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Digital life storytelling and dementia: linear narratives or lines of flight?

Conference theme: Digital storytelling: form and practice

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Digital storytelling using a standard software package such as Photostory 3 can work to impose a linear format on a slideshow of visual images. By contrast the forms of self-expression adopted by people who have a diagnosis of dementia can often be digressive, circuitous and rhizomatic, corresponding more closely to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'lines of flight'. Preparatory to completing digital stories with ten people with a diagnosis of dementia who were living in a long-term social care environment, we used both linear (visual narrative) and non-linear (collaging) storyboarding techniques. This presentation draws on examples of both, together with extracts from one completed digital life story, to highlight why we need to avoid linear form dictating digital storytelling practice. Rose, born in 1914, shares her 100th birthday with the centenary of WWI currently being celebrated, but her subjective experience of past and present events often opposes the unidirectional, linear view of 'history as progress' that has also been challenged by critical theorists including Benjamin, Deleuze and Guattari. Past and present events frequently interpenetrate, echo, repeat, or are superimposed upon each other, escaping the constraints of the linear

narrative format, and conforming more closely to the nature of a rhizome or constellation.

Key words: Digital storytelling, dementia, narrative, history, lines of flight.

Film projection required (USB or dvd).



Dr Andrea Capstick leads the postgraduate programmes in Dementia Studies at the University of Bradford, and has a particular interest in the use of participatory visual research methods.

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