Digital Storytelling Toolkit
Module 4 – Assembling Your Story

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Software, Apps and Online Tools

There are all kinds of tools you can use to put your video together. A lot of universities have video editing software available to some of their students to use. Check with the Faculty of Health's Learning Technology Services team (http://lts.info.yorku.ca/health/) to see what video editing software is available for you.

At Community Story Strategies, our media lab has Adobe Premiere Elements installed on each laptop. We use that software because it's relatively affordable but has the flexibility to do some pretty cool stuff. There are really cheap or even free apps for phones and tablets.

Free Software

PCs used to come with MovieMaker but, unfortunately, Microsoft discontinued MovieMaker in 2017. You can still download an old version of MovieMaker, or you can check out similar alternatives like Shotcut, VSDC Video Editor, Avidemux, VideoPad and Lightworks.

Macs used to come with iMovie for free, but they now offer iMovie as an app, which can be downloaded for a small fee.

Apps

Splice is a free iOS video editing app. FilmoraGo and Adobe Premiere Clip are both video editing apps available for iOS and Android for a small fee.
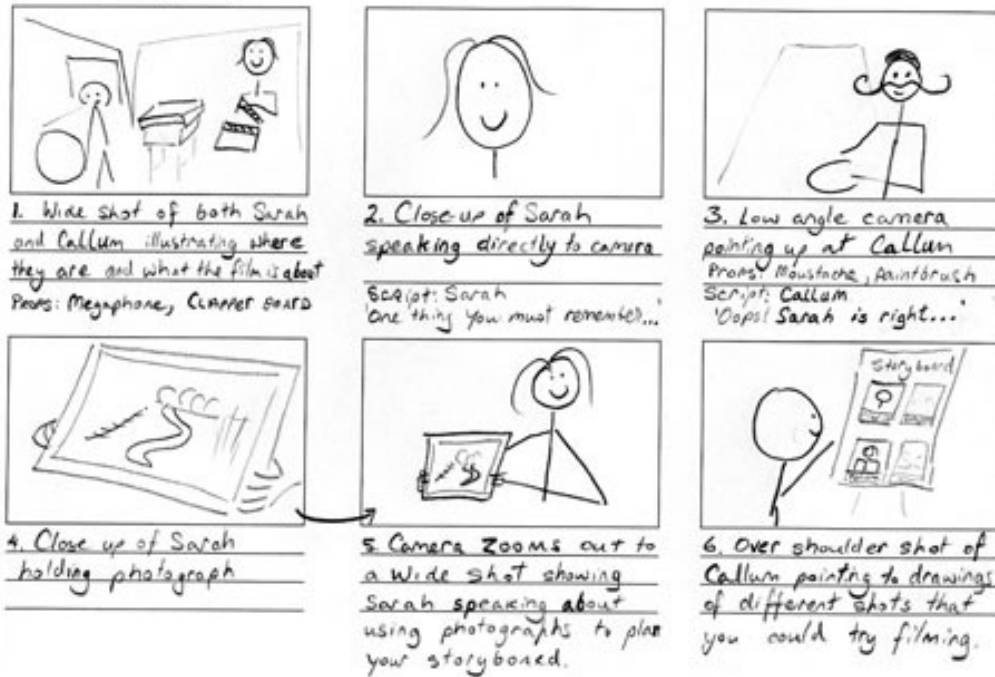
Online Video Editors

There are online tools like WeVideo and Youtube Editor that allow you to do some video editing, though these are rather limited tools.

Remember! It's not about how flashy your tools are – it's about the story. So don't get caught up in the technology. Just use whatever tools you can find that help you tell the story the way you want it told.

Storyboarding

Before you start video editing, I encourage you to create a storyboard or visual plan for your digital story. Also known as a paper edit, a storyboard helps you think like a director.

A traditional storyboard looks like this:

1. Wide shot of both Sarah and Callum illustrating where they are and what the film is about
Props: Megaphone, Clapper board

2. Close-up of Sarah speaking directly to camera
Script: Sarah 'One thing you must remember...'

3. Low angle camera pointing up at Callum
Props: Moustache, Paintbrush
Script: Callum 'Oops! Sarah is right...'

4. Close up of Sarah holding photograph

5. Camera zooms out to a wide shot showing Sarah speaking about using photographs to plan your storyboard.

6. Over shoulder shot of Callum pointing to drawings of different shots that you could try filming.

But you can make a visual plan for your story in any way you like. Often, we simply encourage people to save a version of their script and call it "storyboard," and write notes in a different font or colour about the visual story.

The key thing about storyboarding is not just figuring out which image you see in what order in your story. It's also about thinking like a director, which means you are also making notes about how you would like to manipulate the images in your story.

Thinking like a director means thinking about the following elements:

Pacing

How long should we see an image for? Sometimes you will want us to look at an image for an entire paragraph of your story, because there's an important idea you're communicating and you want us to really pay attention. Slower pacing can act like a spot light. A slow zoom into a chair, like in Lynn's story (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-lwq_Q2zj0), really focuses your attention on what she's saying. Sometimes a series of images can bring the story forward in time quickly – for example, in the middle of my digital story (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Une0rb07Wc), I take you through my childhood and adolescence to the present day in 8 seconds and 5 pictures.

Layering

Video editing allows you to manipulate images in ways that can't be done in any other medium. You can layer images in most video editors so you can build collages. Nina's story (http://www.communitystorystrategies.ca/project/nina/) has some really nice collages in it. Or you can adjust the opacity of an image so it becomes transparent, allowing you to see more than one image on the screen at the same time. Lynn's story (http://www.communitystorystrategies.ca/project/lynn/) is a great example of layering by reducing the opacity of one later.

Effects

You can also add effects like black and white filters, where an image can slowly drain of colour, or colour can bleed back into an image. Or maybe you want an image to start blurry and end up clear. Or maybe you want to add an earthquake to an image to give the feeling of instability. Motion like zooms or pans to your images can also help you tell your story. A nice slow zoom in to a picture offers an opportunity to digest what you're saying. A zoom out can have a reveal-over-time impact. Effects make the difference between a slide show and a movie. But remember to be thoughtful about the use of effects: too many jazzy effects can be distracting and can subtract from your story.

Copyright

We encourage everyone who takes our workshops to use material that they created themselves.

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OpSound
Partners in Rhyme

Public license images:
BigFoto
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Free Images
Open Photo

See Module 3 for more comments on copyright.

Tips for Profs: Much like the script, the development and assessment of the storyboard could be another valuable evaluation item for your course. The more time you give your students to plan up front, the more successful they will be at producing a meaningful digital story. Consider asking students for a storyboard of their digital story (as a work-in-progress) for review and feedback. Also, if you want to assign digital stories to your students, think about contacting Learning Technology Services (LTS) in advance of your course. LTS may be able to assist is such ways as: developing instructional tutorials on video production and editing; allowing students access to hardware/equipment; or granting students access to video editing tools. If this is not feasible, you can directly support students by providing some basic video editing support. For example, you can point them to good "how to" videos on YouTube for particular video editing software.