Alternate Storytelling Workshop

SLQ Wiki Fabrication Lab 2024/03/29 20:19

Alternate Storytelling Workshop

Background

The idea is how to create a process of collaborative storytelling in small to medium groups. The workshop would ideally have a 10:1 client-to-facilitator ratio and could be run with several groups of ten in the same room; noise factor permitting. Other than that supervision factor the only real decider for the size of the engaged community it how many recording devices there are; there needs to be one device per participating community member.

Which is putting the equipment before the explanation I appreciate, but needs to be stated in the upfront and explained (I think). This is not an instance where mobile phones or other multi-use devices will suit the task. They need the be dedicated devices and have a headphone playback options. This is imperative. The logic for this being:

- Phones and other devices have a lot of distracting *other things* they can do. We've seen this time and time again. Drilling down to a device with a singular purpose should (hopefully!) narrow the potential for distraction.
- People are going to be handing the device around the room and when people are handling stuff there is chance that stuff will get broke. Small recording devices are less likely to get broken.
- The recording device can be - and should be - as cheap as can be reliably relied on to work. It needs to have a headphone option as a part of the process is listening back. Having 10 (or more) stories playing back on cheap speakers will drive the room mad and compromise the outcome.
- * A simple device discourages the need for perfection and denies the participant the power to edit, other than to erase what has been recorded.
- Where the recorder can be cheap, the headphones should be good quality and over the ear. In an ideal world they would be noise cancelling to limit external noise. The purpose is to create a cocoon effect with the participant, walling out the other elements in the room.
- It might be worth considering casing the devices and limiting access to any higher functions they might have. It might also make them less likely to be stolen if those cases are an embarrassing colour and lock the headphones in place. This is, after all, what 3D printing/DIY injection moulding is for.

Now with the qualifying out of the way, here is the idea (that'll likely take up less space that the qualifying).

Workshops Title

Alternate Storytelling Workshop

Time required

60-90 minutes (*will need testing*)

Group Size

10 (*per facilitator and taking into account the size of the workshop space*)

Materials

- **White board markers**
- **White board**
- **Instruction reference sheet**
- **Media release/licensing form**

Tools

- **Audio recorder** 1 per participant. *It would be great if these could be given to the participants to keep after the workshop process, if they could be purchased cheap enough in bulk, so participants have the option to continue the process.* This is the recorder I purchased for testing. It allows looped, sequential playback of recordings and has a headphone jack built into it. Unit was $21AUD with free shipping from a supplier in Melbourne. I am sure it could be got cheaper but what the heck.
- **Headphones** 1 per participant.

Process

Facilitating artist tells a story to the room, because that's what the workshop is about. This story should be short (no more than two minutes), have a beginning, middle and end and have several concrete and vibrant elements that are easy to latch onto. The facilitating artist provides the story on one side of the briefing paper to all the participants and writes the concrete elements and basic structure points on the white board for communal reference.

In small groups the participants are asked to go away and each create a retelling of that narrative as a group. They are given As many people as are comfortable are asked to retell the story back to the group. This is to develop an understanding of the reiteration process that they will all be undertaking in the rest of the workshop.

Facilitating artist runs the participants through the process of the workshop. This is on the other side of their briefing paperwork (which also has - hopefully - easy technical instructions) for reference throughout the workshop. The process being...

- Each participant prepares to tell a short, spoke story. Structural elements of the story are provided as per the facilitators example.
- Each participant recorded the story on to the device. Emphasis is placed on the idea that it does not need to be a polished or finished idea. It is a first draft that will go through a number of iterations over the span of the workshop. There is a defined time limit on this process.
- The participants then hands their voice recorder to the next participant.
- The participants listens to the previous persons story, takes notes and retells the story in their

own words.
- The participants then hands their voice recorder to the next participant.
- The participants listen to all the previous stories told, takes notes and retell those stories in their own words.

There are two options to concluding the process, depending on the desired outcome. They are...

Final Outcome - Self Contained workshop

- This process continues until the voice recorder returns to the participant that told the first story that was recorded. They will take notes and retell those stories in their own words, finishing off the loop of activities.
- Each participant will bring their recorder up the front and play their story for the whole group.
- If the participants are keeping their recorders, the facilitating artist will need to rip the files off of the recorder.
- All iterations of the work will be bundled and emailed to the participant as a package directly after the workshop if they're not taking their recorders with them.
- A copy of the final story from all the participants will also be distributed to the participants immediately after the workshop.
- Ideally there would be a playback devices (or devices) in the space where people can listen to the workshops outcomes. This could be as simple as an RPi with a keyboard encoder hooked up to buttons, running SCRATCH and a speaker (inside a custom case of course). An example of how to do this can be found here.

Final Outcome - Part of a Larger Offer

- This process continues until the voice recorder returns to the participant that told the first story that was recorded. They will take notes and retell those stories in their own words, finishing off the loop of activities.
- Each participant will bring their recorder up the front and play their story for the whole group.
- The facilitating artist collects all of the recorders. There is a break between now and the next session of the workshop. If the workshop was in the morning then a break until late afternoon might work. Probably the next day is the saner option. In the interim the facilitating artist will pull together the numerous narratives into a single story for telling.
    - In an ideal world the facilitating artist would work with each participant and mentor them through this process over a thirty minute session. Or multiple artists...
- The group is brought together for a final session. They are presented with the final story. They will work to record these final stories in a recording environment (where feasible), otherwise onto their voice recorders.
- Each participant will bring their recorder up the front and play their story for the whole group.
- If the participants are keeping their recorders, the facilitating artist will need to rip the files off of the recorder.
- All iterations of the work will be bundled and emailed to the participant as a package directly after the workshop if they're not taking their recorders with them.
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