

## Encouraging diverse voices as part of cultural heritage data collection

Keywords: digital storytelling, bias, social justice, community memory, vernacular dialect

### Introduction:

Digital storytelling provides new opportunities for DH as both academic fields seek to encourage dialogue, make the world comprehensible, and discover new ways of interaction with the support of digital tools (Barber, 2016). It gives us the opportunity to hear the voices missing from the historical record. How might we reimagine the democratization of and challenges to the human record?

### Thesis:

Digital storytelling is regarded by many media researchers as an important way of embodying folk creativity with the assistance of new media forms (Burgess, 2006). From the perspective of media research, the act of storytelling itself can be closely related to the expression of social rights and unequal power distribution; the act of storytelling in traditional media channels often lacks the ability to fully represent society, thus the emergence of digital storytelling is argued by some to be a part of social justice movements that challenge the power of the mainstream discourse (Canella, 2017). For GLAM practitioners, working with local communities, digital storytelling is one of their essential tools for collecting important pieces of evidence and material for preserving the memory of the community. These contain more diverse and efficient memory materials than the traditional single-form historical records used in the past, such as scattered textual archival records, undigitized old photos, un-transcribed oral history materials (audio and video recordings) and so on. We argue that it is essential to include the voices of the marginalized to democratize the historic record.

### Methodology:

The Shanghai Memory Project gathers and aggregates data from its rich holdings, and we use a critical research method to examine and reflect on the use of digital storytelling as part of the project. These data include the voices of the ordinary people of Shanghai, and particularly the traditional vernacular (*Shanghainese*) dialect, which can help to redress the biases and the historical record. We acknowledge and reflect on the biases within our records that have impacted on the selection process along with ideological and other consequences to rectify the historical record (Guilliano, 2022). This is an important additional dimension to the wider Shanghai Memory project. These data fill the gaps in the historical and cultural record so that we can 'ensure that the stories and voices which have been underrepresented in both print and digital knowledge production [...] can be heard' (Risam, 2018. p.129).

### Conclusions:

There is a great potential for DH practitioners to make use of GLAM collections to discover new material and support knowledge creation through the lens of digital storytelling. More importantly, it moves the focus from the mainstream and gathers individual and collective

memories from the marginalized, the minority, the overlooked, and forgotten, what Castells (2011) calls 'counter power' to challenge the established historiography. Digital storytelling can be a powerful tool to influence the 'ways in which narratives are crafted and [...] the struggle over how dominant paradigms are established, reinforced and [also importantly, how they are] resisted' (Canella, 2017. p.26). These diverse viewpoints are needed to achieve balance in the historical and cultural record.

*(Word count: 497 without inline citation)*

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