

The Digital Media Story in a Wireless World

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Storytelling is a fundamental means of human communication. Shaped by advances in the technologies of production and distribution, the story form has evolved to communicate knowledge frameworks, behavioral norms and spiritual insights within contemporary culture. The 21st century will be no different.

In coming years, stories will be created by and for a wireless world. Mobile devices will adorn our bodies and our living spaces. Presentation technologies coupled with personalization techniques will enable an intimate relationship to exist between the receiver and a message enroute. Story content — transmitted in bits and packets — will be subject to modifications caused by intersecting bits.

Is the receiving person alone? At home? Driving the children to school? Walking to work? Creatively considering some new strategy for work? Creatively considering a strategy in a game? Overwhelmed by momentary communication demands? Open to an emotionally charged encounter?

In order to understand the demands wireless technology may face as increasingly mobile modalities are incorporated into human interactions, we need to understand how “always on” connectivity can impact our story constructions as well as our lives. While familiar forms of story — the novel, the movie, the intimate conversation with friends and family — will continue to exist, new story forms are emerging which require systemic approaches to content presentation and audience reaction, interaction and exchange. Future story applications will incorporate sensors, actuators, and wireless transmission in order to shape personally meaningful histories, personal health stories and distributed commerce. In each case, dynamic data must be molded into an effective and meaningful human experience.

As the passive role of the audience transitions to the active learning community of the future, communication systems will increasingly need to moderate group engagements. “Always on” messaging requires that systems exhibit far greater sensitivity to the context of participants than was built into earlier communications systems. In understanding the world of always on messaging, the story gestalt can help us design systems which effectively manage the interruptive character of messages to the receiver and maximize expectations of the sender — as well as create engaging content.

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