

TEHA Masterclass in Digital Storytelling

"From Information Receivers to Curators of Knowledge". Exploring Digital Storytelling as a Tool for Co-Creation in Research, Education and Public Engagement

21-24 September 2026, Tallinn University

Please register by 14 September [HERE](#).

Introduction

Digital Storytelling has emerged globally as a powerful participatory and action research method that enables individuals and communities to share experiences, surface local knowledge, and contribute actively to processes of inquiry and change. Grounded in lived experience, place, and culture, digital storytelling combines narrative, images, sound, and reflection to create meaningful stories that can inform research, education, policy, and practice.

Stories make information more understandable, memorable, and persuasive. They help unlock grassroots knowledge, reveal hidden perspectives, and use the power of emotions to deepen understanding and shape decision-making. As a creative and participatory tool, digital storytelling can challenge hierarchies of expertise, amplify voices that are often unheard, and create new opportunities for dialogue, empathy, and collective learning.

In an increasingly complex and data-rich world, researchers are being called upon not only to generate knowledge, but also to engage meaningfully with the communities and individuals whose experiences inform that knowledge. Digital storytelling offers a powerful response to this challenge by moving participants from being passive recipients of information to active curators and co-creators of knowledge.

This four-day Masterclass led by Professor **Antonia Liguori** introduces participants to the theoretical foundations, practical applications, and ethical considerations of digital storytelling as a research method. Through a combination of discussion, experiential activities, case studies, story development exercises, and project design workshop, participants will explore how digital storytelling can support participatory research, knowledge co-production, public engagement, impact generation, teaching, and community-led change.

To make the most of the masterclass, the participants are expected to spend a little time preparing beforehand. **Please see preparation notes below.**

The workshop is organised by the [TLU Centre of Excellence in Life Course, Wellbeing, and Open Society Studies \(TEHA\)](#).

Programme

21 September, 10:00-15:00 (lunch 12:00-13:00)

Understanding Digital Storytelling as a Research Method

From Voice to Knowledge

- Introduction to digital storytelling: history, principles, and practice
- Storytelling, participation, and knowledge co-production
- Digital storytelling in research, education, and community engagement
- Exploring case studies from different disciplinary contexts
- Ethics, representation, ownership, and consent

22 September, 10:00-15:00 (lunch 12:00-13:00)

Experiencing the Process (4 hours)

Stories, Meaning and Lived Experience

- Story circles and collective reflection
- Narrative structure and story development
- Developing story ideas and scripts
- Peer feedback and collaborative learning
- Storyboarding and visual thinking

23 September, 10:00-15:00 (lunch 12:00-13:00)

Designing Digital Storytelling Projects

From Stories to Research Design

- Planning and facilitating storytelling projects
- Recruitment, participation, and inclusion
- Data generation, analysis, and interpretation
- Digital storytelling and research impact
- Developing a digital storytelling project linked to participants' own research interests

24 September, 10:00-12:00

Sharing, Reflection and Future Practice

Storytelling as Story-listening: From Personal to Collective

- Story sharing and collective reflection
- Presenting project ideas and receiving feedback
- Building storytelling into future research, teaching, and engagement activities
- Closing discussion and next steps

Preparation notes

Digital stories work best when they create value for both the storyteller and the audience. They allow us to move beyond information sharing and towards deeper reflection, dialogue, and understanding. Throughout this Masterclass, we will explore digital storytelling not only as a communication tool, but also as a participatory research method that can support knowledge co-production, public engagement, teaching, and community-led change.

All the information and guidance you need will be provided during the Masterclass. However, to make the most of our time together, we invite you to spend a little time preparing beforehand. You do not need to complete every activity below; simply select those that resonate most strongly with your interests, research, and experience.

Why are we doing this?

This Masterclass offers an opportunity to:

- Experience digital storytelling from the perspective of both researcher and storyteller/participant.
- Explore how stories can generate, communicate, and mobilise knowledge.
- Reflect on the role of participation, voice, and lived experience in research.
- Consider how digital storytelling might enhance your own research, teaching, engagement, or impact activities.
- Experiment with a creative and participatory method for understanding complex experiences and uncovering unexpected insights.

Things to do before the Masterclass

1. Reflect on your research and practice

Between now and the Masterclass, spend some time reflecting on your current research interests, projects, or professional practice.

You may find the following prompts helpful:

- What research questions are currently driving your work?
- What forms of knowledge are often overlooked or difficult to capture through traditional research methods?
- Whose voices are missing from conversations within your field?
- What challenges do you face when engaging participants, communities, or stakeholders?
- How do you currently communicate research findings, and what limitations do you encounter?
- Can you think of a project where storytelling might have enhanced understanding, participation, or impact?
- What would you like participants, communities, students, or policymakers to better understand about your work?

Feel free to make notes, collect ideas, or record observations in whatever format suits you best.

2. Bring an object with a story

Please bring a personal object that has significance to your academic journey, research practice, teaching, community engagement, or professional identity.

The object might represent:

- A turning point in your career.
- A meaningful research experience.
- A challenge or success.
- A value that guides your work.
- A relationship with a community, place, or project.

During the Masterclass, we will use these objects as prompts for reflection, storytelling, and discussion.

3. Consider a story you might wish to tell and develop into a digital story

You may wish to begin thinking about a short story connected to your work as a researcher, educator, research project partner.

This could be:

- A moment that changed how you think about research.
- An encounter that challenged your assumptions.
- A meaningful collaboration.
- A lesson learned from working with participants or communities.
- A story that illustrates why your research matters.

If you wish, you may draft a short script of approximately 200 words, although this is entirely optional and will be developed further during the Masterclass.

4. Gather photographs or visual materials

If you are interested in creating a digital story during/after the Masterclass, please gather a small collection of photographs, images, sketches, or other visual materials that may help illustrate your story.

These can be personal, professional, historical, or project-related. Please ensure that you have permission to use any images that include other people.

You may store these materials on a USB drive, laptop, cloud storage platform, or other device that you can access during the process.

5. Optional Reading List

Participants are not expected to read everything before the Masterclass. The readings below are intended to provide a range of perspectives on digital storytelling as a

participatory practice, a research methodology, and a tool for education, public engagement, and social change.

Lambert, J. (2010). The Digital Storytelling Cookbook. Digital Diner Press - accessible online <https://wrld.as.uky.edu/sites/default/files/cookbook.pdf>

Liguori, A, Rappoport, P, Gachago, D, Eds. (2025). Story Work for a Just Future. Exploring the Plurality of Knowledge and Method within the Digital Storytelling Community, Smithsonian Scholarly Press. <https://doi.org/10.5479/si.30758276>

Liguori, A, Sung, KJ, McLaughlin, L, Stuttle, J (2023). What Digital Storytelling Means to the New Generation of Researchers. *Social Sciences*, 12, no. 9: 485. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12090485>

Liguori, A, Rossignol, KL, Kraus, S, McEwen, L, Wilson, M (2023) Exploring the uses of arts-led community spaces to build resilience: Applied storytelling for successful co-creative work, *Journal of Extreme Events*, 8(4), 2250007, ISSN: 2345-7376. DOI: 10.1142/S2345737622500075.

Roberts, L, Liguori, A, McEwen, L, Wilson, M. (2023). The challenge of engaging communities on hidden risks: co-developing a framework for Adaptive Participatory Storytelling Approaches (APSA), *Journal of Extreme Events*, ISSN: 2345-7376. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1142/S2345737623410026>

Further Reading

Lambert, J. (2013). Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community (4th ed.). Routledge.

Dunford, M., & Jenkins, T. (2017). Digital Storytelling: Form and Content. Palgrave Macmillan.

Hardy, P., & Sumner, T. (2018). Cultivating Compassion: How Digital Storytelling Is Transforming Healthcare. Palgrave Macmillan.

Wilson, M, Liguori, A, Underwood-Lee, E (2026), Storytelling Research Methods: Meaning Making and Interdisciplinary Knowledges across Borders, ISBN 9781032228426, Routledge.

Things to bring to the Masterclass

- Your reflections and notes.
- A meaningful personal object.
- Any draft story ideas you may have developed.

- Photographs or visual materials that you may wish to use.
- Headphones or earbuds.
- A laptop, if available (please check whether devices will be provided by the University).

Most importantly, bring your curiosity, openness, and willingness to experiment with a different way of generating and sharing knowledge.

Bio

Antonia Liguori is a Professor of Participatory Storytelling and Public Policy and Co-Director of the Research Institute of Collective Place Leadership at Teesside University, UK, and a world leading expert in Digital Storytelling.

Over her career, she has had the privilege to experience a very diverse and exciting pathway, both in the heritage and the media sector in Italy and in academia in the UK (Loughborough University 2014-2023; Teesside University 2024-present).

She earned her PhD in History and Computer Science from the University of Bologna, Italy, in 2005.

Before moving to the UK, from 2006 to 2012, she coordinated the Multimedia Department at BAICR Sistema Cultura, a prestigious Consortium of cultural institutions (including the Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani, Fondazione Antonio Gramsci, Fondazione Luigi Sturzo, Fondazione Lelio Basso, Società Geografica Italiana) with the aim of contributing to the enhancement of cultural heritage through the use of innovative methodologies and the creation of digital environments. During that period, she had the opportunity to learn about and experiment with the Digital Storytelling methodology in formal and non-formal education, and to apply that as a tool for community engagement and public history.

Since then, she has been involved in a variety of international research projects to develop tools and methods to foster innovation in education; to explore the role of storytelling and memories in today's digital world; to investigate and trial ways of using digital storytelling as a participatory methodology for interdisciplinary research. Over the past five years her research has been focusing on three main strands: applied storytelling on environmental issues; digital storytelling in (cultural/heritage) education; storytelling, sense of place and cultural values.

For more information: <https://antonialiguori.blog/>