as well as for broad regional or perhaps national gatherings or trainings. The following is an overview to hosting a StoryFaire event.

AGENDA

The day will be organized in four sessions, with seven workshops/activities. There will be two concurrent sessions where you can choose one of four workshops, three of the four workshops will repeat in the second session. Any one person can take four of the seven workshops.

Morning 10am - 12:30pm

Session 1 - General Session

10:00 - 10:15 Introduction

We will provide a brief overview to the day, and the work of StoryCenter in story work processes

10:15 - 11:00am

Workshop 1

StorySeeds - Prompts and Process

You will be invited to write to three prompts from a random collection of 32, or from a photo (for the Snapshot Story session) or an object or objects (for the Shoebox Story session) to give you a running start on the day on possible stories to share.

BREAK

11:15 - 12:30

Session 2

Concurrent Sessions

Workshop 2

StoryCircles (Limit 10 participants)

We will explore the use and management of shared story exchanges for the drafting and improvement of written stories.

Workshop 3

Listening Station

An exercise for preparing interview questions for use in oral history projects, and a demonstration of StoryCenter's Listening Station kit.

Workshop 4

With These Hands

Exploring the template writing prompt with sharing and discussion about how best to use this tool.

Workshop 5

Snapshot Stories

Bring a photo with great meaning or mystery for you, and share the story that comes out of that story.

LUNCH

1:15 - 2:45

Concurrent Sessions

Workshop 2 (Repeated)

Story Circles (Limit 10 participants)

We will explore the use and management of shared story exchanges for the drafting and improvement of written stories.

Workshop 3 (Repeated)

Listening Station

An exercise for preparing interview questions for use in oral history projects, and a demonstration of StoryCenter's Listening Station kit.

Workshop 6

StoriesSeen

A stroll around the library to capture images and share ways he images could be used in one or more of your stories.

Workshop 7

Shoebox Stories

Bring a shoebox of objects from your home, choose three, and tell a story that links the three.

BREAK

3:00 - 3:45

Session 4 - General Session

Workshop 9

StoryJam

In the large group, we will invite 5 to 7 folks to share a 5-minute impromptu version of a story.

3:45 - Event Closure

If you know now you will not be able to attend for any reason, please let us know. And of course if you have any questions, please send them our way.

Staffing

Besides planning the event and all the attendant issues (see above) this program will come pretty much self-contained.

StoryCenter will provide four staff for any one StoryFaire, unless the agenda is amended to reflect less than four concurrent activities. In addition we are hoping for 2 to 3 support staff to assist with the logistics, but realistically our staff of four can handle those issues as well. We are always interested in partnering with library staff as part of their training and preparation to bring one or more of these workshops back to their community.

Logistics

To set up the event we will need support on signage, parking, and communications about any specific issues regarding the space or its use. We handle the food needs for the event, unless otherwise arranged: a morning coffee service and boxed or shared lunch (ex: pizza/salad) is what we usually arrange.

Equipment

We usually carry our own technical equipment but could imagine where one or more workshop sessions could take advantage of a computer lab, iPad lab, or other technical equipment. We would prefer the beginning and ending events to have sound and a projector as part of the experience. We will confer about issues of wifi use or other technical issues.

Floorplan

See diagram for each workshop space.

StoryKit FAQ

Q. Are there any expenses related to the use of the StoryKit (do you ever plan to charge for the distributable material)?

A. No. Once completed the StoryKit pdf, and companion web page will be accessible to any one to use and re-produce free of charge, we do expect normal citation and recognition as part of any redistribution of all or part of

the document. The copyright will be to StoryCenter, Inc. under a standard attribution creative commons license.

Q. Are we free to create events using the title StoryFaire or the associated workshop names?

A. As part of our open source perspective, we invite the re-creation of these events, either under same or similar titles, or creating your own titles for the same names. We ask that you make explicit that activities for which we are not directly planning or executing not be presented as formally affiliated with StoryCenter, or managed by StoryCenter.

Q. To whom do the products, recordings, transcripts, and any other products resulting from the execution of these workshops belong?

A. StoryCenter has a principle that all stories belong to their authors, and the authors must sign a release to allow any specific re-use or publication of all or part of their work as authors. StoryCenter may request a license for its activities as part of its promotional efforts, but StoryCenter does not consider itself a publishing platform or a venue for promoting stories in its mission.

Q. How can we get involved in expanding or developing the StoryFaire concept or developing new activities and resources?

A. Beyond our 2018 funding (which ends September 2018), we are not sure we will be able to maintain an ongoing project to update and expand these resources on our own, so we will be relying on partnerships and new resources to expand the package of offerings, and the resources. We invite people to share their ideas, curriculum, experiences, and documentation via the CaliforniaListens.org website.

Q. Can you assist on our implementations in the future?

A. As suggested above, we can provide some minimal consulting support ongoing to our friends in the California Library community, but we will be

seeking additional funding to support more active technical, production, logistical and training support.

Q. Are there classes or additional training in the more advanced media production and editing techniques that you offer? And if not, where would you suggest I look?

A. We do offer ongoing public workshops that would further entrain you in the digital media editing and management that we use in these generally “low tech” story projects. You can [visit our website](#) to see the listing of workshops. Short of coming to us, we are also happy to design workshops for your library, and to assist with programs on a custom basis. We also suggest you look into the resources available to you at your local media centers, and community colleges.

Q. Can you assist us with print, electronic media, or web-based presentation or publication of stories or materials, or other documentation processes?

A. As suggested, we are more focused on creating learning experiences and training than publication, and so it is not our emphasis to support your web-based or other format publications directly. We have service providers we can recommend who work in the library sector, and we can act in a producing capacity working with our own set of contractors if resources are identified, services and deliverables defined, and a timeline established that we consider reasonable and realistic.

Q. Where would you like to see the StoryFaire in the future?

A. Our hope is to take the show on the road nationally through ALA and other professional associations interested in bringing these ideas to the larger field. We would like to see projects similar to California Listens evolve in other states where we have staff and ongoing activities (which is some 20 states around the US as well as numerous provinces in Canada).

Sample Materials

6. Application Form (for Each Activity)
7. Release Forms (for Each Activity)
8. Sample Flyers and Rack Cards (for Each Activity)
9. Press Release
10. Outreach Email Templates (Public, Staff, Partners)

Resources

[StoryJam Flyer from Fresno County Library](#)

(Articles, Books, Case Studies, Examples)