



# Silver Stories Evaluation Report

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Image by Matej Kristovic

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

This report is an evaluation of [Silver Stories](#), a research and training partnership of nine organisations from six countries. The project brought together expertise in digital storytelling, community engagement and education to train professionals working with community groups and elderly people. Silver Stories ran from October 2013 to September 2015 and was funded by the [European Commission's Learning Programme, under the Leonardo da Vinci Lifelong Transfer of Innovation sub-programme](#). This programme seeks to adopt and transfer existing innovative practices to new settings that included sectors, target groups and countries, made achievable by working with transnational partners.

This evaluation report is a key project deliverable to explore the efficacy of the project in delivering its aims, namely to:

- Adapt and transfer learning methods from Extending Creative Practice (ECP) across the whole partnership and to two new countries and, working to provide VET for a new target professional group – i.e. trainers and employees working in the caring professions – across the whole partnership.
- Establish a means for digital storytelling to be incorporated into the on-going training of professionals in all the partner countries. More detail on the evaluation methodology can be found in Appendix 1

This report considers the project delivery against the research aims and objectives as set out in the original project application. We draw on a range of sources and data including material provided by the project partners. The report reviews delivery, identifies achievements and successes as well as lessons learnt throughout. In doing so it makes recommendations about how the work pioneered through Silver Stories might usefully be taken forwards.

### 1.1 Headline Findings

- **Silver Stories demonstrated the innovative use of digital storytelling with health and care professionals.**
- **Digital storytelling can be readily adapted to meet to a range of different health and care and support contexts.**
- **A considerable amount of time was needed to access and then build relationships with appropriate health and care sector partners, however this developmental investment has 'paid off', resulting in sustained partnerships and ongoing work.**
- **The digital storytelling methodology has tangible benefits when incorporated into training for health and care professionals.**
- **Digital storytelling can have valuable benefits for participants.**
- **Silver Stories highlighted a tension between the pressures on health and care staff and the considerable resources needed to facilitate high quality digital storytelling opportunities.**



- **The project highlighted ethical dilemmas associated with working with vulnerable groups and their carers.**
- **Strong connections forged between various partners throughout Silver Stories will hopefully extend beyond the life of the project.**
- **An optimum way of delivering this work on a local and national basis is through the partnership of educational and/or vocational training providers with organisations with expertise in arts, media and communication.**
- **Significantly the project has instigated the integration of digital storytelling into the training of professionals.**

## 1.2 The Silver Stories Partnership

The partnership was led by the University of Brighton (UoB) which acted as the contact point with the UK National Agency, undertook managerial tasks on behalf of the partnership, hosted workshops and acted as the central hub for project communication. The project partners fell into two categories: large organisations or institutions involved with education and learning and smaller arts and media based organisations. The project's success has been achieved in many of the national contexts through close collaborations between these two types of organisations. (A full list of project partners with their contact details can be found in Appendix 3).

Silver Stories is an ambitious, organisationally intricate project. The size of the partnership added conceptual and managerial complexity to the project. As is usually the case with partnership based projects, success is reliant on effective co-operation and cross-partner working as each partner brings different areas of expertise and experience to the table.

It is simplest to think of the partnership as an interrelated series of six country-based hubs of activity, delivering research in three distinct areas of 'action research' or transfers of innovation. These are:

- Transfer 1: Experience of working with trainers of Stage Three (Active) older learners.
- Transfer 2: Experience of working with trainers of Stage Four (Frail) older learners.
- Transfer 3: Experience of working with trainers of marginalised learners, such as carers of homeless young people.

The three simultaneous elements of 'action research' were preceded by a contextualising period of desk-based research that included the development and writing of bespoke digital storytelling modules for use in Transfer 1 and 2 and 'Needs Analysis' research. This laid the foundations for subsequent research by providing an understanding of digital storytelling with older people as an innovative practice that could be taken forward through a more tightly focused programme of action research. The 'Valorisation Programme' ran in parallel to the main programme and included: the development of a web presence; the collecting of individual stories through a Vimeo channel; a social media presence; attendance at external conferences; and meetings and the organisation of exhibitions and conferences hosted by the partners. Throughout this process Silver Stories has been characterised by valuable learning arising from the cross-sectoral exchange between arts and health professionals in these national 'activity hubs'.

## 2 PROJECT DELIVERY

### 2.1 Contextual Research

The Needs Analysis research not only informed the project at the outset, but also provided an informative starting point for the evaluation. An integral Baseline Survey was conducted which elicited information on the experience of digital storytelling with different groups in different settings, the use of digital storytelling within Higher Education and the use of ICT with older people in care and community settings. This was necessary in order to set the context for the ensuing transfers and continued to inform the on-going qualitative data gathering. Notably the Needs Analysis found that:

1. There is some existing evidence of the benefits of digital storytelling when used in community and health settings with older people. This evidence base provides an impetus for health and care sector providers to develop digital storytelling as part of a professional toolkit for those who are training in this area.
2. The evidence presented confirmed that digital storytelling as a methodology has strong potential to be taken forward, developed and accredited in higher education settings. This may be through the development of stand-alone modules that are accredited or the use of digital storytelling as a form of reflective learning within health care. Digital storytelling practice has the potential to evolve from 'one-off' projects or 'tasters' into a quality assured learning and assessment tool that can be used both as a reflective learning process for students, and as a means to engage with older people in care settings.

This research emphasized the importance of putting in place a structure that can deliver this effectively in order to integrate the method into higher education. Developing this structure could go some way towards ensuring that there are not pedagogic barriers restricting the development or use of digital storytelling. The development of the Silver Stories modules offers one way to effectively embed the practice.

### 2.2 Valorisation and Dissemination

The partnership has been adaptive, realistic and strategic in identifying the best way to valorise, disseminate and promote its work. In each national context the partners have carefully identified appropriate partners to work with and have dedicated time and resources in developing these wider partnerships. The rationale is that through successful delivery with evidence of real application, benefit and good practice, the project will be valorised effectively. The changes in management and responsibility were felt most keenly in the valorisation work package with the gradual transfer of responsibility from Trapezio to UoB. However, at the close of the project Silver Stories is positioned to leave a lasting legacy on VET provision by:

- Integrating digital storytelling into the training of professionals working with Stage 3 and Stage 4 older people through training and the development of quality assured modules.

- Developing sustainable professional expertise in the provision of digital storytelling workshops for a range of beneficiaries in each of the participating countries.

Silver Stories now has a strong web and social media presence and has attracted national media attention. This profile has been consolidated through exhibitions (UoB and IPL but to tour the rest of the partners in the following year), film festivals (Mitra), the hosting of academic and community conferences (IPL, UoB, and Progress Foundation) and numerous conference presentations. It is hoped that this report, along with other outputs generated by the partners will make a valuable contribution through evidencing the achievements of the project and discussing some of the nuances of the practice at the heart of the project.

The Silver Stories partnership was designed to meet the challenges it faced. It included organisations with expertise in digital storytelling (University of Brighton, DigiTales, Digital StoryLab, Mitra, Trapezio) and those in the provision of vocational training for targeted care professionals (University of Brighton, Laurea, the Progress Foundation and IPL Leiria). Through a series of specific interventions detailed in the project work packages, the project set out to ensure a legacy by:

- Integrating digital storytelling into the training of professionals working with <sup>1</sup>Stage Three and Stage Four older people through training and the development of quality assured modules for the provision of digital storytelling workshops.
- Developing sustainable professional expertise in the provision of digital storytelling workshops for a range of beneficiaries in each of the participating countries.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on Laslett's assertions on 4 phases of life.- *Ageing and Society / Volume 7 / Issue 02 / June 1987, pp 133-160*  
*Cambridge University Press 1987*

### 3 EVALUATING THE TRANSFERS

The following sections set out the three Transfers of Innovation at the heart of Silver Stories, and evaluate their progress against aims and objectives. In summary, whilst Transfers 1 and 3 have been relatively straightforward, Transfer 2 has proved to be more difficult and implementation required additional unanticipated work. The transfers ranged in terms of target group, focus and method. Partners have shared practical examples of using the methodology and adaptation thereof. This exchange has taken various formats including visits to partner institutions, screening examples of outputs from participants and presentations of the country context and experiences with the method.

#### 3.1 Transfer 1: Experience of working with trainers of Stage Three (Active) older learners

##### Transfer 1 Aims:

- To improve and test a prototype digital storytelling training solution for third age older people (active older people), for use by professionals who are working in care or social/community settings with older people;
- To update the prototype to include new training components and IT technologies adapted to Windows 7, ready for field-testing in VET and CPD settings in vocational training institutions and in non-formal community settings in the partner countries, for professionals working with the target group.

The Romanian context illustrated the potential of digital storytelling, underpinned by implementation through an extensive and well-established network. Transfer 1 began with The Progress Foundation hosting a management meeting and workshops at Constanta, Romania during May 2014. The experience of the Progress Foundation working with the Librarian Trainers Working Group (LTWG) in Extending Creative Practice meant they had a great deal of knowledge and experience to share during the transfer. This included the importance of providing older learners with an introduction to basic IT (during the ECP project librarian trainers developed an ICT introductory module to deliver along with the digital storytelling content). It also focused on developing good practice in regard to timing and workshop scheduling and identifying staffing and support levels necessary to ensure learners have a positive experience. Furthermore as LTWG ran digital storytelling projects across several centres simultaneously, this allowed an element of experimentation and adaptation, which was then collated into a set of workshop methods by the Progress Foundation.

This was beneficial for partners as they saw Transfer 1 as a stimulus for their own activity within the Silver Stories project.

*'I learned from the practical differences and difficulties involved in running the workshops, for example ways of engaging people in team building games and exercises. These can really bring people together.'* Project partner

This transfer incorporated training by local trainers. The librarians demonstrated their approach and explained the ways in which it was delivered within a national infrastructure of libraries. They also showcased a variety of outputs through presentations by participants. A question and answer session allowed the Silver Stories partners to ask about their experiences with the help of librarian translators. Romanian trainers facilitated a workshop, presented innovative story gathering techniques, presented stories and allowed all partners to discuss experiences with participants. Digital storytelling methodologies were shared and explained within their contexts of use.

### 3.1.1 Learning and Adaptation

During this transfer, the decision to begin with the Romanian context allowed partners to see the potential reach of Silver Stories and digital storytelling specifically. Here the methodology had been developed within a well-resourced national network of librarian trainers with experience of working with older people. This transfer was valuable for the Silver Stories partners; for example, while IPL (Leiria) brought extensive experience of working with older people they did not have previous experience of using digital storytelling with this group. Therefore for IPL, (a partner not involved previously in Extending Creative Practice), this transfer was crucial and considerable learning in regard to digital storytelling with older people came out of the workshops. Opportunities to meet with Romanian participants were also valued. Other partners likewise reported valuable learning, which complemented their existing expertise. Digital StoryLab for example, had expertise in digital storytelling, but not with older people and not at this scale.



Elisa recording her story. Image by Tricia Jenkins

### 3.2 Transfer 2: Experience of working with trainers of Stage Four (Frail Elderly)

**The aims of this work package were:**

- To update, improve, adapt and test digital storytelling training modules designed for use with fourth age older people in care and community settings, to their use in vocational education and training and CPD of those who work with this target group
- To export the knowledge, skills and prototype training modules to the partner countries to field-test them in VET and CPD settings in VET institutions and in informal and community settings.

This transfer incorporated experiences of working with carers and health care providers for Stage Four older people, e.g. people with dementia. This element was highly productive in terms of the learning it generated. This is in part due to the specific support needs when working of this group of participants and the fact that there is a great deal of variation in national contexts in regard to the care of older people. This transfer clearly demonstrated the flexibility and adaptability of digital storytelling practice.

The Finnish partner Laurea had been instrumental in Extending Creative Practice and therefore had considerable experience in successfully developing and using digital storytelling training modules with fourth age elders. Under this transfer they fine-tuned the module structures and adapted them for use in a VET and CPD context, resulting in tested and improved digital storytelling prototypes, suitable for the training of trainers working with fourth age older people in care settings, such as care homes or community centres. Laurea transferred their skills to training professionals working in care settings with fourth age older people, or those in vocational training, to work with elderly people. Initially, Laurea and Mitra internally validated the improved modules. A Train the Trainers workshop was organised in Finland, led by experts from Laurea and Mitra working in the field of VET within the caring professions in order to 'export' the methodology. The workshop drew on different experiences of working with stage four older people including the refinement of a module used by Laurea with social and care workers. Each transnational partner sent several participants to attend the Train the Trainer workshop, resulting in 13 participants trained in digital storytelling for fourth age older people.

This transfer also incorporated visits to the Caring TV project<sup>2</sup> run by Laurea and presentations on the University's work using digital storytelling. Here ethical and organisational difficulties were communicated. It became apparent that partners had varying needs and expectations at this workshop due to diverse understandings, applications and experience of digital storytelling. Here an introduction to the method would have helped participants engage with the interpretation of digital storytelling applied by Laurea. During this workshop Mitra presented outputs with a discussion about their home country workshops with the third age learners which offered a contrasting approach.

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<sup>2</sup>Caring Tv is an interactive web-cam service which aims to promote independent living amongst older people through participatory programmes and information services delivered via an internet based network.  
<http://www.caringtv.fi/professionals.html>



### 3.2.1 Learning and adaptation

*'In order to be able to 'sell' the methodology to new partners we need to be able to present good examples of instances where it has already been used successfully with older people with the benefits clearly set out.'* Project partner

Transfer 2 proved the most difficult to deliver. The first and third transfers are comparably straightforward adaptations of an established practice, whereas the second is more complex in a number of ways; it requires greater adaptation of the pedagogy and the active cooperation of an additional professional group with the capacity to establish new routes to beneficiaries. The partners involved in Transfer 2 encountered issues with gaining access to trainers working with fourth age beneficiaries. This access problem is directly related to the types of organisation the partners represent and the networks that they may or may not be part of. For example Laurea were able to easily access fourth age older people as they are within a professional educational setting concerned with the training of care professionals. In contrast Trapezio and Mitra, as creative sector NGOs, did not have these kinds of established relationships and encountered problems when seeking to access fourth age elders. As they did not have pre-existent relationships with university departments that train healthcare professionals, they had to develop these new partnerships. This relationship building takes time and indeed a significant part of the project duration was spent building up the necessary trust and collaboration. Trapezio strategically forged the relationship with IPL and introduced them as a partner to the Silver Stories project. This afforded access for Trapezio to both health care professionals and fourth age older learners, whilst enhancing the training offered by IPL. Digital StoryLab in Copenhagen and DigiTales in London occupy a mid-ground as independent organisations hosted by a university and consequently both were able to successfully utilise and build on existing connections in order to work with fourth age older people and the professionals who work with them.

This work package produced good examples of Transfer of Innovation. For example, while Mitra had limited experience with fourth age organisations they utilised their creative sector expertise. The 'Single Image' digital storytelling method training was demonstrated to the Slovenian partners at the Digital StoryLab workshop in Denmark. Mitra then worked hard to initiate a new relationship with University Alma Mater's Gerontology department, developing a half-day workshop, based on the Single Image method resulting in significant interest and the potential to be implemented into a curriculum of the University. Furthermore this relationship has possibilities for new positions for the professional trainers and also more sustainable connections and cooperation on a local, as well as on national and international level amongst the partners.

Mitra also successfully developed a film festival model as a means to recruit new participants and went on to hold a 'mini-film festival' at two elderly care homes in Ljubljana in August 2015. This proved a very effective way of introducing the method to potential participants and carers working there. The success of this model as a way of reaching older people and the organisations working with them has offered a valuable example for other partners and. The University of Brighton held a similar mini-film festival in August as part of their Silver Stories exhibition which stimulated interest in future collaboration from both

local community groups and representatives from the local council engaged with the city's elderly population.

One of the significant findings arising from Transfer 2 is that there are notable differences between the countries that the partnership was working in, regarding the provision of health and social care. These mitigate against the adoption of new practices unless the proposer of these new or experimental practices has pre-existing links with the health/social care system. Within Silver Stories the university partners have had more success and have found ways to develop these partnerships fruitfully. NGOs in contrast do not have the same degree of institutional influence and, as Silver Stories has demonstrated, have had to work harder to begin to build this. It is clear that the development of a strategy for extending digital storytelling within professional health care practice is complex and this is exacerbated by differing national contexts. Silver Stories partners have collaboratively developed and approved a module that is fit for purpose, however getting this adopted by health and care agencies proved to be very difficult without significant institutional and professional connections. This is due to the fact that the module needs to be accredited by a training provider or 'sold' by a training provider to a prospective client.



Image provide by Trapezio

### 3.2.2 Challenges

The challenges encountered in Transfer 2 demonstrate that digital storytelling delivered with frail older people requires (a) very specific skills, knowledge and experience, (b) effective routes to delivery and (c) a strategic commissioning context that allows partners to capitalise on both of these to take the work forward. At the outset of the project the Needs Analysis research detailed the use of digital storytelling methods in Higher Education settings with professionals training to work with older people. This gave examples of effective use of the method with older people in a number of settings, however, the majority of the examples identified related to active older people (third stage). The two examples of the method being used with fourth stage older people were: some experimental digital storytelling with Laurea in Finland (during ECP); and the work of Patient Voices in the UK. Given the limited information regarding this type of innovative practice, any analysis of 'what works' when training professionals who work with this group was preliminary and merely indicative at this stage. Furthermore, the examples of work with stage four older people were in healthcare institution settings based on established working partnerships. Silver Stories partners innovatively developed these relationships and in doing so significantly built on existing knowledge in this field.

Silver Stories Transfer 2 highlighted some of the factors contingent for successful delivery with fourth age participants. Centrally it requires very specific skills and knowledge; the work is slow and labour intensive, needs strong social and care skills and an understanding of medical conditions that impact on participants' individual ability to engage. Furthermore it requires the trainer to take on the technical aspects of production rather than simply supervising.

There has been notable learning and the development of good practice during this experimental adaptation of the method. This includes:

- The necessity of working on a one-to-one basis with older people, for example through interviews
- The need to transcribe participants' interview responses
- The necessity of staff providing significant one to one IT support by inputting the visual, audio and textual material for the digital story
- The importance of working with and building on stories, which may have already emerged through skilled reminiscence work. This replaces the established digital storytelling 'Story Circle' group as a method for developing stories
- The importance of utilising the existing relationships between facilitators and carers and older people in order to offer a solid foundation for work with participants who have physical and/or learning barriers.

In this setting the traditional digital storytelling collaborative approach of the workshop and story circle is replaced by more intensive one-to-one work. This alternative process of digital storytelling has significant implications in terms of finances and resources.

One of the findings of the Silver Stories action research is that the therapeutic benefits of digital storytelling are underexplored. Digital storytelling as a labour intensive process is relatively expensive to deliver in these contexts. The potential therapeutic benefits of digital storytelling as a long-term intervention with stage 4 older people is a field of research which could therefore be usefully investigated. The potential benefits extend beyond the participants themselves to carers, health professionals, families and communities.

This transfer (through feedback from the workshop trainers) reiterated significant ethical and technical issues which consequently pointed to further training needs and adaptations (see section 6.1.1 for further discussion). Ethical challenges included developing ways to support trainers who were coping with very emotional responses during the storytelling process (including the behaviour of participants which was seen to be manipulative and competitive). In addition to this 'emotional labour', trainers were working with older people who had low ICT skills and high levels of support needs. For instance some older participants needed higher levels of support in using the technology in order to 'drive the editing process'. This in turn raised ethical questions around authorship: whose story was being told? Was it genuinely the older person's story if it was edited by a trainer working to deadlines? The role of the facilitator cannot be denied and is often implicit in the final piece. The tensions around authorship inherent in digital storytelling are common across many comparable forms of participatory arts practice.

The availability of resources impacts on the potential uptake and effectiveness of the method amongst fourth age older people and the professionals working with them. For example Laurea found that the settings where they had most success were privately run care homes. Having a key care home employee championing the work meant that there was support and continuity in implementation throughout the workshop period. This also meant that there was a stronger possibility of continuation of the method beyond the life of the Silver Stories project. Furthermore, in this instance of a well-resourced private care home, Wi-Fi and iPads were available which meant that participants could independently continue

with digital storytelling related activity in their rooms. This points to the challenge of developing sustainable well-resourced partnership work between training organisations, NGOs and universities in order to ensure that delivery is sufficiently resourced.



Image by Claire Levy

### 3.3 Transfer 3: Experience of working with trainers of marginalised learners, such as carers of homeless young people

#### Transfer 3 Aims:

- To import vocational training solutions, using digital storytelling, to enable Romanian VET professionals (librarian trainers and regional training coordinators) to reach excluded and marginalised groups
- To import methodologies to develop key skills of marginalized groups who are excluded from the labour market.

This transfer incorporated experiences of working with various marginalised groups. It demonstrated a great range of experimentation, looking at the most effective means of project delivery and also learning about recruiting and working with new user groups.

- DigiTales hosted a workshop in London in April 2014 and then worked with UoB to host two more in Brighton in July and Dec 2014. Representatives from the Romanian partner organisation, the Progress Foundation, together with a librarian trainer attended the April and July workshops which offered experience of working with professionals who work with homeless young people (through the Salvation Army Housing Association or SAHA<sup>3</sup>) and young people from SAHA's Foyers. Stories produced from these workshops were exhibited at Silver Stories exhibition in Brighton and also were showcased at the final conference in Leiria.
- Seven members of Romanian team also attended Train the Trainer workshops run in Portugal in November 2014, which incorporated the workshops with Ubuntu (as detailed below).
- Digital StoryLab ran a series of workshops from Jan 2015 with different groups of youth workers and librarian trainers from two libraries in the region. Two librarian trainers from Romania attended one of these workshops to gain skills in working with immigrant populations.

### 3.3.1 Emerging learning and issues

The experience of the workshops during this phase offered alternative approaches to the use of the method for partners and professionals working with marginalised groups. Learning has come through direct experience of running workshops and experimentation in terms of method and scheduling. Expertise gained by facilitation trainees includes using digital storytelling as a useful aid for 'opening up' difficult issues around personal feelings; enhancing understanding between workers and participants; as an easy means to teach IT skills; and as a method of encouraging participants to realise their own talents.

There was also consideration of the stories produced particularly by Progress Foundation who found that their participants would typically offer stories told in the third person. Consequently participants were distancing themselves from their own personal narrative. The Progress Foundation found that the stories being produced by other partners were much more personal. They realised that wanted to focus on 'story' rather than IT skills, which had been the priority previously. Progress Foundation is using methods within their workshops which are meant to act as a 'directed storytelling device'. This approach includes developing a 'pyramid' method, which builds up storytelling elements to a conclusion and is designed to encourage more personal forms of storytelling. This is an approach developed by the Progress Foundation in collaboration with librarian trainers and forms part of their story development toolkit.

Like some Silver Stories partners working with fourth age learners for the first time, the Progress Foundation was working with a new client base and therefore needed to spend time recruiting public sector organisations and NGOs to work with in this phase of the project. As it took time to build up a client base, workshops took place later than planned as a result. This work however, is likely to offer further partnership development into the future. Moreover the planned film festivals (see section 5 on Valorisation) offer an opportunity to extend the work to new participant groups from within the Romanian library network.

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<sup>3</sup> See - <http://saha.org.uk/>



### 3.4 Summary findings arising from transfer and adaptation action research

The partners have been working successfully with an established method that was developed by Joe Lambert from the Center for Digital Storytelling in the 1990s. Working through the earlier project Extending Creative Practice, and now in Silver Stories, the method has proved to be agile, allowing adaptation and use with different participant groups in each country context. The success of the transfers has to a large extent been due to the Silver Stories partners' ability to both adapt this method to the particular circumstances of each transfer and to respond to the challenges that have arisen; they have been developing new partnerships whilst simultaneously formulating appropriate training strategies. In this respect, it has much in common with other digital storytelling projects across the world.

This template has provided what has become a working document that partners have experimented with in order to fit with their own particular contexts and client needs. This is an extremely adaptable formula, which has allowed partners to engage with professionals working with marginalised learners (homeless people and newly arrived immigrant groups for example), as well as third and fourth age older learners with a host of physical and learning barriers. The transfers have resulted in a diversity of approaches to workshop delivery. This illustrates the adaptability of the methodology and modules in relation to setting, context and target groups. The transfers have also highlighted the value of the ongoing action research and knowledge exchange sharing which took place across the partnership pointing towards the scope for developing further work especially in regards to Transfer 2.

As discussed above, whilst transfers one and three have been relatively straightforward, transfer two has proved to be more difficult and implementation is requiring additional unanticipated work. The transfers ranged in terms of target group, focus and method. Partners have shared practical examples of using the methodology and adaptation thereof. This exchange has taken various formats including visits to partner institutions, screening examples of outputs from participants and presentations of the country context and experiences with the methods.

### 3.4.1 Learning

Considerable learning has arisen out of the Transfers in regard to ethical practice, module development and technology.

#### **Ethics**

Transfer 2 (focused on fourth age older learners) highlighted the need for consideration of the ethics of working with older people with cognitive impairment. Silver Stories was delivered in contexts which involve three different sets of ethical practice; media, Higher Education, and health/social care. These are not always compatible and therefore this is an area where a shared understanding of issues around authorship, informed consent and involving family members needed to be developed, which added to the complexity of running the workshops. In Finland for instance extra time was required by nurse facilitators to speak to family members to gather permissions. The fact that consent may extend to family members (who have taken or feature in the images or in the stories) was made apparent in IPL's work. IPL has identified a need for guidelines in regard to privacy, confidentiality and professional protocols. This arose after discussions regarding the confidential status of matters discussed in the story circle phase of the workshop. This contrasts with the professional protocols regarding a therapeutic group setting where personal stories are confidential.

As the project progressed it became apparent that the work of partners in Transfer 1 and 2 was not entirely separate. Some care homes hosting the workshops worked with third and fourth age people collectively and therefore the project partners needed to adapt to this situation. Because of these realities the adaptation of the method has had some commonality across the transfers as well as differences. One significant difference was the recording of conversations with participants to form the basis of digital storytelling films which was used instead of the usual scripting process in Finland and Portugal. This useful adaptation was necessary with some third age learners due to low literacy levels (IPL) and fourth age learners whose cognitive abilities ruled out the writing of a script (Laurea).

In Finland trainers found a way to enable participants to tell their story by interviewing, transcribing responses and checking back with them *'to ensure that the story was being told in the way in which she wanted to tell it.'* In UK this method proved more effective amongst third and fourth age learners who wanted to share stories in less formal environments than the digital storytelling workshop would normally allow. While there is a risk that stories become a 'second hand' interpretation of experience rather than a personally authored digital story, Silver Stories facilitators were acutely aware of this risk and did their utmost to ensure the story was driven by the participant.

Working closely with Instituto Politécnico de Leiria (IPL), a higher education institution, enabled Trapezio to run workshops with stage four older people for the first time. Here they found that the delivery of digital storytelling required a very different approach. For example training had to be delivered on a one-to-one basis rather in a group setting in order to meet the needs of fourth age participants. Here the quality of the digital storytelling *process*, rather than the final *output* became more important due to the participants' substantial support needs and impaired cognitive abilities. In order to be able to make their digital story participants needed a more focused, intimate type of workshop.

Trapezio also found that in some instances there was initial resistance from family members in regard to their elderly relatives being able to participate in such activity and the potential benefits of participation. It is intended that these concerns will be explored in subsequent research being taken forward by some Silver Stories partners.

IPL found that the majority of care home residents did not have images to use in the digital storytelling process. They worked adaptively by encouraging family members to contribute to the filmmaking process by bringing family images into the care home setting. This fuelled dialogue between participants, families and the professional staff, and this was seen as beneficial in deepening relationships between all parties, enhancing the quality of care.

### **Method and Modules**

Partners found that the most effective learning during the transfers was in relation to the demonstration of methods and participation in workshops with specific groups. Digital storytelling with older people presents specific challenges (as set out in the [ECP report](#)). Silver Stories has developed significant and appropriate adaptations of the digital storytelling method, which have been developed and shared across the partnership.

Partners raised the issue of staffing levels due to the higher staff/participant ratio necessary for a quality learning experience when those participating have multiple challenges to overcome. Facilitators with high levels of skills are a particular prerequisite<sup>4</sup>. Given that working with groups (especially where participants have additional needs) requires several trainers, an ideal team is one which combines expertise in the methodology, in IT and in working with the specific group<sup>5</sup>. IPL also noted the need to have facilitators who are trained to deal emotional responses arising from the process, in recognition that the process could be personally difficult. However this has implications for sustainability in terms of resources and staffing requirements.

There has been valuable learning in regard to the time needed to ensure both a positive learning experience for beneficiaries and sustainable professional practice for trainers. After testing the revised module (in March/April) it became evident (at the national conference sharing sessions in Romania) that two-day training sessions were not practicable. The intense nature of the process was causing 'burn-out' for trainers and there were firm recommendations to revert to a three-day training schedule.

Similar observations were made by IPL about the considerable length of time needed to complete films with older participants. Some of the hindrances were due to difficulties with technology. Here workshops were increased by 10 hours (from 25 to 35) in order to ensure participants completed their films. Additionally IPL found when working in residential care homes for older people that '*they can't do it every day*', but instead sessions needed to be spaced out over weeks to allow them to reflect on the work and to build up their stories over time.

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<sup>4</sup> See Thumim, N. (2012). *Self Representation and Digital Culture*, Palgrave Macmillan: London. for further discussion in reference to Digital Storytelling.

<sup>5</sup> See for example the DiGem guide ( Jenkins and Dunford 2012) which sets out these requirements in detail [http://www.digem.eu/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=38&Itemid=41&lang=en](http://www.digem.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=38&Itemid=41&lang=en)

IPL has been developing guidelines in partnership with healthcare professionals at residential home Alcobaça to help with working with fourth age learners. Practitioners found that participants had a tendency to tell a very long 'whole' story and then needed help with drawing out a short segment of that story to turn into a two to three minute digital story.

### **ICT**

All partners have stated that ICT training is a key issue, with implications for the number of facilitators needed to work with target groups and therefore cost. Partners gained from sharing methods using differing types of software. Some partners are now using tablet technology in workshop delivery. This indicates the feasibility of 'App' development into the future. Furthermore, prior IT knowledge and cognitive ability in fourth stage participants is limited which adds to the need for more teaching support. There is also evidence of different learning needs by dementia sufferers, for example short sessions over a longer period of time. Greater one-to-one support is needed for this group and this has implications for the adaptations of the method if it is to be tailored to these participants.

### **3.4.2 Impact on Participants**

There is good evidence of positive change in self-perception by older participants and their families. Silver Stories partners are developing local partnerships and finding innovative ways of reaching mainstream audiences and academic modes of dissemination. More broadly this dissemination will help to contribute to addressing fixed perceptions of older people, particularly as the method is able to communicate an individual's experiences and voice. Where we have seen film festivals (Slovenia) and exhibitions (Portugal and UK) take place, older people are being given new platforms for communicating directly with wider audiences.

At the Silver Stories conference in Leiria a number of participants spoke about the process of making a digital story and what this had meant to them. For two young people with the SAHA, having international interest in them and their stories (through being invited to the conference) gave them real pride and a sense of achievement. The example provided by the three way collaboration across the programme between DigiTales, UoB and SAHA illustrates not only the potential for benefit for different groups (young people and older people in residential care) but also for staff.

## **4 VALORISATION, MAINSTREAMING AND DISSEMINATION**

Valorisation is the term used by the funding programme for the communications activity designed to promote the work of Silver Stories and ensure it is adopted as widely as possible. The partnership has been adaptive, realistic and strategic in identifying the best way to, communicate, disseminate and promote their work. In each national context the Silver Stories partners have carefully identified appropriate organisations to work with and have dedicated time and resources to developing these relationships. The rationale is that through successful delivery with evidence of real application, benefit and good practice, the project will be valorised effectively.

Early changes in the programme saw the gradual shift in leading this area of work from Trapezio to UoB. However, these changes in responsibility have meant that the lead partner has brought academic kudos and significant institutional support to the project. At the close of the project Silver Stories is positioned to leave a lasting legacy on VET provision by:

- Integrating Digital Storytelling into the training of professionals working with Stage 3 and Stage 4 older people through training and the development of quality assured modules. IPL is now leading the way in offering the module from September 2015.
- Developing sustainable professional expertise in the provision of digital storytelling workshops for a range of beneficiaries in each of the participating countries.

The project now has a strong web and social media presence and has attracted national media attention<sup>6</sup>. This profile has been consolidated through exhibitions, (UoB, IPL) film festivals, (Mitra, Progress Foundation) the hosting of academic and community conferences (IPL, UoB, Progress) and numerous conference presentations. It is intended that this report, along with other outputs generated by the partners will make a valuable contribution to this through evidencing the achievements of the project and discussing some of the nuances of the practice at the heart of the project.

The final partnership conference held at IPL Leiria, Portugal during May 2015 was successful, well-resourced and attracted international delegates in response to an international call for papers despite having no allocated budget as part of Silver Stories, which is a testament to the level of interest in this area. UoB, DigiTales and IPL worked closely together to programme the conference with a mix of material from inside and outside the partnership. The conference provided a platform for the project, placing it in an international context. It also allowed the project partners to showcase tangible examples to colleagues across the university and the international audience. This has helped to give weight to IPL introducing the optional module in digital storytelling for nursing and occupational therapy students from September 2015. IPL is also introducing a digital storytelling programme for the 60+ programme run at the university and already have older students signed up for this course.

The final partnership meeting provided a means to review the project and plan taking its work forward beyond the funded period. All of the partners offered updates on their work and in all instances the partnership work, developed through Silver Stories using the digital storytelling methodology, was continuing in each national context. For example Mitra's work with older people's residential care homes is only now coming to fruition and there are plans to deliver a series of new workshops. Digital StoryLab are exploring how their work with two regional libraries could extend its reach and emulate the cascade model prototyped in Romania whereby the libraries become centres for community activity. Close working relationships have been fostered through the partnership and planned publication outputs are in development, for example joint articles, between the Progress Foundation and UoB and between DigiTales and IPL, and a book on digital storytelling at UoB with input from several partners.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.dnevnik.si/magazin/aktualno/srebrne-zgodbe-skozi-gibljive-slike>  
# Silver Stories Conference 'IPLEIRIA#ESSLei

There has been considerable success in some of these areas. At the final conference in Portugal the work achieved to date, the learning gained through the three transfers and the adaptation of the modules (content and approach), was considered in order to identify how these successes could be built on through valorisation, dissemination and ultimately mainstreaming. The three strands of the conference focused on older people, community settings and reflective professional practice. The conference organisers produced a call for papers and attracted interest from the wider arts sector (and more specifically the digital storytelling sub-sector), the health and care sectors and organisations working with disadvantaged groups. There was a complementarity between presentations from Silver Stories partner presentations and external presenters.

The success of the conference illustrates a level of interest in the work on a European scale and suggests potential areas of focus going forwards. The proceedings have been submitted for peer review in a cross partnership paper in the international journal *Age Culture Humanities*.<sup>7</sup>

#### 4.1.1 Dissemination

Partners have been pro-active in disseminating the project through a number of platforms and methods including:

- The website, as well as social media such as a Facebook page and Vimeo.
- A significant number of papers have been given at national and international conferences and more are currently planned across the partnership. These have included: Athens (DigiTales), Biennial Qualitative Research Conference (Progress Foundation), Azores and International week at IPL, MECCSA in the UK (DigiTales), MERJ in Prague (UoB and DigiTales) GEECS keynote (UoB), RIDERS (UoB). Notably the Fourth International Visual Methods conference at UoB in September 2015 which showcased Silver Stories and the biennial Digital Storytelling Conference in USA (Sept 15).
- A bespoke panel at the Fourth International Visual Methods held at UoB saw the work presented to 50 academics and practitioners from across the world.
- The Silver Stories exhibition hosted at the UoB in August 2015 which included an IT and Cake event designed to promote the work to older people across Brighton. One visitor encapsulated the interest the project frequently provokes: *'Wouldn't it be nice if you could use this model for the local community of Brighton and Hove to enrich the old here.'*
- The final conference in Leiria – this was well promoted and attended and attracted significant interest. This not only showcased the work of the project and a number of films made but also had a public exhibition at the university.
- Blog posts, for example see <https://cucrblog.wordpress.com/2014/06/16/elections-and-silver-stories-from-the-black-sea-by-claire-levy/>  
<https://cucrblog.wordpress.com/2013/12/14/silver-stories/>  
<http://digi-tales.org.uk/category/blog/>

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<sup>7</sup> Authored by Tricia Jenkins (DigiTales) and Maria Dos Anjos (IPL)



- An older people's festival of films in Maribor, Slovenia, curated by a well-respected octogenarian film director and within which workshops were also programmed. The structure and planning for this has been shared with partners and Laurea are intending to organise a film festival too, alongside the Romanian festivals due to take place in 11 regional centres over summer 2015.
- UoB and Trapezio both contributed radio interviews to arts programmes.
- Mitra organised and hosted a public event that showcased their innovation and expertise. This successfully raised their profile and brought wider recognition.

The project has also benefitted from a number of academic partners who have maximised available opportunities to participate in conferences for example, as well as media based organisations who utilise their networks to circulate project information and products.

Partners were asked to reflect on the project over the last two years and using their experiences look forward at how they think it should continue. Two of the main ambitions that emerged were (1) using the Silver Stories methodology as a tool within health training and CPD of health and care professionals (i.e. IPL has been successful in introducing a digital storytelling optional module) and (2) the importance of a long-standing ambition to develop of an EU level interactive digital story aggregated archive (in development, led by UoB and DigiTales).



image by Ray Gibson

## 5 CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

This final section summarises some of the key findings, themes and learning emerging from the evaluation and, where appropriate makes recommendations about how the work that Silver Stories has developed could usefully be taken forwards.



Image provided by Tricia Jenkins

### 5.1 Digital Storytelling and Care: Silver Stories and CPD frameworks.

The evaluation considers ‘the impact of engagement with Digital Storytelling as an element of professional practice in the VET and CPD of those working in the caring professions’ and ‘the benefits of the inclusion of Digital Storytelling into the practice of those working in care and community environments with older people on their client groups in terms of a) enhanced potential for their re-engagement with the labour market, b) its effectiveness as a therapeutic tool and c) their capacity to be actively engaged with the digital world’.

These are the core focus of the project and whilst the impacts are likely to be interrelated, it is simplest to approach this through the two separate groups ie: what have been the benefits for professionals and what have been the benefits for participants. The project has explored the experiences of each of the partners and those they worked with and in doing so has gathered a large amount of data. In summary, the feedback from the piloting and adaptation of the methodology with the different groups of professionals and participants has been extremely positive. Evidence gathered demonstrates that the process of digital story making has multiple benefits and the ability to impact simultaneously on caring professionals and those they care for. However those concerned with moving the work forward need to learn from the research undertaken through Silver Stories and consider what types of partnerships need to be in place, as well as the resources, settings and ethics that offer a framework for good practice. Delivering digital storytelling along these good practice guidelines will ensure that the full benefits and impact are achieved for all stakeholders.

Silver Stories demonstrates the potential to contribute to CPD frameworks but this varies across national arts and care contexts. For example:

- In the UK there are clear synergies with the NHS aim of fostering compassion in overworked and stressed health workers<sup>8</sup> by sensitising care professionals to the older people they are looking after through encouraging reflection and learning.
- In Finland nurses from a private care home (Villa Tapiola) reported feeling that the process helped them to deepen their relationships with their patients; that is understanding their 'back-story' enriched the experience for both sides. This was echoed in delivery in Portugal.
- In Portugal IPL will offer digital storytelling as an optional module within Nursing and Occupational Therapy Training from Sept 2015. This is a significant result and what can be learnt from this needs full consideration in terms of the commitment of the team at IPL and their situational context within the health care system.

This latter example would emulate the model currently used by Laurea in the training of nurses and can be taken as an example of Transfer of Innovation within the partnership. After training 36 nursing students in the methodology at Laurea, six students went into care home settings to assist with the digital storytelling workshops with fourth age learners. This was voluntary however, relying on students' own enthusiasm for the project. The potential of digital storytelling to develop the compassion of health and care professionals was clearly demonstrated through the films trainee facilitators made about their work. For example, one film was made about working with two brothers being taken into care. Other trainee facilitators made more personal films: a psychologist and a student working in a Portuguese care home made films about their own grandmothers, one of whom had Alzheimer's. There is clearly some crossover here between professional and personal experiences, as indeed there is in the workplace.

Digital storytelling trainers working in this field undoubtedly need strong IT skills, particularly where participants' skills are low or their capabilities are limited due to age related factors. This will have cost implications for the partnership's future mainstreaming ambitions as does the fact that it is a far more labour intensive process especially when it requires one to one storytelling work. The flip side of this is the potential deepening of relationships between carer and client that the process initiates.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://cultivatingcompassionatecare.wordpress.com>

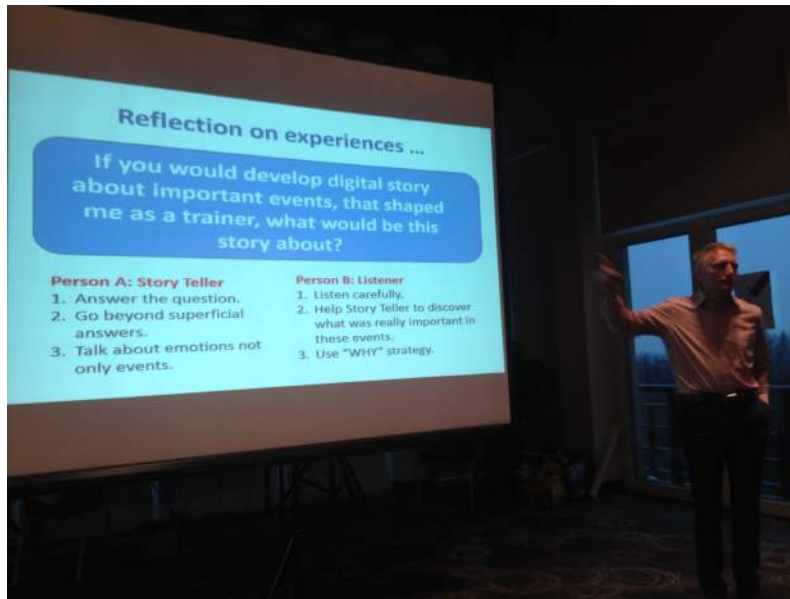


image by Claire Levy

### 5.1.1 The ethical challenge of working in caring contexts

One of the key areas of learning during the delivery and transfer process has concerned the ethics of visual practice with older and vulnerable people and their carers and the need to balance the therapeutic benefits with the democratising of digital media<sup>9</sup>. The ethical dilemmas which arose during the delivery of Silver Stories, and provided valuable learning opportunities, are not unique to work with older people. However, work with vulnerable and cared for storytellers does require specific sensitivities, for example in regard to consent.

Through discussion and research it became apparent that a range of different types of consent were at work across the project. These were also relational to the project's national contexts and institutional settings for delivery. In response to these questions the University of Brighton agreed to produce a guidance document and a sample consent form was circulated to partners. It is important to note that these ethical dilemmas are not unique to Silver Stories, they are an everyday and on-going feature of any participatory visual practice. In the field of digital storytelling it is recognised that it is not merely a matter of learning to use information technology in order to have the means to tell one's story; it is also an affective process that has ethical dimensions. Advice and professional guidelines are already available for visual practitioners<sup>10</sup> working in participatory visual practice<sup>11</sup>. There are also guidelines and a 'Bill of Rights' available specifically concerned with digital storytelling<sup>12</sup> and specific guidelines concerned with digital storytelling in health and care settings<sup>13</sup>

The ethical dilemmas arising in Silver Stories include those of:

<sup>9</sup> See Thumim, N. (2012). Self Representation and Digital Culture, Palgrave Macmillan: London

<sup>10</sup> See for example the British Sociological Association Visual Sociology Group Guidelines of ethical practice [http://www.visualsociology.org.uk/about/ethical\\_statement.php](http://www.visualsociology.org.uk/about/ethical_statement.php)

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.photovoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/pvethicalpractice.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <http://storycenter.org/ethical-practice/>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.patientvoices.org.uk/pdf/presentations/AHS%2020130425.pdf>

- **Editorial Control and Interest:** The themes of a workshop may act as a framework for participants to explore ideas and develop a personal creative voice. However there is a fine balance to be struck between encouraging participants to develop an autonomous and self-directed story or shaped by the workshop leaders and/or facilitators who may seek to showcase stories with 'I' message, often with 'emotional impact' and the wider 'we' message which has social, historical and/or cultural resonance. This issue is not confined to Silver Stories but is present in digital storytelling initiatives more generally and is a key area of contested discussion within digital storytelling networks.
- **Choice and Consent:** Storytellers being given a choice and making informed decisions about consent in regard to the sharing of their stories (both on and offline), beyond immediate or family settings, as part of the Silver Stories Project. Ethical good practice regarding consent includes an option to withdraw consent at any time. The demands of funders are sometimes at odds with this as it may be stipulated that all material produced is made public. As Silver Stories is EC funded a pre-condition of participation was that stories made would be made public and as a result the option to withdraw consent was not available. Ideally ethical practice would give storytellers more say in their conditions of participation and the dissemination of their stories.
- **Distributing and Sharing Stories:** This concerns the question of who is using the stories and for what purpose? While there is value in the storytelling process for participants, the final films can also provide a valuable resource for NGOs as a promotional or educational resource for example, in order to communicate the value of their work. This raises issues of the purpose and sustainability of participation and the implications of the re-use of stories as they become forms of 'data'. Again, this is an area provoking discussion within digital storytelling circles and is brought into sharp focus by Silver Stories – i.e. the point at which a personal story about for example dementia, becomes a case study for the medical profession or those concerned with health policy.

Digital storytelling can be (and is likely to be) emotional and affective and this often has an impact upon both the storyteller and facilitator. It may intensify feelings of vulnerability and insecurity for the storyteller; it may bring up difficult memories. It therefore also raises issues of confidentiality and disclosure for staff. Both actors in this process may need emotional support when stories have a therapeutic dimension. Furthermore work with people experiencing dementia and their families also raises specific challenges in relation to consent for people with memory impairment and the potential distress caused by being reminded of this.

During the course of workshop sessions run by IPL, (at the Alcobaça care home), judgement calls were made around whether stories were suitable for public consumption. Participants were briefed on the way their films might be viewed afterwards, so that there was an understanding of the public accessibility via the online platform, which could then affect which story a participant decided to share.

Developing clear ethical guidelines and encouraging reflection between practitioners in regard to the on-going ethical dilemmas they face will be important when seeking to develop partnerships with the health and care sector. The partnership has produced a handbook which addresses this area and seeks to contribute to a debate and to facilitate this type of work.

### 5.1.2 Innovative Delivery

Whilst Silver Stories draws on existing digital storytelling methodology and practice (for example as developed through Extending Creative Practice), it is also innovative in terms of how it has taken and adapted this to specific contexts and as a curriculum element for care professionals. The project set out with definite aims and objectives as well as delivery targets. However, in order to achieve these it has employed a range of strategies and approaches, thereby innovating throughout its delivery. A good example of this is in Slovenia where Mitra set up a Silver Stories film festival which served as a platform for showing digital stories and simultaneously as a way of engaging older people and importantly profiling the project.

The difficulties that some partners found in gaining access to organisations working with older people and especially to older people in order to offer workshops and training, necessitated thinking 'outside the box'. As one partner explained in an interview they didn't have sufficient evidence of the benefits of digital storytelling for older people and care professionals so it was often a hard case to make. She said that in order to be able to 'sell' the methodology to new partners they need to be able to present good examples of instances where it has already been used successfully with older people with the benefits clearly set out. Part of the rationale of the project was to establish a track record, evidence of successful delivery and its benefits so it required an element of risk and innovation on the part of project partners.

There was also innovation in relation to bringing creative arts and digital intervention into health settings. In most of the partners' national contexts health or care and arts are traditionally confined to very specific areas such as art therapy; one partner said that not only is digital storytelling usually associated with young people but that this is compounded by the fact that the healthcare system is very traditional and resistant to new approaches. However in many of the instances across the project there have been real benefits for the staff and organisations from this cross-sectoral exchange of professional practice.

This kind of resistance didn't deter the Silver Stories partners but meant that they had to work hard to forge new relationships with health and care agencies, establishing the value of the method through the experience and results of the delivery. A good example of this is in the UK where DigiTales and the University of Brighton worked with SAHA<sup>14</sup>, initially delivering a series of workshops with staff and young people from their residential Foyers. Because of the enthusiasm for the method this has now extended more widely and staff support young people and older people in residential settings in making digital stories. The stories produced are showcased and were even used to communicate to the organisation's senior management some of the experiences of young people using their services.

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<sup>14</sup> For more information see - <http://saha.org.uk/about/>



The Silver Stories Partners have had to use innovative approaches to tailoring their work to host organisations. The flexibility of digital storytelling has proved key here. The partners have adapted the process to respond to the needs of various target groups and logistics in terms of access, resources and schedules. This has especially been the case where the work has involved older people with dementia and Alzheimer's; making digital stories with these older people has required sensitivity, resolution of specific issues (for example consent) and one-to-one work over a significant period of time with dedicated health and care professionals. This is clearly an innovative departure from the more usual group workshop model.

The Romanian partners are currently working with a university in Bucharest to develop an online format for nursing staff working in maternity wards to help to reduce burnout through the reflective nature of the process.

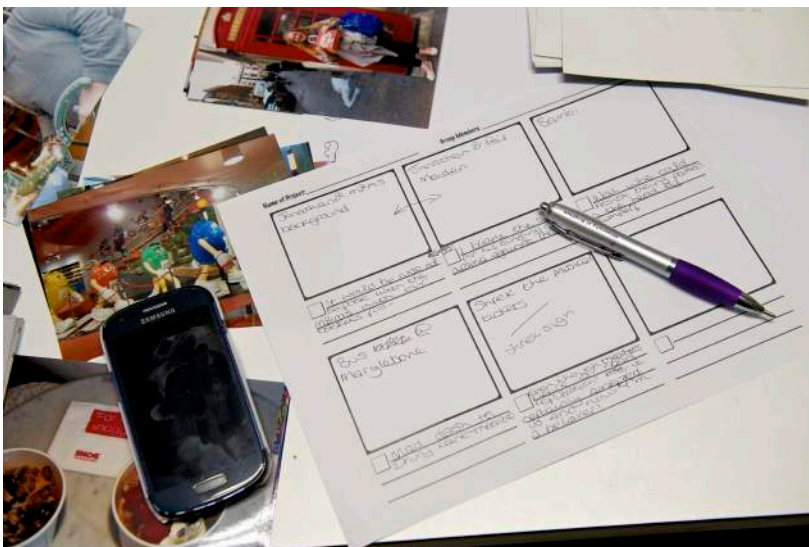


Image by Ray Gibson

## 5.2 The partnership

As well as evaluating the project's delivery, the evaluation was also tasked with evaluating the partnership and the extent to which it has been effective in meeting the project aims and objectives. The partnership has exemplified shared aims and values in the way in which it has worked together and coalesced around these and developed them into a shared vision. The partnership has grown over six years, developing from an initial development meeting in Helsinki and then through the previous Grundtvig funded Extending Creative Practice project. There has been significant learning between partners and this has informed the direction of Silver Stories in terms of working with older people, wider target groups and associated professionals.

There is undoubtedly a huge commitment to the digital storytelling methodology and its value, within the partnership and amongst participating professionals and organisations. This ongoing commitment will be necessary to help sustain the uptake of the method and future partnerships and collaborations work beyond the lifetime of this immediate programme of funding. In the words of one partner, the individual and organisational relationships are characterised by ‘longevity, capacity building – growing up’. A significant value of EU projects such as Silver Stories is the way they allow capacity building and partnership development through project delivery. The involvement and sharing of expertise and resources that is central to this partnership has provided smaller organisations with an opportunity to gain (and share) substantial skills, knowledge and experience and has enhanced their reputation on a national scale.

Silver Stories was ambitious in terms of its scale and its delivery targets, and especially given its relatively small budget distributed between a large number of partners. There are notable inequalities between partners in terms of their size, capacity, available resources and capacity for influence. That said, the lead partners recognised this and it was reflected in the work plan which focused on and worked with the assets of each partner according to their strengths. In many ways the project has relied on a ‘gift economy’ that traded on the good will, hopes and commitment of the small organisations and the support and generosity of larger institutions. It is due to this commitment to the aims and the partnership as a whole, that a huge amount of time and resources have been ‘given’ to the project by partners, without which it would not have achieved all that it has. The conference hosted by IPL in Portugal and DigiTales’ work in Essex with SAHA provides good examples of this.

Beyond the core Silver Stories partnership, the project has worked to build strong links with other organisations. This is one of the successes of Silver Stories and these wider partnerships are already forming the basis for ongoing work on a national level, which therefore contribute to future sustainability.

The learning that has emerged from Silver Stories about partnerships, and about what kinds of structures and partners need to be in place to successfully deliver digital storytelling methodology with health and care professionals and their clients has been valuable. This now forms a solid foundation for taking it forwards.

Findings in this respect include:

- Developing relationships with relevant larger institutions (whose work is involved with training staff and working with older people), can be difficult and resource intensive, but these are critical to the success of the project, its legacy and sustainability. It requires strong motivation and is usefully supported by evidence demonstrating the benefits of digital storytelling with target groups.
- Larger partners were effectively supporting others by offering additional resources, including staff time and specific expertise. Recognising the resource requirements for this type of delivery and partner organisations capabilities is therefore essential at the outset.

- An optimum way of delivering this work on a local and national basis is through the partnership of educational and/or vocational training working providers with organisations with expertise in arts and media and communication. This ‘twinning’ combines the expertise and key assets of each partner in order to deliver high quality innovative training and arts/health interventions.
- For smaller partners developing working relations with larger cross-sector institutions is hard won. However establishing these kinds of connections is likely to be productive in the longer term and therefore worth the initial investment of time and resources.
- Initiating and developing relationships with key agencies in order to access the appropriate staff and clients took more time than was anticipated. This suggests that future work either needs to utilise existing partnerships or allow sufficient development time in the early stages.

## **6.2 Good practice and widening reach**

Through research and delivery of the three transfers Silver Stories has developed a digital storytelling methodology for health and care professionals and extended practice to community groups across Romania. Through this process substantial learning has taken place and elements of good practice have been identified as well as the factors that contribute to high quality delivery in different care, health and community contexts.

At the close of the project it is possible to see the potential ways that workshop delivery can be framed and supported by the organisations and professionals involved in different European health, care and community settings. Clearly, strong partnerships between arts, health and educational organisations offer fertile inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary ground where the health benefits and creative impact of digital storytelling can be explored and realised. The project has signposted a number of potential pathways for taking the work forwards which are already being explored by partners, such as offering digital storytelling modules within health care training curricula (as IPL is now spearheading).

The Silver Stories Romanian example where a national institution (i.e. ANBPR – The National Association of Librarians and Public Libraries) has adopted digital storytelling as a key element of their delivery portfolio, demonstrates how effective the method can be for professionals and for the wide range of people they work with in their role as cultural and community hubs. On a smaller scale we can also see the potential for widening impact with the examples of SAHA in the UK (working nationally) and with IPL in Portugal where they are embedding digital storytelling within their undergraduate courses. This innovation offers a strong precedent for other training institutions as well as cascading practice, as those trained become professionals across multiple organisations and agencies. Furthermore, it is clear that digital storytelling practice with vulnerable older people requires that the ethical guidelines be incorporated into formal learning modules. This will encourage reflection between practitioners in regard to the on-going ethical dilemmas they face when combining personal narratives with visual material. This will prove invaluable when seeking to develop partnerships with the health and care sector.

### 6.3 Achievements

Silver Stories achieved what it set out to do in terms of delivery, meeting targets and importantly addressing all three research questions. Through the interrogation and exploration of the questions there has been significant learning about the export of digital storytelling into care settings especially with regards to transfer 2.

There is clearly impact and momentum on local and national levels in each partner country and little doubt that the work achieved will be foundational to ongoing developments across the partner countries. For individual partners, whilst the project has at times drawn heavily on them and required additional resources, there has been no doubt regarding the value of the methodology and the potential benefits of its application. For each partner the project has facilitated vital learning, enabled new partnerships to be founded and increased the expertise within their organisations.

The modules are clearly fit for purpose having been developed and tested collaboratively across the partnership – something demonstrated by the use in Finland and adoption in Portugal. They can be used either as they are, or adapted to specific groups and contexts such as VET institutions or as part of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) both of which have been demonstrated within Silver Stories delivery.

As the project has revealed, there are clear differences between the needs of third and fourth age older people. In recognition of this the modules developed in Silver Stories were split so that they are tailored to each group and will be made freely available to others working with digital storytelling who can then benefit directly from the experiences of Silver Stories.

A key finding is that whilst professionals can be trained in digital storytelling methods through workshop sessions, where they initially make their own stories, this is only a starting point for enabling them to then work with others to do the same. Whilst there will be a good understanding of the process and its value, there are multiple skills involved that need to be developed over time. These range from IT literacy to story making skills, pedagogic work and group facilitation. One of the partners suggested that an ‘apprenticeship’ period would work better and had in fact been using this model in working alongside two professionals who had undertaken the training, to then deliver with a group of older people. IPL in Portugal have developed the module so that they run a workshop with healthcare professionals and then a follow up session, which also includes the older learners as a consolidation of learning and helps to guarantee outputs.

It is important to reiterate that the achievements of the project were in no small part because of the strong motivation by the partners to see it succeed. They invested in the value of the digital storytelling methodology and its benefits for professionals and participants. The conference, the website, additional IT support and translation, workshop delivery and additional evaluation input have all required work beyond that funded through the EC funding. This has implications for the development of future projects, especially for the smaller organisations and large partnerships.

Digital storytelling as exemplified in Silver Stories is a methodology that has been shown to improve the *quality* of care in that it focuses on the person and relationship building and not just the physicality of care; it can therefore simultaneously offer benefits for professionals and participants. There are however issues relating to the wider financial and political context characterised by increasing pressure on resources alongside rising numbers of older people across Europe. Whilst there may be real interest and clear benefits, the digital storytelling method requires time and resources, which may simply not be available. If it is to be move forwards successfully, experience in Silver Stories suggests project development needs to be done in an environment which is properly resourced and allows for the growth of the cross sectoral relationships needed for it to flourish. Additionally it may be that the type of collaboration we have seen in Silver Stories which pools diverse expertise and capacities, producing multiple benefits and responsive to numerous agendas, is in fact a viable answer to increasing fiscal austerity.



Image by Ray Gibson

## 6 APPENDIX 1: The Evaluation Methodology

At the outset of the project the evaluation team developed and shared an evaluation framework document, which set out a formative evaluation methodology and a framework; this included indicators to assess project achievement and impact. This was agreed at the partner Kick-off meeting (December 2013) and formed the basis of our work over the past two years. As stated in the project application

*'The approach to the evaluation will be iterative and sets out to be participative, formative and summative; that is, holding up a mirror to the project processes, providing a space for intercultural dialogue regarding the challenges and benefits of adapting digital storytelling to use within the training of care professionals, and identifying lessons and informing future work for a wide range of stakeholders concerned with improving the VET in these professionals for the dual impact of enhancing their professional practice and contributing to combating the digital divide that affects older people across partner countries.'*

Following the agreement of the framework a partner feedback and baseline questionnaire was developed. Members of the evaluation team have also met individually and collectively with partners, attended digital storytelling workshops across the partnership and undertaken various qualitative and quantitative research activities constructed to support the work of partners and inform their programme.

Evaluation activity has included:

- Presentation of evaluation methodology to partners at Kick-off meeting
- Designing partner feedback and baseline questionnaire
- Drafting and finalising the Evaluation Framework – including indicators for assessment of project achievement and impact
- Designing workshop/event participant and partner questionnaires
- Liaising with Quality Assurance lead (WP8) and Needs Analysis lead (WP2) exploring how evaluation methods and information gathered may have dual purpose
- Partner liaison – input (into tools/questions), getting data and information from delivery, emerging questions about work packages, etc.
- Collating data and data analysis
- Attending iDocs Symposium (organised by Media department at University of West of England) – project dissemination and exploring options for archiving project data.
- Feeding back to partners at partnership meetings (Presentations May 2014 and December 2014), and including evaluation sessions offering the opportunity for formative evaluation activities where partners were able to discuss and review key aspects of the project.
- Designing 2<sup>nd</sup> partnership feedback questionnaires
- Feedback and reporting – emergent themes, findings, issues – to lead partner
- Liaising with Quality Assurance lead (WP8) and Needs Analysis lead (WP2) Partner liaison – input (into tools/questions)
- Attending workshops and participant presentations – Romania in May 2014
- One to one meetings with all partners on future project progression and planned workshops in Romania (May 2014)

- Team and management meetings (CUCR, UoB, DigiTales) Dec 14, April 14, May 14, September 14, Jan 15, May 15
- Attending SAHA workshops run by DigiTales in the UK (1 – 3 April 2014)
- Fieldwork attending workshop in Denmark in December 2014.
- Creating module evaluation questionnaires. (Dec 2014)
- Attending Pararchive Conference, Leeds University in March 2015.
- Attending Silver Stories Conference, IPL Leiria in May 2015
- Exit interviews with all partners May 2015
- Attending Librarians' Conference in Brasov Poiane, Romania in May 2015.
- Exit Interview with Project Director June 2015

## APPENDIX 2: The Transfers

The three distinct areas of 'action research' or transfers of innovation central to the project were:

- **Transfer 1: Experience of working with trainers of Stage Three (Active) older learners.** The aims for this work package are:
  - To improve and test a prototype digital storytelling training solution for 3rd age older people (active older people), for use by professionals who are working in care or social/community settings with older people;
  - To update the prototype module to include new training components and IT technologies, ready for field-testing in VET and CPD settings in vocational training institutions and in non-formal community settings in the partner countries, for professionals working with the target group.
- **Transfer 2: Experience of working with trainers of Stage Four (Frail) older learners.** The aims for this work package are:
  - To update, improve, adapt and test digital storytelling training modules designed for use with 4th age older people in care and community settings, to their use in vocational education and training and CPD of those who work with this target group;
  - To export the knowledge, skills and prototype training modules to the partner countries to field-test them in VET and CPD settings in VET institutions and in informal and community settings.
- **Transfer 3: Experience of working with trainers of marginalised learners, such as carers of homeless young people.** The aims for this work package are:
  - To import vocational training solutions, using digital storytelling, to enable Romanian VET professionals (librarian trainers and regional training coordinators) to reach excluded and marginalised groups;
  - To import methodologies to develop key skills of marginalized groups who are excluded from the labour market.

### Activities

#### Transfer



- Finland – Laurea worked with (1) voluntary old people who were supporting old people with dementia (2) an old age home for fourth age elderly people with mid stage dementia (Villa Tapiola in Espoo) and (3) different old age homes for fourth age elderly people with mid-stage dementia. They also began working with Elderly Care Centres (with third and fourth age elders) training social counsellor students (from Jan 2015). They trained 32 students, 6 of whom continued to work with Laurea in care homes to complete the films with participants.
- Portugal – IPL began work with social workers and psychologists from Alcobaça Homecare and Alcoboca Evora Homecare nursing homes and Santo Andre Hospital in April and June 2015. This was followed up by further workshops in Alcobaça and Sao Marinho du Porto care home with care workers, with further follow up planned for September/October 2015 with older people. (These organisations worked with older people, with and without dementia.)
- Mitra (Slovenia) worked with social gerontology students at Almer Mater University. After running a taster workshop and then a full workshop with students. They are developing a module to be introduced into the curriculum for September 2015. At the time of writing Mitra were due to hold a small film festival in two state-run elderly care homes in Ljubljana (August 2015) in order to recruit elderly participants in further workshops and to train carers.
- **Transfer 2**
- Denmark – Digital Storylab worked with the University of Aalborg healthcare trainees.
- Portugal – Trapezio worked with IPL University. They ran two workshops at IPL – the first to train facilitators who then went onto to participate in a second workshop, working with third age elderly. IPL is also working with Univates do Brasillia (Rio, Brazil), Department of Biological and Health Sciences in developing a new Masters course in Community Health Systems and Policies. IPL has suggested Univates introduce a new optional module: 'Digital storytelling in community health' over 45 hours.
- Romania – Progress Foundation are working with national library networks. Librarians are facilitators. They ran training with professionals working with marginalised groups from Mar-April 2015.
- Slovenia – Mitra ran a film-festival in Maribor which showcased films and included workshops with third age older people. They used the festival to recruit new older people as well as working with their existing cohort through Extending Creative Practice. (Oct 2014) <https://mitra.exposure.co/silver-stories> .
- UK – DigiTales ran a series of workshops with third and fourth age learners in a sheltered housing scheme for older people managed by the Salvation Army Housing Association (SAHA) in Heybridge near Maldon, Essex and a pilot at Meet Me at the Albany, an arts and culture club for the over 60s in Deptford, London

### Transfer 3

- Portugal – Trapezio worked with young leaders from vulnerable communities involved with youth organisation Academia Ubuntu and Programe Escolhas.
- Denmark – Digital Storylab worked with employees of Brøndby Municipality (local council), and librarians from Vejle and Koge Libraries.
- Romania – Progress Foundation held a series of face-to-face and Skype meetings with their network of librarian trainers and produced a working document of the methodology. This was used to form the method used in Mar/April workshops, which were run in 11 regional libraries with local NGOs and state institutions working with marginalised learners. Cascading activity took place in the form of a national conference in May 2015 organised by Progress Foundation for member librarians. This well attended national event involved sharing experiences of methodology in terms of what worked and what didn't with different client groups. In conjunction with this learning, the conference offered the opportunity for a call to action, whereby member libraries were asked to mount local film festivals over summer 2015 emulating the Slovenian model, piloted in their festival in October 2014.

## APPENDIX 3 Silver Stories Partners

The Silver Stories partners were:

- **University of Brighton (UoB), UK** – Management/Lead partner. Higher education institute, which has a history in arts and design teaching and runs the county's primary training facilities in nursing and medicine.
- **Digital StoryLab, Denmark.** The Copenhagen Centre for Digital Storytelling working with disabled people, young people, older people and other organisations.
- **Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Finland.** Located in the Helsinki region, Laurea carry out professionally orientated education, regional development and research activities
- **Trapezio, Portugal.** Located in Lisbon, Trapezio are part of the Media Shots collective working with Digital Storytelling in social and corporate contexts.
- **The Progress Foundation, Romania.** An experienced NGO, which enhances community development through vocational education and training, volunteerism and infrastructure improvement.
- **Mitra, Slovenia** is a non-profit association working for the development of audio-visual culture and intercultural dialogue.
- **Centre for Urban and Community Research (CUCR) Goldsmiths College, University of London, UK.** Based within the Department of Sociology CUCR is an interdisciplinary research centre with a track record in research and project and policy evaluation.
- **DigiTales, UK.** An independent not for profit research company hosted by Goldsmiths College, University of London.
- **Instituto Politécnico de Leiria (IPL), Portugal** is a higher education institution where The School of Health has developed several projects addressing older people and the use of ICT.

Silver Stories followed on from 'Extending Creative Practice' (ECP), a Grundtvig funded partnership led by DigiTales that 'demonstrated the multiple ways in which the model employed is highly effective, thereby providing a practical method by which to digitally engage older people.'<sup>15</sup>.

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Further project information can be found at:

<https://vimeo.com/user30214197>

<http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/projects/silver-stories>

<http://silverstories.ipleiria.pt/?lang=en>

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<sup>15</sup> [http://www.extendingcreativepractice.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Extending\\_Creative\\_Practice\\_Evaluation\\_Report\\_May\\_2012.pdf](http://www.extendingcreativepractice.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Extending_Creative_Practice_Evaluation_Report_May_2012.pdf)