

McMaster Digital Transformation Research Centre

Digital Storytelling and City Cultural Organizations

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Digital Storytelling and City Cultural Organizations



A Case Study Investigation of the “*Love Your City, Share Your Stories*” Digital Storytelling Initiative in Hamilton, Canada

Working Paper prepared by Brian Detlor, Ph.D., McMaster University

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Abstract

This working paper describes a case study investigation of a city-wide digital storytelling initiative, called [*Love Your City, Share Your Stories*](#) (LYCSYS), led by two libraries and one municipal cultural department in Hamilton, Canada. Data collection comprised one-on-one interviews, document review, and participant observations with internal stakeholders from the two libraries and the municipal cultural department involved in the development and implementation of LYCSYS. Using Activity Theory as a conceptual lens, data were analyzed using grounded theory techniques. A variety of factors (e.g., motivations, goals, actions, tools, rules, divisions of labour) were found to shape digital storytelling outcomes. Congruencies – forces which promote stability and the carrying out of the digital storytelling activity – helped counterbalance contradictions and tensions that influenced change and the reshaping of the digital storytelling activity itself. Congruencies included cooperative partnerships, sufficient funding, senior management commitment/leadership, good governance, strong community support, and flexibility. Contradictions and tensions concerned the choice of cultural icons and stories, adherence to archival standards, the look and feel of developed outcomes, technical obstacles, and project management concerns. From this analysis, several recommendations are proposed for practitioners who plan to launch similar digital storytelling initiatives in their own cities. These recommendations emphasize the finding of a “sweet spot” in the development and implementation of a digital storytelling initiative led by city cultural organizations where congruencies mitigate any contradictions and tensions that may arise.

Keywords: Digital storytelling, city cultural organizations, Activity Theory

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1. Introduction

This paper reports insights and findings from a case study investigation on the *Love Your City, Share Your Stories* (LYCSYS) digital storytelling initiative (www.myhamilton.ca) led by the three city cultural organizations in Hamilton, Canada: i) Hamilton Public Library (HPL); ii) McMaster University Library (MUL); and iii) the Tourism and Culture Division (TCD) of the City of Hamilton.

The initiative involves the capture and dissemination of digital stories concerning significant cultural icons in Hamilton, such as historical figures, architecture and events, in a wide variety of digital formats (e.g., audio, video, text). To enrich and support these stories, a variety of library resources (e.g., photographs, archival materials) were used. LYCSYS is viewed as a significant community-based mechanism to promote Hamilton's cultural and historical identity. A microsite allows citizens to view stories about Hamilton cultural icons, upload their own digital stories, and provide comments on archival pictures pertaining to the cultural icons. At HPL's Central Branch in downtown Hamilton, a large interactive wall display and iBeacon app provide the public with two additional means to experience the digital stories produced.

Work commenced on the LYCSYS initiative in 2013. Though work on LYCSYS is still ongoing, promotion of the LYCSYS microsite and full public access to its stories occurred in September 2016 when a "Big Reveal" was made during Hamilton's week-long "City Cultural Days" celebration event. For the launch phase, stories were organized according to four cultural icons. The next cultural icon will be "Canada 150" in recognition of Canada's 150th anniversary celebration in 2017. Additional cultural icons and stories will be incorporated as work on the initiative continues.

To better understand the factors that affect the implementation of digital storytelling initiatives such as LYCSYS, a case study investigation was conducted. The case study articulates an internal stakeholder's point of view; a citizen's perspective is outside the scope of the present investigation. However, future research will solicit input from community members who contribute or view digital stories housed within the LYCSYS database.¹

2. What is Digital Storytelling?

Digital storytelling combines the art of telling stories with the use of digital media (Lambert, 2013). It involves the whole range of personal stories told in potentially public form using digital media resources (Couldry, 2008, Hartley & McWilliam, 2009). It is a community media practice (Hartley, 1996; Howley, 2005). As with traditional storytelling, digital storytelling revolves around a chosen theme and contains a particular viewpoint. Digital stories tend to be short, have a variety of uses, including telling personal tales and recounting historical events (Robin, 2006). The term emphasizes the use of digital media and digital media resources as a means to create, collect, store, retrieve, find, share and use stories captured in digital form.

¹ This work will be carried out by Fariba Nosrati (Ph.D. candidate, DeGroote School of Business) as part of her dissertation research.

Digital storytelling is a subset of storytelling. Storytelling is a broader term that refers to the use of stories as a unique and innate form of human communication. Well-crafted stories can communicate abstract and complex ideas in ways that encourage understanding; effective stories inspire people by creating human connection and emotional resonance (Rockefeller Foundation, 2014).

The concept of digital storytelling emerged in the early 1990s when the [Center for Digital Storytelling](#) (CDS) in California started providing training and assistance to people interested in creating and sharing personal narratives. The CDS identified seven components of digital storytelling often cited as key successful components of any digital story: i) self-revelation; ii) the use of a personal or first person voice; iii) lived experiences in a moment of time or a series of moments; iv) the use of photos more than moving images; v) the use of a soundtrack; vi) compact length and design and, vii) intention (Lambert, 2013). Because of the recent explosion of increasingly complex social networking tools, such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat, used by the general public to tell and share their own personal stories, a more contemporary definition is likely warranted to better describe the characteristics these stories must possess in order for them to be effective and successful. Further, the burgeoning explosion of newer information technologies such as digital geospatial tools (e.g., global positioning systems, location-aware digital cameras) and multi-media tools (e.g., digital video camcorders, audio recorders, voice recognition software, and LED information displays), expands and offers exciting new possibilities to increase and leverage the utility of digital stories in terms of their creation, storage, dissemination, and reuse. The effective use of digital geospatial and multimedia tools to produce useful place-bound information is well documented (Kelly, 2011; Dennis et al., 2009; Elwood, 2009). Any new definition of digital storytelling must also take into account the impact of these newer technologies.

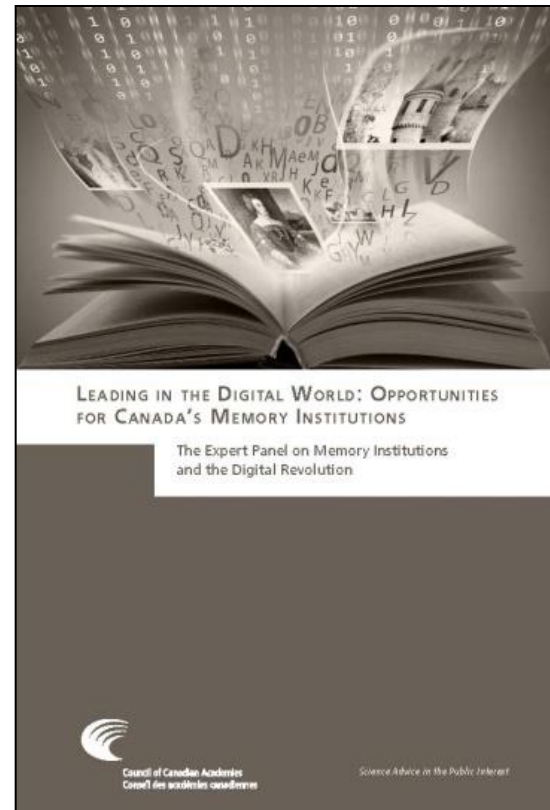
There are many different types of digital stories (Robin, 2006). Of relevance is the historical documentary perspective. **Historical digital storytelling** frames the practice of digital storytelling within the context of public history – usually that of a particular community, place or group of community members. Historical digital storytelling is typically led by cultural institutions, such as museums and libraries, and is overwhelmingly the most popular focus of digital storytelling around the globe (McWilliam, 2009). With respect to historical digital storytelling projects, a team-based approach to participatory content creation, where members of the public work with cultural organizations in the collection, creation and distribution of digital stories, is considered both appropriate and necessary in order to render historical stories of relevance and value. Co-created historical digital storytelling projects led by cultural organizations offer many benefits. They provide the public the means to articulate their own stories and opportunities for these stories to be valued (Mackay and Heck, 2013; Thumim, 2009b). In this sense, such projects empower members of the public with a voice and allow citizens to speak back to cultural institutions that have in the past represented their voice (Mackay and Heck, 2013).

3. Digital Storytelling and Memory Organizations

A report by the Council of Canadian Academies (2015) rallies memory institutions, such as libraries, museums and archives, to exercise their capacity as leaders through digital initiatives, and digital storytelling is one manifestation of this call. Specifically, the report portrays memory institutions as

collectors and preservers of cultural heritage, and describes how digital technologies can provide opportunities for the public to both access and contribute materials entrusted to memory institutions. In this regard, digital storytelling can provide memory institutions with an opportunity to enhance their role as leaders in the communities they serve, improve relationships with the public, and deliver the enhanced services that communities expect.

Specifically, the report outlines important **benefits** to memory institutions with participatory digital initiatives among their communities. These benefits include helping memory institutions to exercise their capacity to lead, establish sustainable and authentic relationships with the public, and deliver enhanced services that users expect in today's digital era by leveraging collaborative opportunities with other memory institutions. The report also identifies numerous **challenges** inherent with such digital initiatives including: the basic technical requirements of digital preservation; dealing with large volumes of digital data; selecting and appraising digital heritage, including its user relevancy; determining reliability and authenticity; and understanding legal, accountability and copyright issues. The report outlines a variety of **organizational actions** that can impact the successful implementation and roll-out of such digital initiatives, such as: prioritizing digital opportunities; developing new business models and human resources; promoting a standardized and generic information technology infrastructure; and managing collaborations, outsourcing, and copyrights. Last, the report describes **national factors** that support the realization of digital opportunities: leadership across memory institutions, legislative and policy drivers, and digital infrastructure.



One of the challenges with participatory content creation led by memory organizations is for these institutions to produce and share historical digital stories that reflect a wide, yet accurate, range of diverse and authentic community experiences, and not just those that represent top-down curatorial practice. However, it is well recognized that sponsoring organizations rarely play a neutral role in the digital storytelling process and, in fact, mediate (i.e., influence and shape) the digital stories produced (Dush, 2012). Mediation is the process in which institutionalized media of communication, such as the press, broadcast radio, television and the World Wide Web, are involved in not only the transmission of information, but also in the formation and transformation of the information disseminated (Couldry, 2008; Silverstone, 2002).

In this sense, institutions which collect, shape and transmit information have an effect on the production of meaning behind the information being shared (Thumim, 2008). Here, mediation is more

than the role of technology in transmitting self-representations; it is the effect of cultural memory institutions themselves (i.e., their mandates, purpose, goals) on the information being distributed on their behalf (Thumim, 2009b). For example, public cultural institutions may assist in the production, collection and curation of digital stories gathered from the general public, but full archives of these stories are not necessarily accessible or maintained; not all stories are put into full circulation or even included in the archive (Spurgeon & Burgess, 2015). Further, institutional objectives and editorial policies of the cultural institutions involved often shape and limit the capacity of project participants in digital storytelling projects to have an authentic voice. That is, cultural institutions impose their own broadcast values and themes that result in a more polished, coherent and articulate account of storytellers' experiences, in order to achieve digital stories that appeal to a wider audience and meet the institution's own production goals. In this sense, cultural institutions inherently alter the authenticity of stories provided by project participants (Friedlander, 2008; Mackay and Heck, 2013; McWilliam, 2008; Thumim, 2008, 2009a, 2009b).

4. The LYCSYS Initiative

[Hamilton Public Library](#) (HPL) is the lead partner on the LYCSYS digital storytelling initiative. Secondary partners are the [City of Hamilton](#)'s Tourism and Culture Division (TCD) and [McMaster University Library](#) (MUL). The LYCSYS initiative supports the City of Hamilton's cultural plan where cultural vibrancy is a pillar of sustainable development, equal to economic prosperity, social inclusion and environmental balance. According to the City's cultural plan, stories are "the DNA of culture" because they express and communicate critical information about the people, places, events, and achievements that form the collective memory and identity of a community (City of Hamilton, 2015, p. 55). The LYCSYS initiative supports the City of Hamilton's Municipal Heritage Plan and the Civic Museum Strategy, as well as HPL's strategic priority of being a community beacon, strengthening partnerships, and increasing opportunities for broader community collaboration. Furthermore, the LYCSYS initiative aligns with McMaster University's "*Forward With Integrity*" strategic initiative which advocates community engagement, and with plans between HPL and MUL to launch joint collaborative initiatives.

Initially, the LYCSYS initiative centers around four cultural icons: Gore Park, Music, Tim Horton's, and Libraries.



Gore Park



Music



Tim Horton's



Libraries

The idea was that these cultural icons would serve as initial themes around which stories from the public would be gathered and curated, and that, over time, more cultural icons would be added. Importantly, library materials (e.g., photos, maps, videos, archival materials) are used in the rendering of stories surrounding cultural icons. **Gore Park**, known as the “Gore”, is the main public park in downtown Hamilton established in 1801 that has been the centre of many holiday displays, celebrations, and events over Hamilton’s 200 plus year history. **Music** showcases Hamilton’s roots and prominence as a Canadian music town; many exceptional and talented musicians have hailed from Hamilton including Ian Thomas, Jackie Washington, Tom Wilson, and Boris Brott. **Tim Horton’s** reflects Hamilton roots in the history and formation of Canada’s largest donut and coffee chain. The first Tim Horton’s store (store #1) is located on Ottawa Street North in Hamilton and opened for business over 50 years ago on May 17, 1964. **Libraries** are important cultural institutions in the history and development of Hamilton. For example, Hamilton Public Library has been present in Hamilton since the mid-1800s, while Mills Memorial Library on McMaster University’s campus was established in 1951.

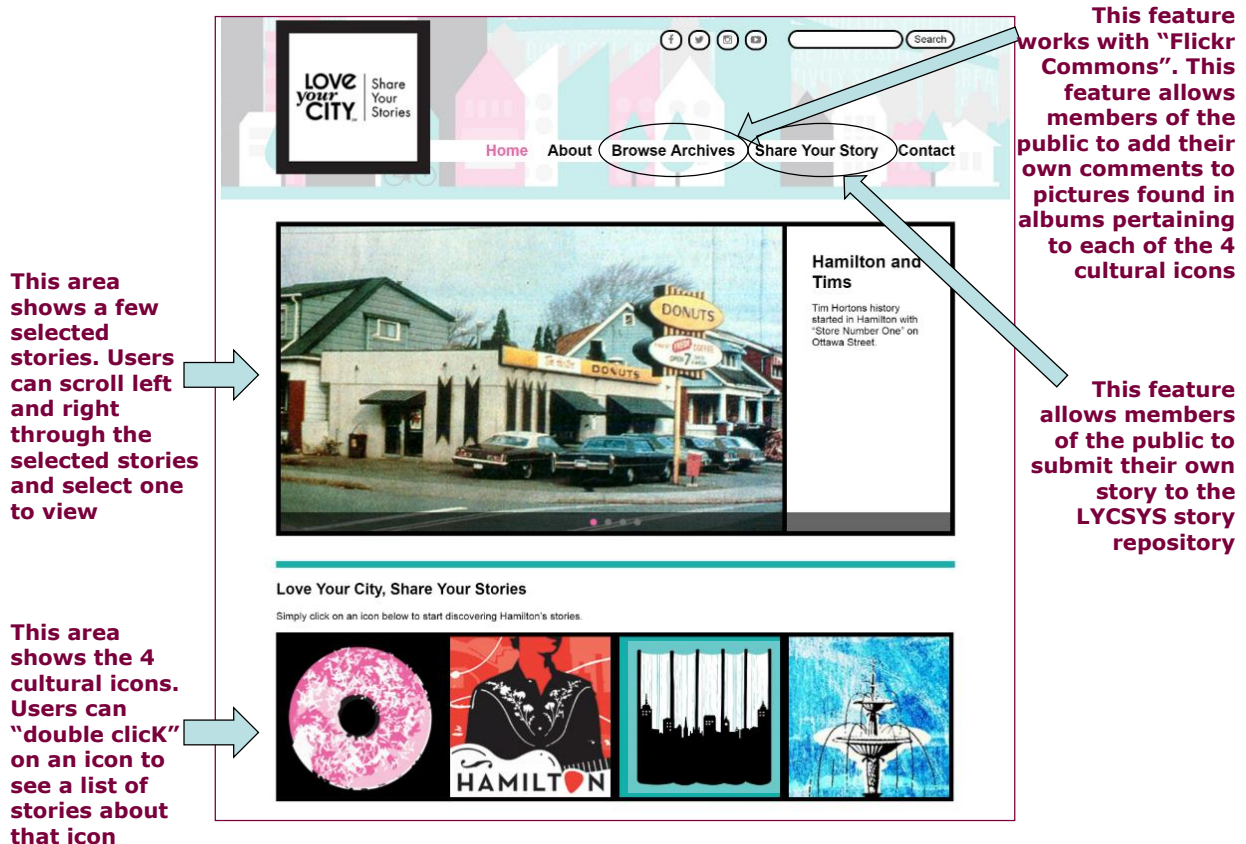
The following is a general timeline of events that occurred over the history of the LYCSYS initiative:

- Pre-LYCSYS. This period of time spans approximately 10 years prior to the start of the LYCSYS project. It is during this period of time that the City of Hamilton identifies its “Love Your City” cultural policy and plan document where cultural vibrancy is a pillar of sustainable development. Culture is seen as a strategic asset, with storytelling being viewed as an intangible component of this strategy. During this period, HPL offers to lead the digital storytelling initiative.
- Research Symposium. On August 8, 2013, a research roundtable/symposium event was held at McMaster University. Representatives from MUL and HPL were in attendance. A small set of potential collaborative projects were identified. By September, 2013, digital storytelling was identified as a joint collaborative project between HPL and MUL on which to engage.
- Ontario Culture Development Grant Application – SUBMISSION. In September 2013, HPL led and submitted a provincial grant application to fund the LYCSYS initiative.
- First LYCSYS Steering Committee Meeting. This meeting occurred in October 2013. One of the main tasks of the committee during the first few months of its formation was the development of a project charter and project schedule.
- Ontario Culture Development Grant Application – RESULTS. In February 2014, news was received that the provincial grant application was unsuccessful.
- City of Hamilton “Future Fund” Grant Application – SUBMISSION. In March 2014, a grant application for city funding was developed and submitted by HPL.
- Gore Park Pilot. In April 2014, a student Research Assistant (RA), Jeremy Parsons, was hired to work on the development of a Gore Park pilot over the summer months.

- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). – Partnership Development Grant (PDG) Application – SUBMISSION. In May 2014, development of a SSHRC PDG grant application commenced. This work was carried out over several months. In November 2014, the SSHRC PDG grant application was submitted.
- City of Hamilton “Future Fund” Grant Application – RESULTS. In July 2014, the Hamilton Future Fund application was successful. 150K received.
- Attempt to Hire a Digital Storytelling Assistant. In July 2014, work commenced on hiring a Digital Storytelling Assistant to lead and coordinate the LYCSYS initiative. By Fall 2014, the idea to hire a Digital Storytelling Assistant was abandoned and a decision was made to hire independent story gatherers for each of the four cultural icons.
- iBeacons Installation Attempt at Gore Park. In February 2015, the idea of installing iBeacons in Gore Park and developing an iBeacon app was first mentioned at a LYCSYS steering committee meeting. In May 2015, an attempt was made to install the iBeacons in Gore Park.
- Large interactive wall display installed. In March 2015, a large interactive wall display was installed on the first floor at Central Branch, Hamilton Public Library.
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) – Partnership Development Grant (PDG) Application – RESULTS. In April 2015, the SSHRC PDG grant application was successful. 200K received.
- Research Project – Kick-Off Meeting. On May 26, 2015, a “kick off” meeting was held at MUL for the research portion of the LYCSYS initiative to communicate the purpose and activities of the project to LYCSYS stakeholders and fine-tune research areas of focus.
- iBeacons at Mills Library. In November 2015, iBeacon installation at MUL commences. Technical difficulties delay the installation until March 2016. In March 2016, an international master’s exchange student (Claudia) collects survey and interview data from 25 users who experience the iBeacon app. Claudia successfully defends her master’s thesis in July 2016.
- iBeacons at Central Branch. In April 2016, a new and improved version of the iBeacon app is developed and iBeacon installation at HPL commences. However, technical difficulties prevent the installation from occurring. In August 2016, a new consultant is hired to get the new iBeacon app working and this is accomplished by mid-September 2016. On September 16, 2016, the lead researcher (Brian Detlor) and his PhD student (Fariba Nosrati) collect survey and interview data from 25 users who experience the new iBeacon app.

- Soft-Launch of the LYCSYS microsite. A soft launch of the microsite occurred over the summer of 2016.
- Last LYCSYS Steering Committee Meeting. On September 13, 2016, the final LYCSYS steering committee meeting was held. At this meeting, project debriefing occurred as well as discussion of the details surrounding the “Big Reveal” launch at the end of the month.
- Hard-Launch of the LYCSYS microsite. On September 30, 2016, a “Big Reveal” event was held to celebrate and announce the successful launch of the LYCSYS microsite. This event coincided with the City of Hamilton’s “Cultural Days” celebration events.
- New Story Gathering Phase. Since October 2016, the LYCSYS initiative has entered a new phase. Initial work will center on establishing a new governance structure, figuring out operational details, and gathering stories for a new cultural icon to celebrate “Canada 150” in 2017.

The following is a pictorial of the main page of the LYCSYS microsite as of September 2016:



The microsite (www.hamiltonstories.ca)

As described in the timeline above, a large interactive wall display was installed on the first floor at Central Branch of HPL in downtown Hamilton that allows users to experience the digital stories

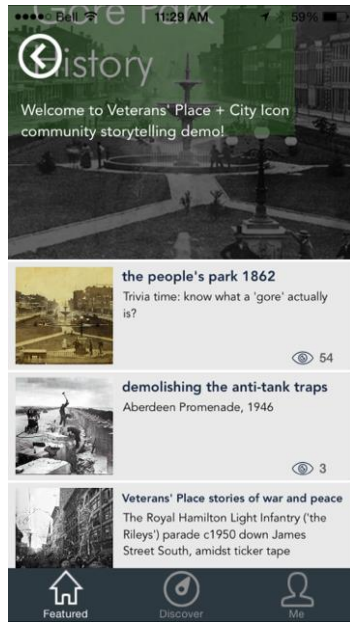
produced. The display is interactive in the sense that users can “touch” the display to explore the stories. Images are projected from a data projector mounted off the ceiling in the room. Doing so prevents wear and tear, and potentially any damage, to a physical touch screen. Sensors on the borders of the wall display let the software know if a user touches a certain part of the wall, and the display reacts accordingly. Users can explore the stories at their leisure. In addition to visual images, speakers are installed above the wall displays so users can hear narrations of the stories and any background music.



Also mentioned in the timeline above is the implementation of iBeacons at both MUL and HPL. Posters advertising the iBeacons were installed at both libraries to entice citizens to experience the app. If users have the app installed on their smart phone or tablet, and Bluetooth is enabled, their smart phone or tablet device “wakes up” when they are physically close to the poster, and the app automatically pushes stories about the image on the poster to the user’s device. In the example below, the poster displays an image of a statue of Sir John A. MacDonald – Canada’s first Prime Minister – that is installed in Gore Park.



As mentioned in the timeline above, two versions of the iBeacon were created and installed. The first version was developed and tested in Mills Library at McMaster University. The following are two screen snapshots of the first version of the iBeacon app taken from a mobile phone. Photos used in the stories were sourced from HPL’s Local History and Archives department.



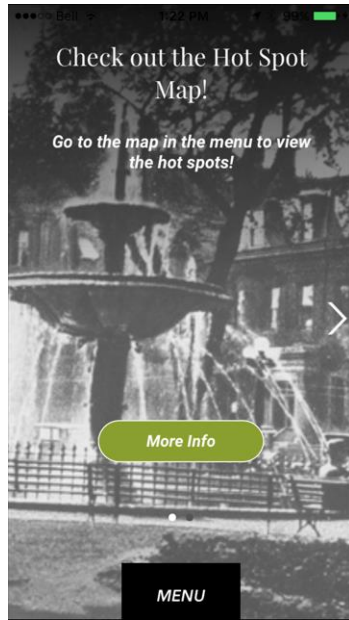
Snapshot from the 1st version of the iBeacon app. The screen displays all stories about “Gore Park”. The user can scroll through to see which possible stories about Gore Park are available for further viewing.



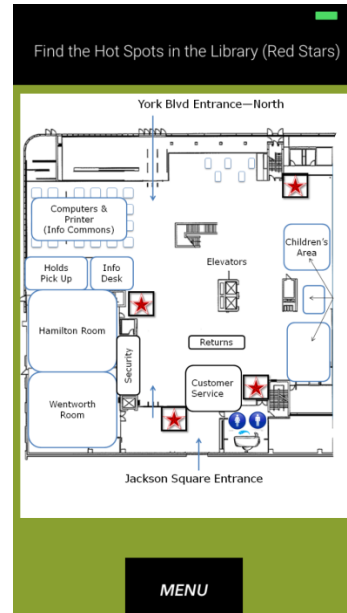
Snapshot from the 1st version of the iBeacon app. The screen displays a specific story about Gore Part that was selected by a user from the previous screen.

The second version of the iBeacon app was developed and installed in Central Branch at Hamilton Public Library. The second version made significant improvements in the usability/navigation of the app and the amount of information content (i.e., stories) available for viewing. Four posters (iBeacon “hot spots”) were installed in the library. Each poster pertained to a collection of stories about a particular object (e.g., monument, fountain, statue) located in Gore Park. These posters were:

- Veteran’s Place;
- Sir John A. Macdonald statue;
- the Cenotaph; and
- Gore Park Fountain.



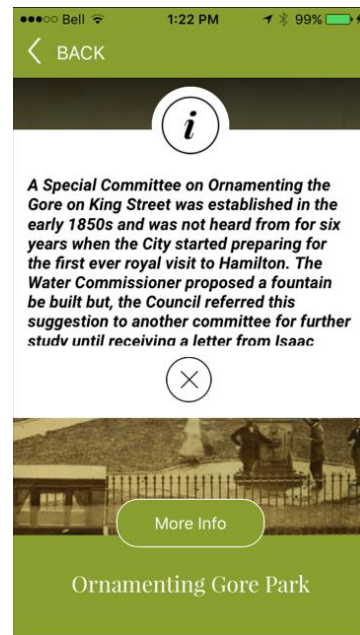
Home screen of the 2nd version of the iBeacon app inviting users to check out the physical locations of the iBeacon posters in the library.



Map displayed on the 2nd version of the iBeacon app showing the physical location of four posters where iBeacons were installed at the Central Branch location.



In the 2nd version of the iBeacon app, more visual space was allocated to images associated with the stories. Users could click on the “More Info” button in the app if they wanted to read about the story.



This is text of the story associated with the picture displayed on the previous screen. To read more text associated with the story, users simply scrolled down.

5. The Case Study

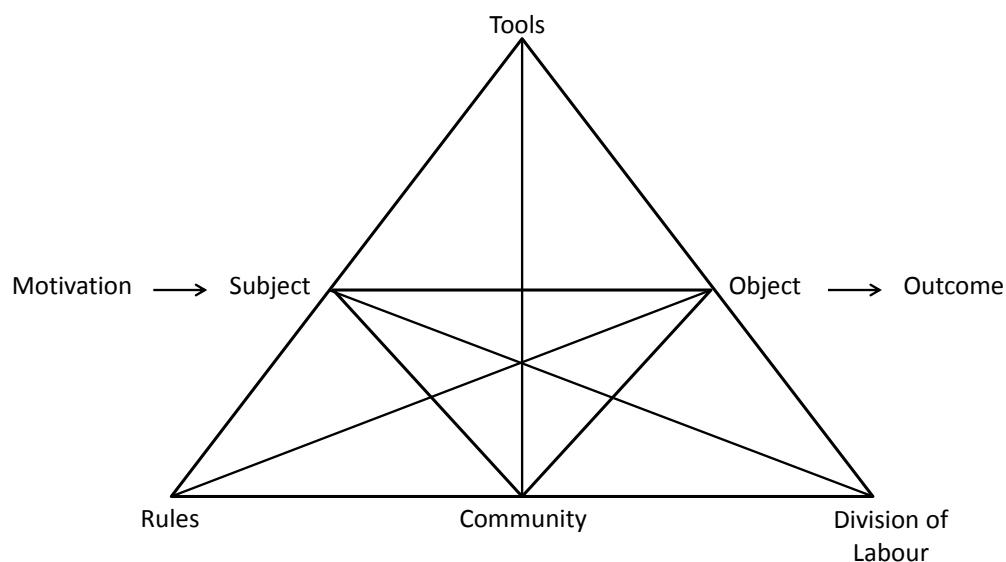
a) Purpose

The purpose of this research is to understand the phenomenon of digital storytelling initiatives led by city cultural organizations by using the case study method to collect and analyze data pertaining to Hamilton's LYCSYS initiative. ***What can the LYCSYS example teach us about how these kinds of initiatives are conceived and carried out? What factors foster or impede their implementation and roll-out?*** These are the research questions guiding this case study investigation.

b) Conceptual Framework

To answer the study's research questions, Activity Theory set the boundaries of investigation and served as a guide for analysis. **Activity Theory** provides a language for understanding and making sense of complex real world activities situated in cultural and historical contexts (Engestrom, 1987; Hasan & Kazlauskas, 2014; Leont'ev, 1981; Vygotsky, 1978). Rooted in 1920s Soviet psychology, Activity Theory has evolved as a theoretical tool for studying human activities situated in the social contexts in which a user acts (Nardi, 1996). Recently, the fields of both Information Systems (Karanasios et al., 2015) and Information Studies (Allen, 2016; Wilson, 2013) have seen a growing and keen interest in the application of Activity Theory because of the theory's ability to bring together both technology and context under the same unit of analysis, namely an activity or activity system.

For this study Engestrom's (1987) "third generation" model of Activity Theory is utilized. Engestrom's model is the most widely-adopted by researchers today (Allen et al., 2011; Chen et al. 2013). It incorporates the following constructs, illustrated in the figure below.



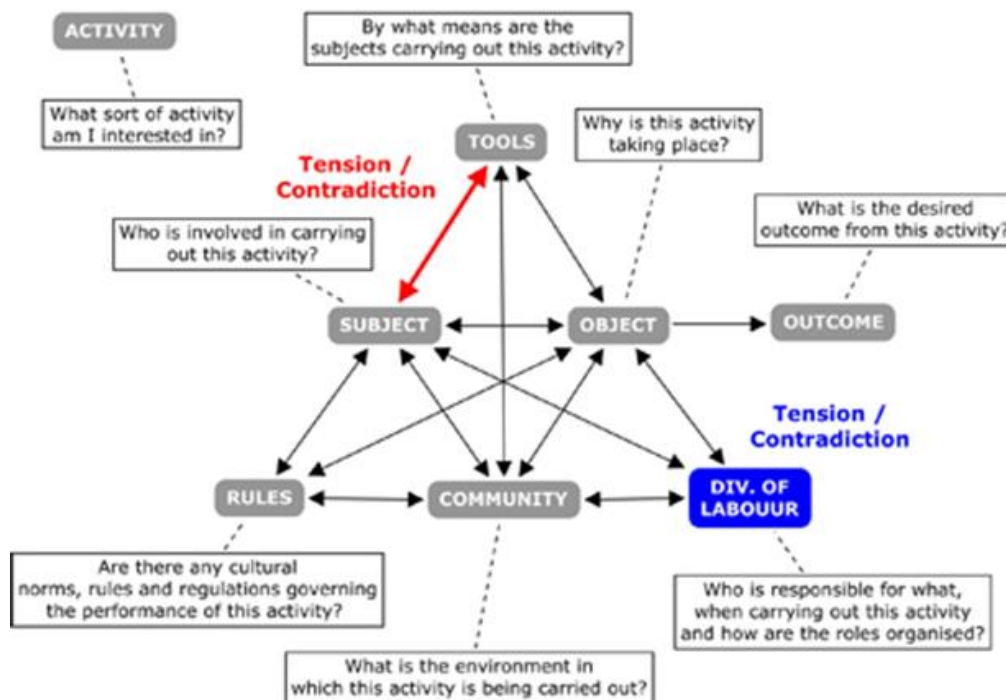
An activity system adapted from Engestrom (1987)

An activity system is composed of a subject, object, tools, community, rules, and division of labour. A **subject** is a person or groups engaged in an activity system while an **object** is the “objective” of the activity. The object gives the activity **motivation** and specific direction. Simply put, an activity system incorporates a subject who is motivated to achieve an object. The object itself is not necessarily a singular goal; objects can be poly-motivational (Kaptelinin, 2005). Further, the same object can be shared by more than one activity (Allen et al., 2014). Both physical artifacts (e.g., technology) and cognitive signs (e.g., memory, language, skills) form the **tools** that a subject uses to achieve an object. A **community** consists of all the people, groups or organizations that have a stake in the work surrounding an activity, while **rules** are the norms, regulations and conventions that mediate the subject-community relationship and guide the activity. Finally, **division of labour** refers to the manner in which work is allocated among various actors in an activity.

It is important to distinguish between an activity’s **outcome** (results) and its object (objectives) because activity systems may lead to unintended results. Further, even though there often is some stability over time, objects are not static and may be transformed in the course of an activity. Changes in objects are not trivial because they can change the fundamental nature of an activity (Nardi, 1996). According to Leont’ev (1981), activities have hierarchical structures where a subject’s motives determine **goals** within an activity and these goals result in **actions** (i.e., an activity comprises actions). In this sense, an activity is composed of actions and each action has a goal (Nardi, 2006).

A fundamental concept in Activity Theory is the notion of **contradictions and tensions** within an activity. As contradictions and tensions arise, they expose the dynamics, inefficiencies and importantly opportunities for change within an activity (Helle, 2000; Engestrom, 1999). Contradictions exist at four levels: i) within the elements of an activity (e.g., tools, rules, subjects); ii) between elements of an activity (e.g., between a subject and a tool); iii) between a central activity at one point in time and more advanced form of the activity at a later point in time; and iv) between co-existing or neighbouring activities (Engestrom, 1999; Karanasios & Allen 2013). Contradictions are sources of change and development leading to the possibility of transformation and the re-conceptualization of the object and the motive. The diagram below on the next page illustrates the roles that tensions and contradictions play in transforming and re-conceptualizing an activity, and how tensions and contradictions can occur at nodes and in the intersections between nodes.

Opposite to contradictions and tensions is the notion of **congruencies** (Allen et al., 2013; Karanasios & Allen, 2014). Congruencies are forces within an activity that promote stability and reproduction of the activity in its current form. Drawing upon systems theory (Buckley, 1967) and the work of Archer (1995), the notion of congruency is similar to the notion of *morphostasis* (i.e., internal forces for balance), while contradictions and tensions are similar to the notion of *morphogenesis* (i.e., internal forces for change). As Allen et al. (2013) suggest, congruencies are stabilizing forces within activity systems and, in a sense, counteract changes to activity systems brought about by contradictions and tensions.



How Activity Theory Components Interact [source: <http://phdblog.net/tag/activity-theory/>]

According to Nardi (1996), Activity Theory is a powerful and clarifying descriptive tool that provides a framework for studying the social context in which users act. Activity Theory offers a well-defined set of perspectives on human activity and a set of concepts describing that activity (1996, p. 8). The theory proposes a strong notion of mediation – all human activity is shaped by the tools and sign system (i.e., language) that people use (1996, p. 10). Actions are always situated within a context, and they are impossible to understand without that context (1996, p. 26). An individual can and usually does participate in several activities simultaneously (1996, p. 26). Further, activities are not static or rigid entities; they are under continuous change and development. Each activity also has a history of its own. There is a need to understand the history of an activity in order to make sense of the current situation (1996, p. 26). Participation in different activities having different object(ives) can cause tensions and distortions (1996, p. 30). Moreover, activities have a double nature. Every activity has both an external and internal side. The subject and object of an activity are in a reciprocal relationship with each other. The subject is transforming the object(ive), while the properties of the object(ive) penetrate into the subject and transform him or her (1996, p. 32).

Activity Theory has a rich tradition of being applied in many fields of study, ranging from education to ethnography to human computer interaction. Because it provides a holistic perspective for investigating an entire work/activity system, beyond that of one actor or user, Activity Theory was a particularly appropriate framework for the current case study analysis of the LYCSYS three-partner initiative.

c) Methodology

As introduced above, a qualitative case study investigation was conducted on the LYCSYS digital storytelling initiative. **Data collection** involved one-on-one interviews, document collection, and participant observations.

Between December 2015 and January 2016, eight semi-structured **interviews** were conducted with key informants from the three participating organizations (HPL, MUL and TCD). Seven of the eight informants were directly involved in the management and governance of the LYCSYS digital storytelling initiative through their membership on the project's steering committee; all informants were involved in varying capacities in the project's implementation. In this sense, the interview participants formed a representative sample for examining the LYCSYS activity system from an internal stakeholder's point of view².

Interview participants were recruited via individual email messages sent to potential recruits by the lead researcher (Detlor). See figure to the right. Email addresses of potential recruits were either in the public domain (e.g., available on public websites) or already personally known by the lead researcher.

The following is the letter of information that was sent to potential recruits to more fully explain the purpose of the study, the types of interview questions that would be asked, potential harms or risks, and how participant confidentiality and anonymity would be protected. The letter explains how interviews would be recorded if permission were granted, that interview transcripts would be sent to participants for their review, and how digital recordings would be deleted once

E-mail Subject line: McMaster Study – The Use of Digital Storytelling by Municipal Cultural Organizations

Dear XXX,

This is Brian Detlor writing – Associate Professor & Chair of the Information Systems Area at the DeGroote School of Business at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

I am contacting you today in the hopes of inviting you to participate in a one-on-one interview, at your convenience, pertaining to the use of digital storytelling by municipal cultural organizations, such as libraries and municipal cultural departments. I am interested in learning your opinions and views on the use of digital storytelling as a mechanism to promote a city or region as a place to be (i.e., a place to visit, live in, work in, or study in). Specifically, I am interested in learning about the various activities municipal cultural organizations carry out when conducting digital storytelling initiatives and the outcomes of these activities, especially in terms of the digital stories produced and the effect of digital storytelling on municipal cultural organizations themselves.

The attached letter of information/consent provides more details about the study and your rights and risks as a participant.

I recognize that people are busy and won't have time to participate; this is okay. Please do not feel any pressure to participate in this study simply because I may know you.

This study has been reviewed and cleared by the [McMaster Research Ethics Board](#). If you have any concerns or questions about your rights as a participant, or about the way the study is being conducted, you can contact:

The McMaster Research Ethics Board Secretariat
Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142
c/o Research Office for Administration, Development and Support (ROADS)
E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

If interested in participating, please reply to me by email @ detlorb@mcmaster.ca or by phone at 905-525-9140 ext. 23949.

I thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Respectfully yours,

Brian Detlor

² A citizen's perspective is outside the scope of this case study. However, future research will solicit input from community members who contribute or view digital stories housed within the LYCSYS database.

transcriptions were made. Details of the letter of information were reviewed again with participants at the beginning of each interview session.



LETTER OF INFORMATION / CONSENT

A Study about the Use of Digital Storytelling by Municipal Cultural Organizations

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Research Sponsor: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (Insight Grant – Partnership Development Grant #890-14-0028)

Purpose of the Study:

The overall purpose of the entire research project is to investigate the role and effect of municipal cultural organizations, such as local libraries and city cultural departments, in their use of digital storytelling to promote a city or region as a place to be.

For this phase of the research project, for which you are being asked to participate in now, the purpose is to understand the various activities municipal cultural organizations carry out when conducting digital storytelling initiatives and the outcomes of these activities, especially in terms of the digital stories produced and the effect of digital storytelling on municipal cultural organizations themselves. This includes understanding:

- how digital storytelling initiatives at municipal cultural organizations emerge (i.e. the history of the initiative);
- the purpose and goals of digital storytelling initiatives at municipal cultural organizations (e.g., to promote a city, to leverage archival collections, to serve as leaders in the community, to raise awareness of the municipal cultural organization itself);
- the process by which stories are developed, gathered, and curated;
- what constitutes a "good" story;
- how digital stories are disseminated to, and accessed by, the public (e.g., the types of information technology used, the functionality afforded by the technology);

- how digital stories are marketed to the public (i.e., how the public knows about the digital storytelling initiative);
- the governance structure surrounding storytelling initiatives;
- a municipal cultural organization's effect on the digital stories produced (e.g., they may alter the authenticity of the story, decide which stories to accept/reject, promote certain stories over others);
- the effect of digital storytelling on municipal cultural organizations themselves (e.g., changing roles);
- challenges (e.g., technical challenges, financial challenges, digital data challenges, reliability and authenticity challenges with stories, legal challenges, ethical challenges, relevancy challenges, the challenge of establishing story parameters (e.g. length of the story, the structure of the story, metadata information to collect), the challenge of deciding which cultural icons to use around which to center the stories, the challenge of providing consistent strategic messaging across curated stories, the challenge of writing stories for different audiences in the community, the challenge of knowing a story's audience)
- outcomes of the digital storytelling initiative (e.g., response from the public; the quality and quantity of stories produced);
- lessons learned.

Procedures Involved in the Research:

You are asked to participate in a one-on-one, open-ended interview, approximately 60 to 90 minutes in length, in a private meeting room of your choice, either at your place of work, an interview room on campus, or in a meeting room at a local library. It is estimated that most interviews will only be an hour in length, though some interviews may last 90 minutes. No interview will last longer than 90 minutes and most will last no more than 60 minutes.

Interview questions will poll a subset of the areas identified above, depending upon your role in the storytelling initiative in your organization. For example, if your role strictly adhered to communications and marketing activities, then your interview will primarily concentrate on exploring details on those activities. If your role strictly adhered to information technology aspects, then your interview will primarily involve discussing those activities.

Sample interview questions include:

- What is your role and experience with the storytelling initiative?
- What activities were you involved with in the storytelling initiative?
- In regards to the activities you were involved with on the storytelling initiative, what worked well? What didn't work so well?
- What advice would you give others working on similar storytelling initiatives based on your experience with the storytelling initiative to date?
- How has the storytelling initiative impacted your organization? Your daily role?
- What do you envision the future impact of the storytelling initiative will be on the organization?

Interviews will be digitally transcribed and recorded with permission. All transcribed data will reside on researchers' personal computers (laptops) and/or McMaster servers only. After interviews have been transcribed, digital recordings will be deleted. Hand-written notes may also be taken during the interview sessions.

In addition to the interviews, you will be asked to supply the research team with any documentation or written material you have concerning the storytelling initiative itself. The researchers will use this documentation as background to understanding the context of the storytelling initiative. You can supply this information before, during or after the interview session.

Any paper documentation collected from participants or produced will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the PI's office at McMaster.

Potential Harms, Risks or Discomforts:

The risks involved in participating in this study are minimal and no more than one would experience in daily life. Having said that, there is a chance some participants may feel embarrassed or anxious if discussing aspects of the digital storytelling initiative in their workplace that did not work out well, especially if they were responsible or accountable for these specific aspects. There is a chance some participants may have a contradictory opinion regarding digital storytelling as compared to others in their place of employment and/or their peers and this could be potentially embarrassing if participant identities were made known or deduced. If interviews are conducted at the participant's place of work, then there is a chance that others in the workplace will know that the participant has agreed to participate in the study; thus anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

To minimize these risks,

- Participants will be sent a transcript of their interview and asked if they would like to modify or delete any text in the transcript prior to analysis of their interview data.
- Participant identity will be anonymized in any reporting of the study's results.
- Participants will have freedom to not answer any question asked in the interview that they prefer not to answer.
- Participants will have the ability to withdraw from the study by an approximate date (see below).
- Participants will have the option to conduct their interview outside the workplace (e.g., at a private interview room on campus; in a local library) to prevent others in the workplace from seeing them being interviewed.

Potential Benefits

The research will not benefit you directly. However, we hope to learn more about the role and effect of municipal cultural organizations, such as local libraries and city cultural departments, in their use of digital storytelling to promote a city or region as a place to be. The goal is to understand the various activities municipal cultural organizations carry out when conducting digital storytelling initiatives and the outcomes of these activities on the organizations themselves. This insight will yield theoretical contributions to the literature, as well as tangible recommendations for practice.

McMaster Campus Parking Pass

Participants who drive to the McMaster campus to be interviewed will receive a free parking pass. Participants are free to keep their parking passes if they choose to withdraw from the study.

Anonymity & Confidentiality

You are participating in this study anonymously and confidentially. The researchers will not use your name or any information in the reporting of results that would allow you to be identified.

Any documents or transcripts retained by the research will strip the identities of the participants. Specifically, a unique pseudonym will be used, in place of a participant's real name, in any interview transcript retained or field notes created by the research team.

Please note, that anonymity cannot be 100% guaranteed. Others in your workplace may see you being interviewed. Also, it is often possible to deduce identities through the stories that people tell. Please keep this in mind during your interview session.

All data collected from participants will remain resident and secure on researchers' personal computers (laptops) and/or McMaster servers. Any paper documentation collected from participants will be stored in a locked cabinet in the PI's office at McMaster.

After digitally-recorded interviews have been transcribed, digital recordings will be deleted.

Please note that research data will be kept indefinitely by the PI. He plans on conducting research on digital storytelling for many years to come (beyond the life of this specific research project). As such, research data collected in this specific project may be included in future research initiatives by the PI.

Withdrawal:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is your choice to be part of the study or not. If you decide to be part of the study, you can stop (withdraw) from the study, for whatever reason, even after signing the consent form or part-way through the study, up until approximately **September 2016** when data collection will be completed. If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise.

To withdraw, simply verbally tell or send an email to the PI. No reason for withdrawing is required or expected.

Information about the Study Results:

The researchers expect to have this phase of the study completed by approximately **December 2016** once all data has been collected and analysed. If you would like a brief summary of the results, please let the researchers know how you would like it sent to you (see below).

Questions about the Study:

If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact the PI (Detlor). His contact information is listed above.

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Secretariat
Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142
C/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support
E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

CONSENT

- I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Dr. Brian Detlor et al. of McMaster University.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested.
- I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time or up until approximately September 2016.
- I have been given a copy of this form.
- I agree to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of Participant (Printed) _____

1. I agree that the interview can be digitally-recorded.

... Yes.

... No.

2. ... Yes, I would like to receive a summary of the study's results.

Please send them to me at this email address _____

Or to this mailing address: _____

... No, I do not want to receive a summary of the study's results.

3. ... Yes, I agree that the information I provide the researchers can be used in future research projects pertaining to digital storytelling initiatives with the caveat that the same protections to anonymity and confidentiality outlined above are maintained.

The interviews ranged between 30 and 60 minutes in length, and were held in private meeting rooms. Seven of the eight interviews were digitally recorded; at one interview only hand-written notes were taken. Between January and July 2016, interview recordings were transcribed. Resulting transcripts were reviewed by participants to ensure accuracy.

The study's research questions informed the design of the interview instrument. That is, informants were asked to provide their perceptions of both the benefits and challenges of the LYCSYS initiative, as well as the factors that fostered or impeded the project. Importantly, Activity Theory constructs were used to shape interview questions. That is, questions were asked that probed participant perceptions of the LYCSYS initiative in terms of its underlying motivations, goals, actions, and outcomes, tools, rules and divisions of labour, as well as any contradictions and tensions that occurred. Described below, the interview script included the following content areas and specific questions.

Purpose

1) *What is the purpose of the “Love Your City, Share Your Stories” (LYCSYS) digital storytelling initiative?*

- To promote a city?
- To leverage archival collections?
- To serve as leaders in the community?
- To raise awareness of the municipal cultural organization itself?

2) *Why is your organization interested in the digital storytelling initiative?*

- What does your organization hope to gain from the initiative?

History

3) *How did the initiative emerge (come to be)?*

- What is the history of the initiative?
- Describe how the initiative came to be?

Impact on the Organization

4) *How has the storytelling initiative impacted your organization?*

- How has your organization reacted to the LYCSYS initiative?
- Are people in the organization pleased? Worried? Concerned? Explain.

5) *What do you envision the future impact of the storytelling initiative will be on your organization?*

Impact on the Participant's Role

6) *How has the storytelling initiative impacted your daily role in your organization?*

7) *What do you envision the future impact of the storytelling initiative will be on your daily role?*

Impact on the Public

8) *How has the public (your constituents) reacted to the LYCSYS initiative?*

9) *What do you envision the future impact of the storytelling initiative will be on the public (your constituents)?*

Activities in the Digital Storytelling Initiative

10) *If another city called you up and asked you for advice on what are things one needs to do, or have in place, to conduct a digital storytelling implementation... what would you tell them?*

- i. If you had to plan a project or schedule for a digital storytelling project, what would the tasks or activities of that project or schedule be?
- ii. What are the tasks involved in implementing a digital storytelling project?

11) *What activities were/are you involved with in the storytelling initiative?*

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES (use as probes):

- i. Identification and selection of cultural icons on which stories will be based
- ii. Collecting stories from the public / Recruiting people to tell their stories
- iii. Curating stories
- iv. Developing story parameters (e.g., length, # of pics, music, use of archival material, recording meta-data information on a story)
- v. Communicating/Marketing the LYCSYS initiative to the public
- vi. Building a story repository
- vii. Building a micro-site to render stories
- viii. Purchasing and installing the LED display
- ix. Managing the project

12) Of these activities, which activity were you mainly involved in?

For that activity, ask the following set of questions:

- a. Describe that activity in sufficient detail to so I can visualize all the things that are involved in that activity.
 - i. What is the motivation (driving force) behind this activity? What is the objective of this activity?
 - ii. What are the actions (sub-tasks) that comprise this activity? What are the goals of these actions (sub-tasks)?
 - iii. Who are the people involved in this activity? What do these people do? How is work divided among these people to get the activity done?
 - iv. What tools are used to conduct that activity?
 - v. Are there any rules (e.g., standards, best practices, laws) that shape this activity?
 - vi. What are the outcomes of the activity?
- b. In regards to that activity, what worked well?
- c. Give an example where things worked well.
 - o Tell me a story/ Describe an event or happening where...
- d. In regards to that activity, what did not work well?
 - o Give an example where things did not work well. Tell me a story/ Describe an event or happening where...
- e. What challenges did or do you face carrying out this activity?
 - o technical challenges? financial challenges? digital data challenges?, reliability and authenticity challenges with stories?, legal challenges? ethical challenges? relevancy challenges? the challenge of establishing story parameters (e.g. length of the story, the structure of the story, metadata information to collect)? the challenge of deciding which cultural icons to use around which to center the stories? the challenge of providing consistent strategic messaging across curated stories? the challenge of writing stories for different audiences in the community? the challenge of knowing a story's audience?
- f. What advice would you give others based on your experience with this activity?
 - o If you had to do it all over again, what would you do differently? Lessons learned?

13) What worked well on this project?

14) What things could be improved and/or things that could be potentially de-rail a digital storytelling project?

Other Things To Ask

15) In your opinion, what constitutes a “good” story?

- What are the key characteristics of a story that make it good (effective)? E.g. emotional, central character, a beginning/middle/end, has a theme, has a message, uses music, lots of pictures.

16) Comment on the governance structure / project management approach used in the LYCSYS storytelling.

- What works well?
- What needs improvement?
- What challenges exist? How can they be overcome?
- What unique challenges exist for an initiative with multiple partner organizations... are there special tensions (e.g., different objectives among the partners) that need to be

17) Comment on a city cultural organization’s effect on the digital stories produced.

- E.g., they may alter the authenticity of the story, decide which stories to accept/reject, promote certain stories over others, etc.

18) What advice would you give others working a similar digital storytelling initiative based on your experience with the LYCSYS initiative to date?

19) Is there anything I have forgotten to ask or comments you want to include that we haven’t covered yet in this interview?

In addition to the interview data, a variety of **documentation** pertaining to the LYCSYS initiative (e.g., funding proposals, project-related documents, steering committee minutes, e-mail communications) also was collected. As of November 6, 2016, this documentation comprised 93 project, grant, and background documents and over 235 email messages. This documentation was primarily gathered during July and August 2016.

Last, but not least, **participant observations** made by the lead researcher on the case study were documented. The observations made by the lead researcher (Detlor) reflected his role on the project steering committee since August 2013, as well as his attendance at various gatherings and

events pertaining to the project. The observations consisted of personal notes taken by the lead research since 2013, as well as notes he created while reading background documents and email messages that were collected throughout the duration of the project.

Data analysis occurred from January 2016 onwards. To facilitate data analysis, a qualitative textual analysis software package (Dedoose) was used. Data analysis involved the first three steps of grounded theory as advocated by Strauss & Corbin (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Myers, 2013): i) open coding; ii) axial coding; and iii) selective coding. **Open coding** involved discovering categories in the data based on theoretical constructs from the study's conceptual framework (i.e., Activity Theory), as well as thoughts elicited by participants and insights from the researchers themselves. Open coding techniques included asking questions of the data (e.g., who? what? when? where? how much? why?), using the flip-flop technique, exploring far-out comparisons, and making constant comparisons. **Axial coding** techniques involved use of Strauss and Corbin's coding paradigm tool to identify and explore relationships between categories generated during the open coding process. **Selective coding** involved selecting a core category from the many categories generated during both the open and axial coding stages, and systematically relating this core category to other categories produced. The goal was to create a central storyline around which other categories could relate.

The application of Activity Theory for open coding was pivotal in eliciting findings because it provided the framework for exploring the central activity of city cultural organizations leading a community digital storytelling initiative. Questions asked of the data included the following:

- i) Who were the subjects of the activity?
- ii) What was the object(ive) of the activity?
- iii) What motivated subjects to conduct the activity?
- iv) Did different subjects view the activity, and the objectives of the activity, differently? If so, why?
- v) What were the goals of the activity?
- vi) What actions resulted because of these goals?
- vii) Who comprised the community associated with the activity and how did community members influence the activity?
- viii) What tools, rules, and division of labour mediated the activity and how did they mediate it?
- ix) What were the expected outcomes of the activity?
- x) What contradictions and tensions existed within the activity and how did these contradictions and tensions reshape and change the activity?

xi) What congruencies existed within the activity and how did these congruencies stabilize the activity and promote the reproduction of the activity?

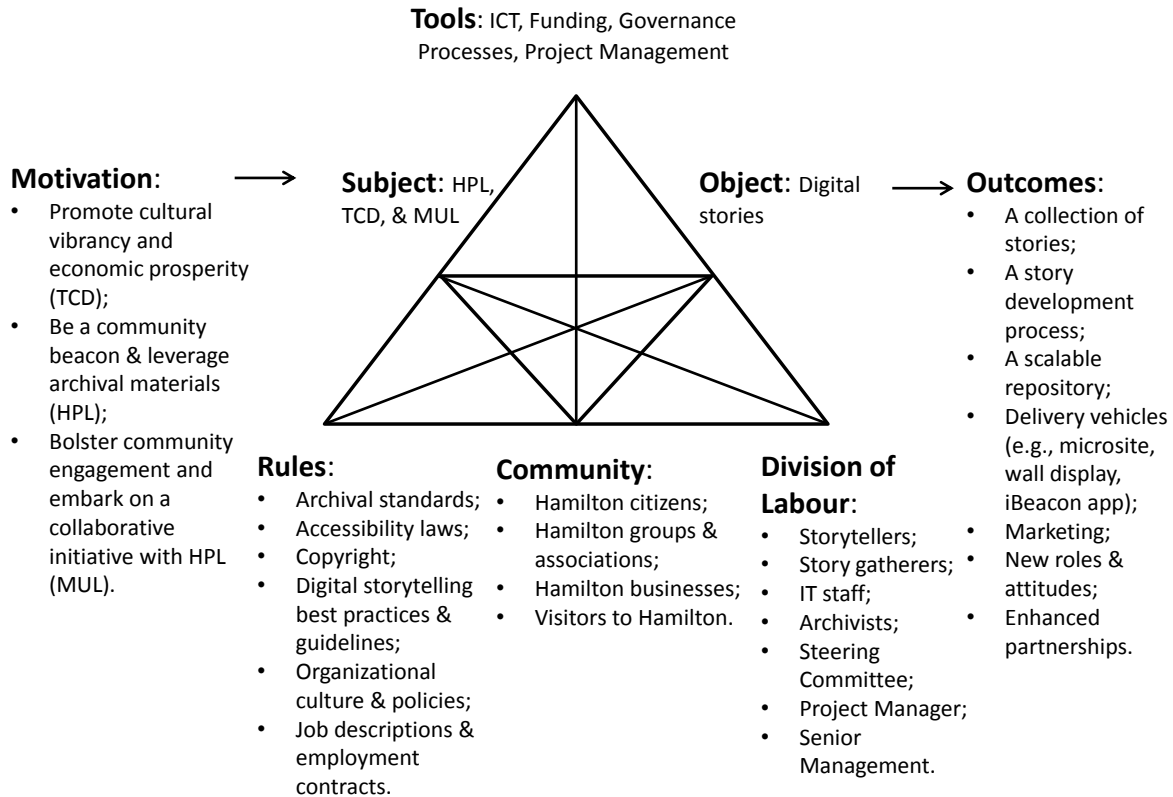
According to Nardi (1996, p. 95), Activity Theory implies: i) a research time frame long enough to understand the object of study (i.e., a long enough timeframe is needed in order to understand user motivations for conducting the activity; ii) attention to broad patterns of actions and behaviours that comprise the activity (this is to facilitate greater in-depth understanding of the context in which the activity occurs); iii) the use of a varied set of data collection techniques; and iv) a commitment to understanding things from users' points of view. These points were taken into consideration in formulating the methodology used in this case study investigation. For example, the research timeframe for this case study spanned several years thus providing a long enough period of time to understand user motivations and actions. A lengthy set of actions comprising the digital storytelling activity was explored. A robust set of data collection techniques was employed (e.g., one-on-one interviews, direct observations by the lead researcher, and the review of documentary material over the history of the activity). The use of grounded theory data analysis techniques facilitated a strong user-centric interpretation of the collected data.

In terms of the **validity** of research findings, an earlier draft of this working paper was shared with a subset of LYCSYS steering committee members. Feedback was sought on the accuracy of the facts presented and the interpretations made on the collected data – that is, how “truthful” the facts and interpretations are (Golafshani, 2003). This feedback was used to modify and/or correct inaccuracies or misinterpretations in the final report. In this sense, feedback on an earlier draft of this working paper served as a form of “member check” to ensure the validity of research findings made, recommendations suggested, and conclusions drawn (Creswell, 2013; Miles et al., 2014).

Reliability in qualitative research can be achieved by showing the credibility and trustworthiness of both the researcher and the way in which data was collected and analyzed. The lead researcher responsible for this case study (Detlor) is well-versed in qualitative research methods. He has successfully conducted several qualitative research studies over the last 20 years and has published numerous journal articles, books and book chapters based on his qualitative investigative work. He currently teaches a PhD-level course on the use of qualitative research methods in Information Systems (IS) research. Detlor is “theoretically sensitive” to the topic being investigated (i.e., he is knowledgeable of the literature in the areas of digital storytelling and information systems; he has over 10 years work experience in IS project development and implementation). Triangulation of multiple data collection methods occurred (i.e., interviews, documents, participant observations). Rigorous data analysis techniques were employed (e.g., open coding [ask questions of the data, flip-flop technique, far-out comparisons, constant comparisons], axial coding [coding paradigm tool], selective coding, coding for process [conditional matrix tool], the use of qualitative data analysis software [i.e., Dedoose]).

d) Findings

Data collection and analysis are now complete. Activity Theory provides a structure to report findings. The figure below summarizes findings using Engeström's model as an analytical lens.



The Activity of Digital Storytelling as per the LYCSYS Case Study

a. Central Activity

The **central activity** under investigation is the implementation of a community-based digital storytelling initiative by three city cultural organizations in Hamilton, Canada.

b. Subject

There were three **subjects**: Hamilton Public Library (HPL), McMaster University Library (MUL), and the City of Hamilton's Tourism and Culture Division (TCD).

c. Object

The **object** of the activity was the creation of digital stories for the Hamilton community.

d. Community

The **community** was broad and includes Hamiltonians, citizen groups and associations, businesses and visitors to the City of Hamilton.

e. Motivation

Each memory institution had a different **motivation** for engaging in the LYCSYS activity system.

TCD

TCD's motivation was its support of the City of Hamilton's **cultural plan** that identifies cultural vibrancy as a pillar of sustainable development, equal to economic prosperity, social inclusion and environmental balance. Cultural vibrancy promotes and preserves authentic experiences and expressions. According to the cultural plan, culture comprises both tangible and intangible cultural assets. An art gallery would be an example of the former, while storytelling would be an instance of the latter. There is a duality of benefits in fostering culture for a city: i) there are economic benefits that result from people gaining an affinity and emotional attachment to a city as a place to be and wanting to invest time, energy and dollars there; and ii) there are social benefits in terms of citizens better understanding and caring about the city and its inhabitants. One participant expressed this duality of benefits quite clearly:

Participant: "[LYCSYS is] about inspiring and developing a deep affection for the city. We talk about the Cultural Plan as "Love Your City", so really ultimately, the whole idea is when you understand your culture and connect with it, you love your city. There's a deep affection, so you're connected to it. So, you don't want to leave; you want people to stay here. It's all positive feelings, so really, it's affection and loyalty....It does translate to economic development, and also social development, social connection. So the idea is that it's a nicer society; it's a more prosperous society. So, it has both tangible money-kind of fiscal benefits, but then also just people are nicer. I think it's a sense of we care for each other... like social capital."

HPL

There were many reasons why HPL was motivated to launch a digital storytelling initiative. The original impetus was a desire to help advance the City's **cultural plan**.

HPL Participant: "Okay, I think [what] we are trying to do is help advance the City's culture plan through this project, and that was the impetus for the actual project getting created... We've been participating in the City's dialogue around their culture plan for years. We were a participant in that going back probably almost 10 years... digital storytelling came out of one of their actions for their culture plan.... And so that was kind of what sort of jump started it... it was when we said we'll be very involved in this aspect of the City's culture plan."

As such, HPL was supportive of the City of Hamilton's cultural plan to celebrate iconic landmarks, get the community to share their stories, and promote Hamilton as a **place to be**, especially for those who live in Hamilton.

HPL Participant: "I think there's an element of wanting to sort of show Hamilton in a good light outside the community - that would be true - but I think our focus is... more directed towards making Hamiltonians feel a stronger sense of place."

However, the LYCSYS project was also consistent with the library's strategic priority of being a **community beacon** for the City of Hamilton. HPL is a leader in the community. The project elevates the profile of the library with the community, which includes residents, students, workers etc. The project also fosters **community engagement**.

HPL Participant: "The library has... strategic priorities of being relevant and responsive... of being a community hub... This [project] was one way that we can engage the community in a really interesting and on-going way... [The project] is an opportunity to introduce non-library customers to our programs and service and the great things that we have happening here."

In this sense, the City's cultural plan was a catalyst for HPL to **create compelling digital stories about Hamilton**.

HPL Participant: "What we're hoping is to sort of jump start the creation of digital stories through the cultural icons. Creating compelling content about Hamilton. That's what we are hoping to create. And then that, in a sense, creating momentum for us to get into more digitization of digital content, and capturing and publishing that on a regular basis... it lined us [up] with what we need to do in terms of Local History and Archives... it was an opportunity for us to kind of jump start our ability to support that kind of archival creation of digital content."

HPL Participant: "The purpose of the digital storytelling project is to capture Hamilton's history through storytelling... history that could not necessarily be captured otherwise. The perfect example: by picking the different icons, we all know about famous artists here, but we may not know the collateral stories that go with it, that enrich the whole history. For example, we often use for Gore Park is that, yes... we all know what the Gore Park Fountain is, but did we know, you know... Mr. & Mrs. Smith proposed there? And that led to another story which leads to another story. It adds all that context to a physical element and it makes a richer.... a richer history for the community."

The City's cultural plan was also a catalyst for HPL to **increase the momentum to digitize the Local History & Archives collection**. That is, the project was a motivator to start the research

work about what repository technology to adopt; this involved discussion with other libraries (including McMaster) and museums around the world.

HPL Participant: “It gave us the impetus to look at different archival software.”

HPL Participant: “And, you know, we’ve got incredible archives here in Hamilton as you know. The City does not have its own archives. The archives are at the Hamilton Public Library. McMaster also has archives. And the [Hamilton] Spectator [newspaper] also has images as well as part of their archives. It’s a wonderful resource that we need to promote more. And this [LYCSYS initiative] was a project that I felt where we would do that very, very well.”

One participant stated that the LYCSYS initiative **aligns well with HPL’s mission** to preserve the history of city, to capture individual voices in the community, and get varied perspectives, as perspectives change with time and differ from person to person. Another participant indicated the need for HPL to capture and create content about Hamilton and continue this work in the future.

MUL

MUL was motivated by the increased opportunity for **community engagement** advocated by McMaster University’s “Forward With Integrity” strategic plan.

MUL Participant: “I have to say, we came in a little bit late... Hamilton Public [Library] and the City were already engaged in a conversation around digital storytelling... But for us, the reason why we decided to go forward was really to... I guess as an expression of community engagement. That we were looking for a way to support the community, in a way that made sense, in terms of the skills and expertise that we had as an organization, and this just seemed like a very obvious way that we could contribute to something that was really important to the community.”

Interviewer: So what’s the reason behind the library [MUL] wanting to be more engaged with the community?

MUL Participant: “I think we would recognize that this was a gap in our strategic agenda. That we have been accelerating issues like services to users, and enhancing the research mission, but we were focusing too much on life within the University and we were not in some ways contributing back as much as we would have like to the community. I think it was a recognition of the gap in our strategic agenda. And so the opportunity was really perfect, because, in some ways, we were looking for a way of expressing community engagement and then this one came to us. And it just seemed like a very, very logical fit... I think our original intention was to support the community, and the communities, in a way that we can help the community.”

All Three City Cultural Organizations

Participants from all three organizations indicated that the digital storytelling project aligned well with specific plans to ***promote collaborative partnerships*** and carry out joint initiatives.

HPL Participant: "I think what we hope to gain is certainly enhanced partnership with City Culture and the McMaster University Library. We're working together so we're hoping that's going to be an ongoing thing."

MUL Participant: "[At the end of this project] I think, as well, it would be wonderful if the three parties [MUL, TCD and HPL] were even closer, and more tightly aligned, and that there were by-product projects that emerged out of some of these stories. And I can see that happening very, very clearly as we start exploring new stories, then new relationships will develop. Not just with the City and the [Hamilton] Public Library and the [McMaster] University Library, but with other partners on campus as those stories need to be told."

Different motivations among the three partner organizations were considered strengths.

Participant: "It's fabulous because if it was, you know, really set in stone, then as an organization who's a partner, you're not really getting what you want and what you need as your organization. So if the project is still fulfilling its mandate of sharing stories... loving your city and sharing your stories. Great! But the fact that McMaster [University Library] and the City's cultural department and the [Hamilton Public] library get more out of it, even better! It's like a double layer."

f. Goals

The ***goals*** of the activity, as expressed in city funding applications, were to:

- expand on the mapping of tangible and intangible cultural assets;
- build a robust geo-referenced database of tangible and intangible historical landmarks, people, and events as identified by the community;
- implement a cohesive digital repository of digitized archival material that can be easily shared among partners and respective audiences;
- forge stronger linkages between project partners and provide opportunities to explore additional collaborative projects;
- collect and share a series of multi-media stories brought to life through technology that elicits memories and a greater sense of community pride;

- provide an experiential learning opportunity for all members of the community;
- allow community members to celebrate the city's history in new and engaging ways; and,
- increase a sense of pride and a sense of community among Hamiltonians.

Some participants expressed the ***need for the library to capture important events*** that currently are being by-passed.

Participant: "There are so many great events that get lost in memory, and if we have people skilled to, you know, take some video footage and then re-capsulate it into something that actually people would enjoy watching. That's great. I've been to some great speeches here at the library, things like that... but they're forgotten. People might watch them. But, we're not recording them and it's unfortunate."

Some participants discussed the need for the library to ***gain expertise in digital storytelling***.

Participant: "That's one of the things that we're hoping through this process... that we gain some expertise so that we're able to create stories... I hope we will have the capacity to... to create compelling digital stories... so being knowledgeable to be a creator ourselves and to do a better job of that."

Participant: "I think it [the LYCSYS initiative] fits nicely in with the other... with similar projects that are happening in other parts of the world. And sort of.... in some ways, bring Hamilton into the research streams... I think there's a technological purpose as well, that I think is quite compelling."

Other participants talked about the need for the library to ***support research on Hamilton and Hamiltonians***.

Participant: "I would hope that there'd be a lot more local content about our history that would be available to people, both for interest and also maybe for students doing work. You know, that they're able to get plenty of information about a local neighbourhood, maybe a place where they live, and have layers of information to, you know, help their studies."

Several participants talked about the need to ***capture Hamilton-based stories***, for now and the future.

Participant: "I think ultimately, there is a lot of pride in Hamilton, and so just having that more grounded in meaningful [stories], by people having memories of what's happened, is really important."

Participant: “I would hope that there'd be a lot more local content about our history that would be available to people, both for interest and also maybe for students doing work. You know, that they're able to get plenty of information about a local neighbourhood, maybe a place where they live, and have layers of information to, you know, help their studies.”

Participant: “The purpose of the project is really to gather a corpus of.... in some ways, cultural memory, and a corpus of stories that really collectively describe and express the uniqueness of Hamilton... I think stories are compelling, and citizens, I think, want to know the stories of their community. And I think they want to be able to share them over the course of time. And I think that is illustrated through history in many cultures, where people like to gather stories, and share stories, and preserve stories. And this is just, in some ways, a new way of doing the gathering.”

Participant: “As a public institution, we need to be preserving stories, oral stories, for the legacy of the city, and for the people who are in them, because we do have such a diverse community with such wonderful stories.”

One participant talked about the goal of **increasing knowledge sharing between partner city cultural organizations**.

Participant: “I also hope there's more transfer of knowledge, and that's where there's a big opportunity. Between the different organizations, people talk different languages, they think differently, and if we can work together... Just look through different lenses, that in itself is great.

There is also the goal of using storytelling to foster **emotional attachment** to Hamilton leading to **greater community pride**, engagement and involvement in the community, and a greater **sense of place**:

Participant: “Stories make an emotional connection... stories are like data on steroids... if you're emotionally attached to community, you have a greater sense of civic pride. And with that civic pride is more civic engagement. That engagement could be [in the] form of positioning yourself so that you support political office, it could be donations, it could be the fact that I'm going to sell my city to other industry, other communities... it just make it a much more rich and robust, and culturally intense community where people want to live... because the stories create a stronger sense of place, you will have a stronger community... more of a connectivity with everyone.”

Participant: *"I think there will be this huge sense of pride. I think there will be a snowball effect. I think that it could very well be two years from now people discovering stories. I think that it will be a great leverage for appealing to people."*

Participant: *"I think the effect of that it is to [create]... a sense of pride and collective identity, and shared experience that will make Hamilton a better place to be, and will make people recognize what a wonderful place it is to be, because people will be more cognizant of the stories that otherwise they would not be aware of."*

Another goal is to provide a mechanism through which partner organizations on the LYCSYS initiative can **demonstrate their strengths and value as an organization to others**. The best evidence of this is the inclusion of the Library cultural icon itself in the LYCSYS initiative as a means to showcase the value of the library to the public through the sharing of stories about the two main libraries in Hamilton (MUL and HPL). Other examples include not only demonstrating strengths and value to the general public, but to other stakeholders of the partner organizations.

Participant: *"I think it [the LYCSYS initiative] will provide us with some new vehicles to disseminate some of our strengths."*

MUL Participant: *"Pardon the pun, but it [the LYCSYS initiative] will be a nice story for us to tell. There are the stories themselves, but then there's the story of how this whole thing came about. And, I can see it being a really nice piece to be able to share with donors, and to share with, you know, our faculty that are supporting us. You know, the people that care about the University Library I think will be interested. And it will also be something that I think ultimately the President will really care about. Certainly, the Office of Community Engagement likes this story. So... the story of the story."*

Others thought the LYCSYS initiative was an opportunity to **rebrand the library**. In this sense, participants thought the initiative would help portray the public library as doing more than lending books. Specifically, through this digital storytelling project, participants thought this project would position HPL as a facilitator of community building, an appreciator of history, and an advocate of community engagement.

HPL Participant: *"It's helping us to let people in the community know that we're more than just books."*

HPL Participant: "What I think we're doing here is trying to re-brand what a library is and does, and how it is connected to its community.... I think what they're doing is trying really hard to recognize where we are now, and... to move to the digital world. And libraries have always been places for stories to be housed. Stories are the narratives that tell us who we are, and what we're doing on the planet, and with each other, and so on. I think... that this is an effort to transform ourselves in terms of how we keep our stories, and how we share them."

g. Actions

Numerous specific **actions** were identified by participants and through the analysis of documents. These included, but were not limited to, the following:

- **Communication actions** (e.g., identification and set up of communication channels, as well as marketing approaches, to let the community know about the LYCSYS initiative).

For example, a communications plan for the LYCSYS initiative was developed. Its goal was to promote the "Love Your City, Share Your Stories" initiative and to recruit individuals to share their stories. The high-level communications strategy was to promote the LYCSYS throughout the greater Hamilton area. Tactics included various elements: i) developing a social media campaign with a focus on FaceBook and Twitter to strategically engage Hamiltonians to not only like, share, follow and retweet, but also to share stories; ii) leveraging Sunday concerts at the Central Branch of HPL to provide opportunities for story sharing; iii) including promotional pieces in HPL's *What's Happening* publication; iv) connecting with McMaster University media for calls for stories; v) engaging the City of Hamilton's Cultural Roundtable to help spread the word about LYCSYS through their channels; vi) maximizing LYCSYS presence at community outreach events, such as the *Winterfest* kickoff, to promote LYCSYS and collect digital stories on site; vii) leveraging the www.hpl.ca website to promote LYCSYS until the microsite was ready; and viii) call for stories via the large video wall display at Central Branch.

Several participants felt social media was pivotal in communicating to the community what the LYCSYS project was about and how to rally interest and participation in the initiative. This would involve the use of social media to promote digital storytelling to the general public, but also would involve listening to the public through social media to hear and understand their feedback and then react accordingly.

Participant: "Marketing/community relations to me they are very similar activities because you are promoting it, but also understanding and listening... and that kind of thing. There's communication/marketing/community relations... it's managing that side of it too. I think that it needs to be big.... I think it does require that strategic campaigning calendarized kind of component, and then also the listening and responding, right? So, I would say both. There's a social media component with the chatter and that kind of thing, and [the] listening. And then re-visiting that calendar... I

do think it requires a calendar and a push, but I'm hoping that there's also this dynamic that would happen."

Some participants expressed concern if messages sent over social media were too formal or too corporate.

Participant: "I think we want to make it as playful as possible, and give it like a friendly voice... in general, in general, I think when corporations try and play in a space like this [social media], there is that risk that it sounds too corporate, therefore a little less accessible."

Some participants felt that any marketing message sent over social media should represent a mix of viewpoints, including viewpoints from the libraries involved on the project, the City, and citizens. The idea was to keep dialogue and discussion on the storytelling initiative open and receptive towards any thoughts or suggestions. Diversity was key in the formation and communication of any marketing messages sent and received over social media.

Participant: "I would say a mix. I think it's healthier to have a mix and I think we are looking for a real diverse group. I know you are probably going to end up with ideas all over the place. It might be difficult to come up with where you want to go. I think if you shut ideas down too much, people are going to fall off. But I think... I think it's healthy to try, and as much as possible, have there be a lot of ideas. At least early on. I know eventually when it comes down to what gets tweeted, you'll have to figure out how to filter... how to [do that]."

- **Story actions** (e.g., identification of cultural icons/stories to collect, creation of methods to collect stories, determination of story parameters). This includes the identification and evaluation of cultural icon suggestions; story gathering approaches (recruitment of people to tell their stories such as library host events, senior citizen writing events, interviews, story creation workshops, public submission of stories such as Speaker Corner events); the development of story collection instruments (e.g., interview templates, format of workshops, story submission templates); the identification of story parameters (e.g., length of story; minimum number of photos required); identification and collection of story metadata elements; the creation of curated stories.
- **Infrastructure actions** (e.g., design and implementation of a story database to house the storage of stories; microsite actions; large well display actions; iBeacon actions).

Participant: "[Another] piece - and this is kind of big, this is where we come in, especially going forward - is getting the infrastructure in place so that we're able to present these stories in a meaningful way on the Web, but then also have mechanisms to make sure that when we launch a project that it can keep going.... that involves... the archival

management system... the IT infrastructure to support that... also the metadata, and the cataloguing around it, is another area of activity."

- **Governance actions** (includes the co-ordination of activities among project partners, and the need for some sort of governance structure).

Participant: "One activity is the coordination of the various partners, so that there is some governance to make sure that we're all working together towards achieving the project deliverables that we've promised. That's one thing. There is that kind of governance piece, and it's especially coordination within the various partners. That would be one piece."

There was recognition among participants for the need for a project plan to help coordinate activities and ensure all stakeholders are working towards common deadlines, but also one that allows for flexibility:

Interviewer: "What are your views on how the project should be governed? Should it be more organic where each partner does its own thing? [Or] do you foresee the need for strong project management oversight on an initiative like this?"

Participant: "Probably stronger oversight than... provided initially. Because I think, you know, and particularly when there's a grant involved, because you've indicated what you are going to produce for the grant monies that have been provided to you. But I also think you need to have... you need to have agreement among the partners of what that framework is going to look like. I think that there are some pieces that have to be more formal, so that you have a solid foundation to build on. [But for others,... we can allow for that to be 100% organic. You know? I think there are some components [that are organic], but that's built on a very solid framework."

h. Tools

A variety of **tools** mediated the activity. Of particular importance was the use of **Information and Communication Technology (ICT)** to gather, store and render digital stories (e.g., the microsite, the large wall display, the iBeacon apps), as well as promote the LYCSYS initiative (e.g., Twitter, FaceBook).

Funding awarded through the City of Hamilton's Future Fund grant allowed the hiring of story gatherers to collect stories from the public that pertain to specific cultural icons. This funding also facilitated the purchase and implementation of information technology to implement and render the digital stories.

In terms of **project governance**, a steering committee comprising representatives from each of the three participating memory institutions met once a month at the offices of HPL to discuss the project. Specified individuals on the steering committee were assigned particular action

items and progress on these action items was discussed at these monthly meetings. Project management tools, such as timelines and a charter, helped to keep LYCSYS on track and were useful for communicating accomplishments and next steps.

i. Rules

Several **rules** and norms mediated the activity. One rule was that the **four cultural/historical icons** selected for the launch phase should be the immediate focus for story collection, but other cultural/historical icons and stories that did not align with these four cultural icons should not be excluded. The selection of icons and stories also should engage the input of the Hamilton community. Care was taken to ensure that input from the Hamilton community was representative, inclusive and diverse. Another important rule was that the collection of stories respected **copyright** concerns (i.e., people contributing stories had to provide copyright permission to publish their stories). In addition, rendered stories had to comply with the Province of Ontario's **accessibility** legislation; this legislation imposes laws on organizations to improve accessibility for people with disabilities (Province of Ontario, 2016). Further, stories housed in HPL's archival database were required to comply with **general archival principles and practices** (Millar, 2010) and were to follow **best practices in digital storytelling** as much as possible (Dietz & Silverman, 2014; Forman, 2013; Matthews & Wacker, 2007). Other rules included following **organizational policies and employment contracts**.

The technology used to house collected stories (A2M) needed to comply with the rules (standards) by provincial, national and international archival bodies (e.g., the Archives Association of Ontario, Canadian Council of Archives, International Archives). Information stored in HPL's archives needed to flow easily and compatibly with other institutions who follow these provincial, national and international rules (standards). In addition, the technology had to handle the ingestion (i.e., import) of text, images and video.

j. Division of Labour

With regard to **division of labour**, HPL was the lead organization on the project. HPL provided the necessary equipment to collect, house and render the digital stories, as well as the staff and resources to manage this equipment and the stories themselves. HPL also provided meeting space, recording space and interview space in support of the LYCSYS initiative. Post-project, HPL was committed to supporting the microsite and facilitating the ongoing collection of stories that celebrated Hamilton and its heritage in collaboration with project partners. MUL provided staff and archival material pertaining to the four cultural icons. TCD provided resources for identification of cultural icons and promotion of the digital stories that were produced. It was assumed that the project would continue once the Future Fund grant timeline was over.

k. Outcomes

Outcomes from the initiative included several components:

- 1. A *collection of stories*** that celebrate important cultural icons of Hamilton and their history;
- 2. A *story development process*** that includes identification and selection of the cultural icons around which stories are centered, recruitment strategies to encourage people to tell their stories, tools and approaches for collecting stories, story parameters (i.e., story requirements), story curation approaches (i.e., methods of developing stories), and story dissemination guidelines (i.e., recommendations for how stories should be told or displayed);
- 3. *Delivery vehicles*** to showcase the stories, including a dedicated website, a large interactive wall display, iBeacon apps, and a scalable digital repository to house the stories;
- 4. *Marketing approaches*** to promote the stories (i.e., approaches to inform the general public about the stories and how to access them).
- 5. *New roles*.** For example, the project encouraged HPL's Local History & Archives department to think about new processes that would facilitate the ingestion of digital stories into the library's archives, as well as how the department could better interact with the public.

HPL Participant: "We need to make sure that the processes we have in place can focus on adding value to [collecting stories]... as opposed to having people fill out forms [because] we have all these paper forms for donations for Local History & Archives [already and] that's what we'll use for the digital stories."

One participant talked about how once the LYCSYS microsite was launched and processes were firmly in place for the collection, curation and sharing of stories, then roles of the partner organizations would change from development and implementation to communication, promotion, financial support and "*connecting with other organizations to bring them into the story-making machine.*"

Overall, there was general awareness that one of the LYCSYS outcomes was having partner city cultural organizations initiative become more "outward facing."

HPL Participant: "I think there is a real recognition on our part that yes, we need to do more with our archives. It's a very special collection and should be shared more widely with the community. There are steps in place now through the project to make that happen."

MUL Participant: “[The digital storytelling project]... I think it's been a good opportunity to bring together people within our organization... from across the organization....many, many different kinds of roles... and engage them in a project that is supporting the broader community. And for many of them, this was their first... this was their first step across the campus [boundaries].”

- 6. New attitudes.** Attitudes, both inside and outside the cultural organizations, were altered. In general, there was an improved appreciation of the cultural organizations and an increased sense of pride because of the cultural organizations’ involvement in the LYCSYS initiative. For example, the general public was excited and pleased about the LYCSYS initiative.

HPL Participant: “Those who have been involved are very excited.... [for example] when we did the “In The Round” concerts, and for Juno week, and things along that line... and we just spontaneously invited people to be video recorded about their great music moment. People loved it! You know, there was no hesitation. Because it was self-selection, you know, you have 300 people there, 30 of them would come and give a story.”

Interviewer: “What have been people’s general reactions to the digital storytelling project?”

Participant: “People love it! They absolutely love it.”

Interviewer: “Why?”

Participant: “People just say, “this is fun.” And they're very happy to participate... And, everybody loves the name of this project.”

There was an increased sense of pride among cultural organizational workers because of their organizations’ involvement in the LYCSYS initiative.

Participant: “I think it [the LYCSYS initiative] makes staff proud of what the library has to offer. That we're not, you know, some traditional library where it's everybody shushing and you're using card catalogues... we're not your Grandmother's library anymore. Or your Mother's library. Or, whatever the phrase is.”

There was an improved appreciation of the cultural organizations within their larger organizational structures. For example, at MUL, there was heightened awareness of the

library among other university stakeholders because of MUL's involvement in the LYCSYS initiative. The LYCSYS initiative is part of MUL's strategic plan and has been discussed among Deans and the Provost. These university leaders are well aware of the digital storytelling initiative and the role the university library plays in the initiative. MUL's involvement in the LYCSYS initiative is also known to members of the larger university community through general communications about LYCSYS in communication messages (e.g., through a [McMaster Daily News post](#)).

7. Enhanced partnerships

Enhanced partnerships between MUL, HPL and TCD were another outcome of the LYCSYS initiative.

HPL Participant: "[The LYCSYS initiative]... it's already has created closer ties with McMaster University, which has made us able to better communicate with other departments in McMaster, and other universities.... Also, we are talking to different city departments, and having greater relationships there."

MUL Participant: "It's also been a great experience for some of our colleagues to get to know their counterparts in another organization. In a way, they should have always. But they didn't. The fact that we're now on first name basis with some of our colleagues down at Hamilton Public [Library] and with the City has been, I think, a great, great benefit to the project."

MUL Participant: "It's also given me some new opportunities to talk with some of my colleagues in the City. And I think that has been quite valuable. It's given me opportunities to get to know some of my colleagues better."

HPL Participant: "I think as well, it strengthens partnerships, which I mentioned. So partnerships with McMaster, partnerships with the City."

I. Contradictions and Tensions

As with any large-scale information systems project implementation, especially those involving multiple partners and stakeholders, ***contradictions and tensions*** occurred. Such contradictions and tensions are important as they play a central role in the change and development of the activity over the lifetime of the activity itself. Five contradictions and tensions were exhibited in the LYCSYS initiative: i) choice of cultural icons and stories; ii) adherence to archival standards; iii) look and feel of developed outcomes; iv) technical obstacles; and v) project management concerns. These are described in detail below.

1. Choice of Cultural Icons and Stories

Several participants discussed difficulties surrounding the choice of cultural icons and stories.

Participant: "You can imagine there are hundreds and thousands of possible icons and stories as well. So the idea would be to try... how do you pick and choose? How do you prioritize which icons, which stories to focus on, what to make the visual?"

Outside of the LYCSYS initiative, TCD spent considerable time and energy working with community members to identify a long list of potential cultural icon candidates. From there, decisions had to be made on which subset of cultural icons to concentrate.

TCD Participant: "Our list is long of possible icons... very, very long... and the budget doesn't allow us to produce all of them. There will have to be some strategic discussion about what do we celebrate, what do we visualize. Because we turn them into promotion items like buttons, magnets, things like that, that we turn into giveaways for engagements with the community and with various stakeholders when we show up at events and talk about culture more generally."

Interviewer: "So what are the things that help you decide which icons to go with? I'm just curious. You must have some sort of criteria."

TCD Participant: "We did go to the community. We had 700 people give input at various events. We had sort of popular ones bubbling up. And then we also talked to councilors and they gave us their sense of what they would like to see... And some of it tends [to be] what's timely. And part of it is filling it in with what we don't have... [we] still don't have a female [cultural icon]. And when we've been looking into females, there hasn't been one... there's been a few where it's like "I don't know if we want this to be our first. Like, do you remember that woman, Evelyn Dick?"

Interviewer: "Yes, the murderess?"

Participant: "Yes. I don't think we want her to be our first female icon, but she came up a lot, a lot, a lot. Technically, [she] meets the criteria but not sure if that's the most positive, sort of happy story to put out if you are only going to do one female a year or something. Right?"

The example of the tensions surrounding the choice of a contentious, negative, yet popular icon such as **Evelyn Dick** highlights the difficulty in balancing out what the community is interested in versus the strategic selection of cultural icons that promote Hamilton as a positive place to be and invest.

For instance, at the "Big Reveal" event in September 2016 where the LYCSYS was officially launched to the public, one leader from the community in his speech to the audience shared his own story and personal recollections about Evelyn Dick. Participants from the interview sessions also indicated their preference and interest in having Evelyn Dick showcased as a cultural icon and/or having stories about her promoted in the LYCSYS initiative.

Participant: "My personal feeling is if that's the story that needs to be told [i.e., the story about Evelyn Dick], and that's the story people want to hear then we should help tell that story. And that we shouldn't be the filters. To say that "these are good stories" or "these are bad stories." I think sometimes the stories that may be a little unsavoury, but they're really integral to Hamilton's past. And the Evelyn Dick stories are a perfect example. Yeah, it's not a nice story, but it's a very compelling story, and it speaks to some of Hamilton's past as a place of, you know, crime and murder and mafia... that kind of stuff. If we sanitize the stories too much and we only tell the happy and peppy side of Hamilton, then I think we're doing ourselves a bit of an injustice. I think that would be a bit disappointing for the project if it filtered to only be happy and peppy."

Participant: "I think as we open the project up, I think we need to consider those stories personally. Because I think... you're calling it a filter right now. I don't know that I would call it a filter per se because we're still looking... we're not saying "this is what you have to say about the music icon", right? To me, it's sort of limiting to 4 topic areas, but you know, you tell us what you want to tell us. Though we have the final right on editing. But I think that, you know, Evelyn Dick, and stories about Edgewater Manor and Rocco Perri out in Stoney Creek, those are part of our fabric. I think... well, you go to Chicago and you do the tours where there were illicit activities happening... it becomes part of the city's culture. And I think that there... I think there is room for it. It may have to be handled more delicately."

Interviewer: “You said several times about making people connect to the place, being proud of a place, being proud of being a Hamiltonian.... so does that imply that you only will be accepting positive stories?”

HPL Participant: “That’s a good question. I would say... I would say no.... How we try to do it though, and how I would put it is, we try to spend more time bringing people together. Okay, in terms of priority, it’s not to say we wouldn’t have negative stories, or we wouldn’t pick up on... you know, something that’s controversial.... absolutely, we need to do that. But we try to spend our time doing things that build a community, that bring a community together. You know, in terms of resource allocation, and maybe it’s the role of the public library that our current strategic direction.... we’re a community beacon... we try to create a place where everyone, no matter what their backgrounds are, feels welcome and creates a safe environment for them. That mandate may be... intellectual freedom is one of our core values, but the community development piece of it is really important to our mission and to our current direction.”

Participant: “I think the Tourism group is involved in the project... or Economic Development.... They probably would prefer to have a happy and peppy “Come to Hamilton” kind of story, but sometimes the kinds of things that really attract people to the community are the less savoury.”

Participant: “Like, one of the stories I think will need to be told is this story of John Rae. He’s very famous. He’s one of the founding fathers of the Hamilton Association, and he was an explorer. He went up [to the Arctic] and he was this guy who could walk a thousand miles in a year. And he was up there with the fur traders, and doing all this kind of stuff. But one of his claims to fame was that he went up... he was the one who discovered that the crew on the Franklin expedition had participated in cannibalism. He brought that information back, and got into a whole heap of trouble with Lady Franklin back in England and Charles Dickens. You know, that kind of thing? It was a bit of a scandal. Yet, he is one of the unknown stories of Hamilton. And I think, would we sanitize that? And only talk about the fact that he could walk a thousand miles and not tell the story that kind of got him in trouble? You know... I think that would be quite unfortunate.”

There were some tensions concerning the collection and curation of stories about **Tim Horton’s**. Should only positive stories of the Tim Horton be told? How would the Tim Horton organization, Tim Donut Limited (TDL), feel about stories being collected about them? Would TDL be receptive of the idea of allowing video recording within their franchised stores?

Participant: "Well, really all the people so far that I have talked to have been wonderful. But it hasn't been an easy when I talked to Tim Horton's as a bureaucratic institution. I haven't yet managed to get down to Oakville. Because I keep calling them and emailing them and leaving messages as saying "I would like to come talk to you guys". They're not as interested. And it may not important to get them as part of it anyway. It's really about the people of Hamilton, how they feel about it... But then I wanted to go downtown to film the line-ups at Tim Horton's... not downtown, I wanted to go up to LimeRidge [Mall] because they always have line there, and the people in the line-ups were delighted to talk to me about it. But, I found out that there's a rule, a blanket rule of no filming, at Tim Hortons'. Well, this is a downer for me. I really wanted the Tim Horton's backdrop. I wanted to get somebody leaning out the window talking about it, you know, when you go through the drive-through."

Interviewer: "Maybe when you get into the headquarters, you'll be able to get permission."

Participant: "That's what I'm hoping for. That's one of the main things I need to talk to them about. I'm hoping they'll [agree]... because it's only good for them."

Participant: "And another problem that I'm having actually is that I don't want this to turn into a Tim Horton's commercial.... You know, let's be honest; it's not perfect. It's an amazing thing and it's particularly amazing that a Canadian institution has gone.... I mean a business... has gone so far to the top and surpassed things like McDonald's in terms of sales in the country. It's fabulous. We're all happy for that but no; I don't want to make a commercial. So that is one thing I'm trying to avoid."

Interviewer: "What do you think is going to happen if you produce a curated story, or showcase some stories which are negative. What do you think is going to happen?"

Participant: "I don't know. So far, I haven't had anybody be negative, except one guy who said he hates their coffee. Which is fine; lots of people hate their coffee. I don't mind putting things like that in, because then he follows it up by saying "I love their donuts." You know? So, you don't want to be... you don't want to trash Tim Horton's, but you also don't want to make a commercial for them. So yeah. So, I don't know. And I don't think they can do anything to us. They [Tim Horton's] don't have the right to censor us or anything like that."

Interviewer: "So, I'm getting the sense that you think you need to be authentic and true to what people say, and not to just tell the positives or promote Hamilton or Tim Horton's in a certain light that only looks good for them."

Participant: "Yeah, in a commercial light. I don't want to do that. You know, they don't need my help to make more business for them. I want to be able to be honest. The funny part is that everybody is so positive, that, you know, I don't have to worry so far. I haven't had... In fact I'm a little worried so far that it has been so very positive. It sounds like were so "rah-rah". But people consider it a Hamilton institution, which technically speaking it is, but it isn't."

In terms of the LYCSYS initiative itself, the **number and choice of the cultural icons and stories** altered throughout the project. The initial project charter created in 2014 for the LYCSYS initiative identified approximately 25 cultural/historical icons that were well known and positive in nature. In the end, only four of the 25 were chosen as the focus for the launch phase implementation: local music, Tim Horton's (the iconic Canadian donut and coffee chain founded in Hamilton), Gore Park (a historic downtown Hamilton park), and local libraries. Agreement on these four icons was largely influenced by their importance to the Hamilton community and the amount of archival material that was readily available to populate and support stories about them. One of the main reasons for selecting only four cultural icons was that a reduced set of cultural icons would be easier to implement.

Participant: "I think you need to scope out what's manageable as a first phase. Because, you know, this is a new process for us, so even just having four icons, it's a lot of work to gather stories for four icons. So you need to be able to limit the scope of your work in that initial phase."

Interviewer: "What are your views on limiting the number of icons to four?"

Participant: "Because this [LYCSYS project] is so new. Because this is uncharted territory. And because we have so many thumbs and so many different pieces of pies... like we're involved in a number... I could see that we could be easily sidetracked and all of a sudden here is something shiny, bright, and new. Or the [steering] committee could change membership somewhat, and all of a sudden someone could say "no, it's Studebaker [as the cultural icon we should be focusing on]... That's where we're going... I don't care." Because we have the four [icons] and some of them could be argued have richer artifacts or richer opportunities than others, I think limiting that is really important. And I also think that is very important for the creative. And I think of artists, visual artists, they'll do a study and take a study as far as they will go. For years, they will work on a certain medium and a certain theme, until it is exhausted. And then they will start another. If we don't have those parameters, I think it would just be a mish-mash. So I think those four filters [four cultural icons] are what's going to ensure our success."

Not all members of the community agreed with the choice of these four cultural icons. For example, at a presentation given to Hamilton's Cultural Roundtable about the LYCSYS initiative, there was dissatisfaction among members of the Roundtable with the lack of

representation in the cultural icons and stories from disadvantaged groups (e.g., stories from visible minorities, differently-abled groups, and the LGBTQ community). In reaction to this concern, a reminder regarding diversity was shared with the consultants hired to gather stories in the field. When the story gatherers were reminded about this issue, they indicated that many stories were already being collected from a wide spectrum of diverse communities across Hamilton.

The ***amount of leeway (i.e., freedom) story gatherers in the field should have in collecting and curating stories*** was another point of discussion among interview participants. For example, the consultant hired to gather and collate stories about the Music icon created a detailed plan to capture and organize stories concerning Hamilton music, which he discussed with steering committee members at one monthly steering committee meeting. He identified several potential themes that could be utilized to base stories around the Music icon (e.g., stories about steps that a musician takes to become good; stories about music in Hamilton that reflects time, place and people; stories about musicians in Hamilton taking risks and making themselves stand out; stories about musicians in Hamilton suffering for their craft; stories about a music show that everyone remembers). The consultant also identified several crowdsourcing elements to these stories (e.g., a timeline of music history in Hamilton; a geographic map where music happens in Hamilton; a list of iconic Hamilton songs; a list of iconic Hamilton music venues). The consultant also proposed a suggested scope of the number of stories to create: 10 plus stories from songwriters; 10 plus stories from music stakeholders (e.g., audience members, music industry workers, amateur music enthusiasts); 3 plus music community events where questions were posed, music was documented, and stories encouraged (i.e., via open mics, storytelling opportunities); 15 plus songs or stories researched supported with library archival material; and 15 plus venues or events researched supported with library archival material. However, should each story gatherer in the field follow a similar approach? Or should story gatherers be free to go about the task of collecting and curating stories as they personally see fit? Should the steering committee set standards and expectations? Most participants felt story gatherers should have freedom to collect and curate stories as the story gatherers saw fit. But what happens if the stories do not align with the strategic purpose of the digital storytelling initiative (e.g., the City's Cultural Plan) or are too negative in nature?

Participant: "I think ultimately there needs to be some creative expression allowed for the people producing the digital stories."

There was a wide variety of opinion and discussion about **collecting stories from the public**. Would all stories collected be accepted, even those that did not align with the cultural icons or had an unsavoury message?

Interviewer: "I can just imagine stories being entered, and they're not the best stories, or there will be negative stories... And what you do with those? Is there some moral

obligation to accept all stories? If you accept it, should they be searchable? Should they be found?"

Participant: "Yeah. There shouldn't be an ejector button."

Interviewer: "So, let's say I'm a citizen... I share a story.... Who decides what... if... you should disseminate that story... you should put it on the front page of the microsite...what's the process? How do you envision the process of vetting stories? Deciding what's in, what's out? What to show, what not to show?"

Participant: "Well, a lot will be the story delivery. You know, if some people can do a story in 30 seconds, and you're teary-eyed over it... but it has nothing to do with the four icons... you know, what do you do? So, even when you are hearing people tell their story, or you are already thinking "okay, well I think local archives & history has a picture of that, and has a picture of that, and has picture of that". Because you just don't want to have a talking head. You want to have those other layers. So, I think there will be a lot of disagreement. I anticipate on what story should be picked up or not, and I think there would be almost like a newspaper that would have to be an editorial team on deciding. I assume there will be some check lists. You know... and categorizing. Maybe we have 20 or 30 seconds stories that are great, and now we need something with a little bit more substance. So we're only going to focus on the 4 to 8 minute stories. But I just got a perfect 25 minute story. It's golden. How many are we going [to promote]? Guys, we already have 10 of those. You know... can we take it down to that? Can we snip it down? So, I think there's gonna be... I think the cream will rise to the top, and I also think that with the parameters of saying this is what we're aiming for right now versus the 30 second versus the six minute. What are the touch points? Did they talk about Hamilton? You know, are there other elements that will go to enhance a story that will fulfill the mandate, or is this just a really good...."

Some participants thought the digital storytelling project should collect stories from as many different people as possible:

Participant: "I think that we need to try to reach all different levels of our society. For example,... street people. I think it's important to try and talk to children. And to talk to, you know, more well-heeled people... Because it is a Hamilton-wide phenomenon... I think it is important to reach, to try to reach, everybody with all the different icons. And I think we will learn more about our city if we do that."

In addition to concerns over the choice of cultural icons and stories, some participants expressed concern over the ***perspective of the stories*** being told.

Participant: *"What type of stories are we gathering? Are we gathering the memories and the stories of the individual citizens, versus telling the famous stories [of cultural icons] and telling them in a compelling way? And, I think that's got to be step number one... really understanding what you're talking about when you say you're going to do a digital storytelling [project]. Whose stories and at what purpose?... And, from whose viewpoint?... There's a political piece there as well."*

This sentiment was expressed succinctly by one participant who indicated that there needs to be an **overlying strategic purpose** that drives the selection and production of stories:

Interviewer: *"What recommendations would you give another city starting up a digital storytelling project?"*

Participant: *"Begin with the end in mind. Have a strategic purpose behind what you're doing, and not just tell stories for the sake of telling stories because that won't succeed... If cities want to tell digital stories in a sustainable way, they have to know why they are doing it. So, begin with the end in mind."*

In terms of a **process to choose cultural icons and stories**, several participants advocated the need to find a balance between the selection of cultural icons and stories that satisfied local community interest and the City's desire to promote Hamilton in a positive light. The governance mechanism to achieve this balance was unclear. Some participants advocated the need for corporate approval of cultural icons and stories. Others wanted a more grassroots approach where the community would ultimately decide the final selection of cultural icons and stories based on popularity. Yet others expressed a desire to adopt a middle-ground. For instance, one participant suggested a governing committee should collect input from both corporate and community stakeholders and then use that input to decide on the best cultural icons and stories to promote. Another participant thought a good compromise would be to have a committee that came up with a few cultural icon and story suggestions and then have the community vote on which ones to select, perhaps via social media or some other form of online contest/input. That participant also suggested such a process need not be done once, but could be revisited every year or so, as needed.

Participant: *"I'm kind of hoping that ultimately it will be the citizens of this community that determine which stories are told. It's not going to be Hamilton Public Library and McMaster University Library and the City of Hamilton deciding on the stories. Because I think that's fine to get it started. But ultimately, I would like to hear that there's focus groups who were... we've got stalls set up in Jackson Square, and we're asking people... we're doing online querying to find out what stories really need to be told. Because otherwise, I think we're going to tell... we're not going to necessarily land on the right stories. And we might be blinded by our own narrow visions of the stories that are compelling to this community. I don't think we have that necessarily the broad perspective."*

2. Adherence to Archival Standards

Another important tension that emerged concerned differing viewpoints regarding adherence to archival standards. For example, archivists were concerned with capturing the totality of the story, such as the details of the photographic and auditory equipment used to record the story, but story gatherers in the field felt little need or concern for such minute detail.

Those favouring close adherence to archival standards often used the phrase “*metadata is a love letter to the future*” as a means of summarizing their feelings and beliefs about collecting proper and complete metadata information on the digital stories collected. This is a passionate stance concerning the need to collect full and complete metadata information. It speaks to this group’s strong belief to uphold archival standards and a desire to ingest archival materials properly and according to rigorous professional standards. This group strongly believed that collecting full metadata information would best position the usefulness and value of the digital stories in the future.

One participant in this group expressed frustration with one of the story gatherers, who was in the field collecting stories from the public, but who was tardy in filling out the requisite archival forms needed by Local History and Archives. According to this participant, certain metadata information is needed and the person in the field was not compliant in collecting or supplying this information in a timely fashion.

Participant: This is a legacy project... if you were to come and look at some photos 10 or 20 years from now, you would want to know who the people are. Right? Where was this picture actually taken? Or where was this video footage actually taken? And, it's sort of like there are degrees of specificity with archival, but still, the main component is that you need... you need to have the information of what kind of camera was used, and the day, and who's the person shooting [the photo or video], and what not. For people who are hard-core researchers, that's the information that they need. So we're wanting to make sure that we have the materials available to those who are just more casually interested, and that it is interesting to note that this is Mr. X and Mr. Y, and this is where they were photographed. But for those who are doing detailed research, they want to those very specific pieces of information. So, it's trying to make those [things possible].”

This stance was in contrast to others who felt the collection of a complete metadata set as per archival standards was more than what was required. One participant described the strict adherence to archival standards as “*the biggest stumbling block.*” This group felt that the archival standards advocated by those responsible for storing collected stories in the story repository were too stringent and served as a barrier that would limit or prevent any story from being ingested in the first place.

Participant: *"The meta data's got to be reduced."*

Participant: *"The archival metadata and documentation that is required is quite strict. It's almost like an ISO documentation. And I know that there will be organizations that will want to contribute their materials, but it won't necessarily be considered archivally acceptable."*

Participant: *"Seems to be an emphasis on collecting the maximal amount of metadata possible, but is the maximum really necessary or just a nice to have?"*

Participant: *"[The story gatherers in the field] are a little bit daunted by all the paperwork we have to do. I don't know if there's any way around that. It would be nice to have less of that."*

Interviewer: *"What do you mean by paperwork?"*

Participant: *"In order to have anybody on these little videos that we're making, we have to have them fill out in triplicate all kinds of forms to say that they don't mind being filmed, and this kind of thing. It makes it tricky, for example, if I did want to go down, which I really do want to do, go down to [a public place] and take a shot... you're going to get people at the tables behind [in the background]. You know? Am I really going to go to every one of those people? Or is there some way we can smoosh them out in the thing? I don't know. So, those kind of issues. Those kind of legalistic issues are problematic, I think. I know that if there's any way we can downsize that aspect of it, I'd say that would be healthy."*

Interviewer: *"Do you think people are leery of contributing a story if the paperwork were so onerous?"*

Participant: *"I haven't yet come to the point where you I have to make anybody fill out those forms. So, I don't know. But I'm betting that they will. There will be people who'll say "oh, no, no, no... I just wanted to talk to you for a few minutes; I don't want to get into all this!" So, yeah, I think it will probably turn some people off."*

Others recognized both viewpoints as valid and advocated for a middle ground.

Participant: *"What we need to do is we need to make sure we also are able to intake digital stories that maybe don't go through that same kind of rigour. Otherwise, they'll just be lost. You know, and it means we have to kind of let go of some of the standards that we... And it's not that we don't still apply the standards, but we need to be more*

selective about them... So, what we need to do is we need to make sure we also are able to intake digital stories that maybe don't go through that same kind of rigour. Otherwise, they'll just be lost."

Participant: "We can't ask consultants [story gatherers in the field] or the general public [people telling their stories] to do this [submit complete and full meta data information]. So we toned it down [the archival requirements] a little bit to make it more manageable, but still archivally acceptable."

One participant was not sure if the LYCSYS initiative was collecting the right metadata information and expressed the need for better communication and dialogue between the person collecting stories in the field and the persons responsible for archiving this information in the archival database.

3. Look and Feel of Developed Outcomes

Contradictions and tensions concerned the look and feel of developed outcomes. These included the look and feel of technical platforms used to render stories, the URL for the microsite, story formats, and cultural icon logos.

a) Look and Feel of Technical Platforms Used to Render Stories

This contradiction and tension involved the renderings of stories on the microsite, wall display, and iBeacon app.

Some participants voiced dissatisfaction with the layout and design of the microsite. For example, some participants did not like the layout of the microsite in that it required users to scroll down to the bottom of the page to see the four cultural icons displayed. The first microsite rendering did not include a "share your story" link; this was added later after feedback was given that part of the mandate of the LYCSYS was to "share your story." There was some opposition to the use of a pastel colour scheme. However, this colour scheme was already established by the creators of the "Love Your City" initiative (i.e., TCD) and was not really an option to change by those at HPL responsible for creating the microsite. Some participants felt the microsite's design was too oriented to promoting the Local History & Archive's collections as opposed to promoting Hamilton as a place to be. There was some opposition internally at HPL in posting videos on the microsite; some felt the library did not have the requisite expertise and should not be going down this road.

There was some internal opposition at HPL towards the use of iBeacons. Some felt this was not a viable technology. However, the iBeacons had strong support from key members on the steering committee.

One participant strongly advocated the need to create a great user experience with how the digital stories were rendered on various technical platforms. This participant felt the user experience was one of the most critical aspects of the project.

Participant: “[The] user experience... if it is not well-designed, if your website is not clear and navigable and actually tells a story in itself, people will not use it... So, user experience design I think is the Holy Grail here, and what we’ve done with this digital storytelling project is to open up the sexiest, on one hand, and the simplest way of looking at user experience. Anybody who works at digital design will tell you that the point of failure for any of these projects is user experience.”

b) Look and feel of the URL for the microsite

Debate occurred over the selection of a URL for the microsite. There were two choices to consider and the project manager opened up the decision about which one to pick to steering committee members:

“Hello. I’m looking for input from the group on what the URL for the project should be. www.hamiltonstories.ca www.loveyourcityshareyourstories.ca Both of these are available but, your suggestions are welcome. Thanks.”

A variety of opinions were given. In general, those who advocated the use of “loveyourcityshareyourstories.ca” felt the URL reflected the brand of the project and aligned the microsite with the City of Hamilton’s Cultural Plan.

Participant: “Though www.hamiltonstories.ca includes the word “Hamilton” and is shorter to type in, I prefer the “www.loveyourcityshareyourstories.ca” URL as it suggests an interactive site where citizens can share their stories with others. It also connotes an community orientation to the project, which I like. Further, since we are marketing the project as “Love You City, Share Your Stories”, it probably makes sense to go with a URL of the same name (www.loveyourcityshareyourstories.ca). No where do we brand the project as “hamiltonstories”, so it does not make sense to use that URL.”

Participant: “I agree with the second URL [loveyourcityshareyourstories.ca] as well. It aligns well with the City Culture Strategy.”

Participant: “I would suggest the second [loveyourcityshareyourstories.ca] since there is another group that does stories. They call themselves Steel City Stories, so to avoid confusion, I would stick with Love Your City, Share Your Stories.”

Those in opposition felt the URL was too long. This group preferred “hamiltonstories.ca” since it was shorter, and reflected the City of Hamilton and the idea of stories.

Participant: “[loveyourcityshareyourstories.ca] it’s a bit long for a url. Should the length be a concern?”

Participant: “[loveyourcityshareyourstories.ca] it’s massive for a URL...if DNS not yet registered, suggest acronym that’s also hashtag #LYCSYS”

Participant: “They are both good urls, my thought is that www.hamiltonstories.ca is more to the point, and might be more useful down the line to establish HPL as a place for a host of storytelling initiatives, not just LYCSYS. It even has the potential to serve as a kind of on-line hub for all kinds of city story telling like steel city stories. If there is worry about the LYCSYS brand, you could pump that on the page itself.”

c) Look and Feel of Story Formats

There was a difference in opinion on the look and feel of the individual stories produced. Much of this discussion centered on the length of the videos and the rambling nature of some of them. The problem was that story gatherers had the freedom to render stories as they personally saw fit. Different approaches to the renderings were used by different story gatherers. Some videos were over 5 minutes long. Few guidelines were given to story gatherers on the rendering of a story in terms of what a resultant story should be or how it should be formatted (e.g., in terms of length, the use of background voice-overs or music), or how stories had to promote Hamilton as a place to be (the original strategic focus of the LYCSYS initiative). In this respect, the original motivations and goals for conducting the LYCSYS project were not used explicitly to inform the shape of the stories that were developed.

During the interview sessions, participants were asked what constituted a “good” story. Most participants relayed a good story would comprise the following attributes: be short, be emotionally engaging, and have a storyline where some sort of conflict was resolved.

Participant: “Okay, I am a bit of a sucker for a tear-jerker. Definitely, an emotional [appeal]. Whether it makes you laugh, or makes you cry. Some emotional quality where you kind of fall in love with the person, the character, or whatever. Or... yeah, that’s just my own personal thing. So usually if there’s some hardship, or something in there, like a real... like a plot almost... where’s there some hardship and this person struggling and then something happens and then it all works out.”

Participant: “I would say good story has a core emotional thread. A good story is something that does appeal to people’s hearts, a little bit. I do think, and that’s why for example, music, for here in Hamilton, I think is a very compelling... there’s so many stories that could be told because people feel an emotional attachment to the music that

is created in this city. And it's really... it's a sense of passion for people. And, you know, I think that emotional piece is core."

Participant: *"A good story often has a happy ending. That's... that, I think, is true for a lot of people. They like to think that they know where this story is going. It's a bit formulaic and it ends happily... It's got a point of view too. It has to follow a logical train where you're either observing it, or you feel like you're there, but you're not moving back and forth... I think the length is critical. I think it cannot be too long... I think a story that's like, one minute, or two minutes is maximum because of people's attention. And, we sometimes are loathe to leave anything on the cutting room floors. We put it all in. Because everyone works so hard. And yet, the better story is one that's told quickly within a comfortable attention span of people. We all know that's pretty darn.... pretty darn short.... I think a good story is also something has a visual aspect, even if you're hearing it. It's... you're hearing images. I think that's really important. I think music is really, your sound, is important.... especially, depending on the story, of course. Certainly telling the story of music in Hamilton without music would be completely foolish. But then, it has to be good music too. I think we've all seen things for the music actually detracted from the story because it was so darn annoying that you just couldn't wait for it to be over. I think it has to be well done, but there's production value issues too, where when we're talking about things that are being delivered in a graphical online way. That can detract... a good story... with poor production values will fail miserably... Moving images are always wonderful, but it doesn't have to be always moving. Sometimes really haunting images, or still images with effective background, can be really compelling, more so than a reenactment by bad actors. You know, like those heritage minutes that sometimes are really cheesy? It might be even more effective to have still images of real... of real things, pulled from the archives at McMaster or Hamilton Public [Library] or wherever. It can be more compelling."*

Participant: *"No story will resonate and no story will matter if doesn't change the meaning of the life of the person who's experiencing it. The very first piece is emotional impact. You have to understand that people engage in stories for three reasons... which is: what? so what? and now what? If your story doesn't have those three things, you can forget about it... If you are going to engage people with either a piece of video or a piece of text, aligned to say a slideshow... or a standalone app experience, it had better strike the emotions and the attention span of the people who are experiencing [the story]. Otherwise, you're dead in the water. In a day and age where, and this is statistically true, human beings who are interacting with a piece of digital media have a shorter attention span than a goldfish. You have about seven seconds to grab people. And we're so inundated with image and text, that's the second piece. Having engaged them*

emotionally, you have to carry the experience through, which is the "so what?". And the "now what?" is "okay, what does this actually mean to people?" Because we live in a day and age now where the meaning of life, especially given the onslaught of technology, is a very, very fragile thing. If you can serve that and actually add meaning or a sense of identity or a sense of belonging, you've won."

Participant: "A good story should be brief, and it should have a good arch. It needs a good beginning and a good ending. And it needs to be something which moves from the personal to the universal, so that anyone who is listening can identify, even though it's someone else's story entirely. They can identify with it. It's great if it has some humor as well. Or some pathos, if you can mix those in both.... even better! You know, as Mitch Miller said, keep it short, keep it sexy, keep it sad."

Participant: "I think any story, there has to be a hook... something that gets you interested in it. There has to be a reason behind the story. There has to be an emotional connection. And, you know, we say "people have to land the plane"... you know, there's a reason for the flight of fancy, and it could be obvious or it could be a smack across the head. "Oh, I never thought of it that way"... that moment of denouement or something along that line. There has to be an emotional trigger."

Some participants advocated that a good story would have an authentic appeal.

Interviewer: "Of the two stories we saw at our last steering committee meeting, did you prefer one over the other?"

Participant: "I think I preferred Terra Lightfoot's story to a certain degree, just because to me, it was so real. You know, there she is, in her home, with her guitar, her partner's toasting Montréal bagels. And it had a kitschy feel, but it also had very comfortable feel. Right? It's like, "yeah". It's Terra Lightfoot, but you know what, she's like us, and she has stories just like us, and I think that sort of a story would compel others to tell, to share their stories. Because it was just "here it is!"

Participant: "For me, I think authenticity is one of the real critical hallmarks of a good story."

Interviewer: "Do you think stories need to be authentic?"

Participant: "I do. But I also think they can be crafted. You know, there's nothing wrong with someone telling that story... "oh tell it to me again, but expand a little bit more

about when your Dad said this to you..." "Tell us how you feel". You know? Or those types of things... I think it has to be authentic, but at the same time that doesn't mean it can't be coached, and you know, directed."

Authenticity also had a liability angle.

Interviewer: "Do you ever worry about gathering stories from the public where they are not true, that they're fabricated?"

Participant: "My biggest worry is "oh yeah, I was making love with so and so..."

Interviewer: "Yes, this rock star who is in town during the Junos!"

Participant: "Yes, Yes. Or you know, liability about "Oh yeah, that was the time just before so-and-so did a criminal act." Or just the fact, the people who want to be, or pull, an emotional trigger, and sensationalize. There's always that concern. It's a risk."

Interviewer: "How do overcome that, or mitigate it?"

Participant: "There's the storytelling core [guideline documentation on how to conduct storytelling]. They speak to it to a certain degree. Also, with social media, just like Wikipedia, if something is not true, people are pretty quick to respond to that. It's unfortunate. We would do due-process. But people embellish to make the story better.... you know, the fish was this big... that's... that is the risk, and just like Wikipedia, you would take things down if there was... if it was creating inadvertent pain or discomfort to someone."

A few participants described how the Gore Park icon was an excellent example of what constitutes a good story. Gore Park has an emotional connection with those who knew Hamilton in its hey-day when Hamilton was a place to be. People have an emotional connection to the past when Hamilton was at its hey-day. People often say, when referring to Gore Park, "I remember." For anyone who grew up in Hamilton, Gore Park was the heart of the city where everything happened. It has nostalgic appeal. People are connected with it. The park elicits emotion and memory. The buildings showcased in the digital stories are now gone and people who view the stories about Gore Park remark how gorgeous the buildings were.

d) Look and Feel of Cultural Icon Logos

Tension and contradictions occurred around the look and feel of the logos used to represent the cultural icons.

Case in point was the image represented for Sir Allan MacNab, a Hamiltonian who served as Premier of the Province of Canada before Canadian Confederation from 1854 to 1856. This cultural icon, though not used in the LYCSYS initiative per se, was part of the larger list of cultural icons identified by TCD. There was some tension concerning the playfulness of the image used, where a lipstick impression was prominently



displayed on the forehead of Sir Allan MacNab. Designers of the icon strived for a non-corporate look and feel; their intention was to make the icon fun and inviting. Their efforts resulted in an award and positive acclamation from the community. Others, however, frowned on the playfulness of the image selected. Concern was raised on who should be ultimately responsible for selecting the logo image.

Participant: "There was some push back... some of the curators hated it."

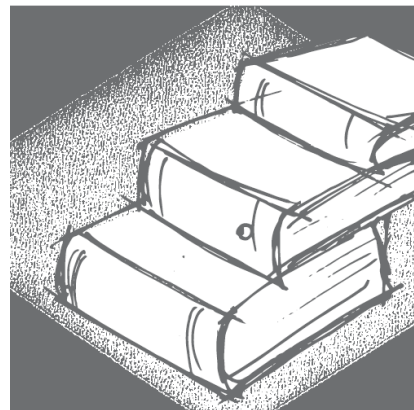
Interviewer: "Why?"

Participant: "Well, you know.... it's cutesy. It's also insulting, they thought... It's definitely not your typical historical approach. And it does turn into a bit of a style thing. At the same time, we won an award for public notice. It's called the "Dazzling Notice" award, and it featured our icons. And it was "come out to our workshop to give input on the culture plan" and all of the images were our icons. We specifically won for playful design because of the icons. And so, because I think they are interesting, and they don't look corporate, and you know, I just think that's why they're great! I don't think we want to ruin that."

Interviewer: "Yeah. It's a balancing act, right? You have to balance different needs."

Participant: "I know. I don't want the curators picking. I don't want our director of communications picking it. I don't even want to pick it."

Tensions and contradictions also occurred over the development of the Library cultural icon logo. The picture to the right is the first rendering of the Library cultural icon. Several participants voiced concern that the icon did not suggest “Hamilton” nor the current reality of libraries. Some participants pointed out that the logo matched the same look and feel of the other icons and that this was a good thing.



Participant: “I have to say that I am not loving the library one [i.e., icon]: we are so much more than books ...although I do like the 'books as steps' idea.”

Participant: “The icons have an established and vivid “pop culture” look and feel” so any new icons added to the family should have the same feel. There should ideally be something Hamilton in the image so it isn’t too generic... We have also talked about how icons become selected (e.g., selection jury) and possibly sharing two or three designs you approve with a deciding group so this is also something to consider.”

Participant: “Agree this is a good start but would also love to see something more iconically Hamilton.”

Participant: “One doesn’t want to design by committee but these aren’t hitting the mark for me. By way of concrete direction:... 1) tell a story: that’s what this entire initiative’s about!; 2) move the eye: that’s what makes an icon memorable—the feedback loop between perception and impact; 3) be witty: a laugh is worth a thousand earnest images—because people are far more inclined to share something that’s moved them to lighten a moment.”

Given this feedback, a second icon was developed. This one had a “due date” slip added to the image to make the icon more representative of libraries. The words “Hamilton Public Library” were printed on the due date card, but it was recognized by the designer of the icon that this lettering may not be legible if the icon is rendered at a small size.



However, there was backlash by some saying the nod to books in the image does not really represent where libraries are today.

Participant: "Icons are certainly tricky. I'm not quite sure it says Hamilton or where libraries are at today. When I think of the Hamilton Library I think of Central Library's beautiful building lit up at night. The building itself, to me, represents Hamilton's take on libraries that are open, innovative and relevant. It also says that Hamilton values libraries and they are also meeting spaces. I'm not sure if creating a pop-art version of the Central Library would be overlooking the community libraries, but perhaps the designer could somehow include a nod to other libraries? I guess it depends if you want to have libraries be represented as a place or an object? If it's an object then books or I'd say tables, chairs, computers might work."

Other participants voiced an opinion that the public generally equates libraries with books, and the negative reaction by some to books in the image for libraries is more of a sensitive issue for a select few rather than the public at large, and that the icon should still go ahead with a book imagery theme. Others liked the whimsical nature of the icon image and how it aligned with the whimsical image of the other cultural icons. Some participants had concerns about the icon's use of colour. A variety of opinions were expressed on how to improve the icon image.

Participant: "I think the new icon is a great improvement. It has that same whimsical, fun, "comic book" feel as the other icons (for Gore Park, for Music, and for Tim Horton's), and the "due date" card does connote the concept of a library better."

Participant: "Can we use a different colour than pink? I think our Tim Horton's donut icon is pink, so I would suggest we use a different colour for the library icon. Since the Gore Park icon is blue and the Music icon is red, I don't think we should use blue or red either. I'm just thinking how the four icons would look on the microsite, and I think each of the four icons should have its own colour scheme. How about yellow or green?"

Participant: "Can we just have the word "Libraries" spelt on the spine of one of the books in the icon? This would make the icon crystal clear that it is about libraries. Perhaps add a few people on the stairs doing library things (e.g., reading, using a computer, at a desk with other people discussing things). I think this would help reflect the concept of the library as a "space" as it shows various activities one typically does in a library."

Participant: "My only comment would be to try not to show a male or a female for any of the icons."

A third version of the Library icon was developed. This one portrayed an image of book spines overlaid with Hamilton's skyline.



Participant: "At this point, I think we would all agree that we're not quite where we want to be with the library icon and that it's proving to be more difficult than we perhaps thought it would be... Although we recognize that libraries are more than books, I think the majority of the population still associates books with libraries and there is a definite historical element there. I would be quite happy with an icon that mimics the theme of Biblioteca Shahrazad. True, it's not an original concept but, it could work very well for us. Books with an outline of Hamilton's skyline and no words is all that would be required.... [XXX], you mentioned the importance of colour as well as placement. If the books were in shades of teal, I believe the colour combinations would be nice. I'll ask how difficult it would be to move the library icon to the left side so teal and blue bookend the pink and red."

In the end, a decision was made to go with the 3rd version of the logo (i.e., the version that portrayed book spines with the Hamilton skyline overlaid on top). There was mixed reaction about using this logo.

Participant: "I really like this! I think it is a great visual for Hamilton inspiration."

Participant: "I didn't know that picture was book spines until you pointed it out. To me, the book spines are not obvious."

Participant: "Hamilton doesn't have a recognizable skyline, so the image does not really work for me."

4. Technical Obstacles

Tensions and contradictions were exhibited with the learning curve with the technology used to render digital stories:

Participant: "The technology itself is a challenge. You know, these are new systems we are using to reach people and that's tricky for me... And we want it to be something that will be seamless and will look good on the wall of the library, or when people go into their computers and find this. So, yeah, just the technology is tricky."

The following is a reflection from a story gatherer's experience using technology to render the stories:

Participant: "I have loved the research part of course, and I loved talking to people about it. Now, I'm reaching a bit of a bump now because I've come to the point where I need to put this stuff all together on a computer. I have an old iMac, and I'm not the sharpest knife in the drawer when it comes to technology anyway. I'm very daunted by it. So yeah, that's my problem. I'm having to deal with how now do I gather all these great stories that I'm getting in this good positive sense I get when I talk to people. How can I make it work, technologically?"

Tensions and contradictions were experienced with the implementation of iBeacons. The technology was described by some as temperamental. In general, it was difficult to get them to work.³ For example, if the iBeacons were situated too close together, then the app that was developed to work with the iBeacons would get confused and not work correctly. The iBeacons were selected primarily because they brought a certain "cool" factor to the project. However, some participants pondered that if it were known ahead of time that the technology would be plagued with so many technical problems, and at a relatively large expense in terms of licensing, whether they would still go ahead with this technology.

Interviewer: "Can you comment on iBeacons? Why iBeacons? What was the whole thought process on that?"

Participant: "It was around being relevant and responsive. And, making what, for some people could be perceived as quite dry and "uhhhh... it's a story about Gore Park". Right? If you are not someone who has a particular interest in the architecture of Gore Park or the war piece that goes with Gore Park, you know, you're not going to pay a whole lot of attention. But, you know, looking at a bit of an attraction piece. So what's going to make it a little bit more interesting for you? And if it's something you can do through a new

³ Despite the technical difficulties implementing the iBeacons, a separate round of data collection by Claudia Crippa, Fariba Nosrati and Brian Detlor from 50 participants who experienced the iBeacon app provides evidence that iBeacon technology is a viable infrastructure for digital storytelling that can positively affect people on a personal level yielding improved perceptions of both Hamilton and city cultural organizations. A separate working paper is in progress and is expected to be complete by the end of January 2017.

technology experience, let's give it a try. And, you know, iBeacons are still relatively new in North America. Some kinks they still need to work out in some of the system."

Participant: "We hit a huge bump because the jewel in the crown for what we wanted to do was to actually create a library/cultural/historical experience at Gore Park. But the technology we were using required live Wi-Fi. And fortunately we are moving a heck of a lot faster than the City. They still don't have Wi-Fi. So the compromise project actually came... [to] set it up on the fourth floor of HPL. It turned out that it worked, and from that came the idea of co-creating with HPL and Mills/McMaster a Gore Park experience in both libraries."

In fact, one day, two of the beacons at HPL were stolen.

Participant: "We've had some issues with the beacons – in addition to the theft of two of them... I certainly didn't anticipate this setback and am feeling a little frustrated with the process."

Some technical concerns came up in regards to how technology could be used to have the general public contribute stories via the microsite if they wanted to contribute a story. Though it would be great to have citizens upload their own digital stories with video and images, the initial approach was to only provide submission of text; the submission of pictures, videos etc. from the public would come at a later date.

5. Project Management Concerns

A variety of project management concerns were associated with the LYCSYS initiative. These concerns were a result that: i) work on the project was secondary; ii) there was a lack of staff and resources dedicated to the project; iii) improvements in internal communication were needed; iv) new work roles and activities constituted the initiative; v) deliverables, timelines, ownership of tasks, project scheduling were unclear; and vi) future governance was uncertain.

a. Work on the Project Was Secondary

Work on the project was not a major role or sole responsibility of any of the employees allocated to the project. Consequently, tensions and contradictions arose because of the struggle between each person's primary job responsibilities and the work that had to be done for the digital storytelling project.

Participant: "It's been exciting, but by the same token, I feel very guilty sometimes because I think I need to give this project more time, and I just don't have more time to give it."

For example, the project manager dedicated to the project was holding down two positions during the roll-out and implementation of the LYCSYS initiative. Several participants acknowledged that not having a single person whose sole responsibility was to be in charge of the LYCSYS initiative was a detriment to the project. All staff workers assigned to the project had other work obligations and responsibilities, many of which were of higher operational priority.

Participant: "There's definitely time where some days you don't even think about it [the LYCSYS initiative]. Like there are other priorities. But, it's always in the background now."

Consequently, work on the project slipped. This in turn affected the goals of the project, especially as the date of the Big Reveal approached. When the deadline of the project neared, more emphasis was put on the underlying infrastructure so that, after the Big Reveal, work could concentrate on collecting stories, rather than on technology set up.

Participant: "I think we are at a point where we agreed that we wanted to ensure that all technology would be in place so that it would be working, so that when have our stories to share, we put them out there and we are good to go. And I think we have accomplished that. The micro-site is in the works. But we do have an app. We've got our video wall. The micro-site is coming. So, I think we are in good shape."

b. Lack of Staff and Resources

Lack of sufficient resources contributed to project slippage.

Participant: "I think there's been some expertise gaps that have... it's kind of like people have knowledge of different pieces of it, but we don't have someone that has sort of full understanding of [everything], and can help make sure [things mesh together well]."

Participant: "I think the other piece would be having more dedicated resources certainly is important. We had some trouble initially hiring, you know, people that had the right expertise."

To some, taking on the LYCSYS initiative was stressful in that the project caused additional work without a corresponding increase in resources. Certain responsibilities were added on to already overloaded workers. For example, some Local Archives & History staff felt the project required a significant additional workload for them without any increase in human staff resources.

One participant said that the LYCSYS project was being implemented when HPL is undergoing a significant amount of organizational change/upheaval: one director retired; another director was seconded to another project and an interim director was pulled in. It would have been better to have permanent staffing throughout the project lifecycle.

c. Internal Communication Could Be Improved

Lack of communication among project stakeholders was noted by a few participants as a source of contradiction and tension.

Participant: "Different managers or directors are really not necessarily working as well together as they could because [they have] different assumptions about who does what... it's trying to make sure that our team is all on the same page as to who is responsible for what, and sometimes that can be difficult in terms of when you have grant projects. You know, it's their grant project, it's not mine. So we've had a few challenges around that trying to get ownership... It's often lack of communication, or people aren't consulted at the appropriate point in time and that they think they should have been consulted earlier. You know, those are some things."

Participant: "Ineffective collaboration internally... that's happened partly because I think people haven't understood.... they haven't had a clear sense necessarily of what their roles are. And so, when there's confusion... you couple that with a bit of lack of communication, and then you can have some challenges. I would consider them natural growing pains."

Participant: "And in a sense too, I think, you know, if I were to go back, one lesson learned would be to maybe map out a little bit more clearly the expectation around the infrastructure delivery piece. And, to be honest, I think people didn't really have a full understanding what was involved in that."

One participant expressed confusion about what constituted a story, what type of stories we were collecting, and how all this should have been better defined and communicated upfront, before even worrying about technology requirements.

Participant: "Certainly, when I came in, I had a sense that it wasn't clear exactly what a story was. Like, what kind of stories were we gathering? And I think maybe not having that collective understanding of what it was, was maybe... slowed us down a little bit. So, focusing on that, I think, from the very, very beginning, I think, is really, really critical... gathering the people on side with a sense of shared purpose. And, maybe not getting caught up in the technical infrastructure too, too early because that's the vehicle. But, understanding the scope. Because people are interpreting these things in different ways. Right? You look at some of the memory projects that are out there in the world, and there are tons of city memory projects, and are all scoped in a different way. So step number one has to be understanding really how we're defining digital storytelling and the generalized scope of how do we draw a box around what it is we are trying to do."

When asked about what advice one would give to another city who wished to start its own digital storytelling initiative, one participant stated to *“make sure all the key resources are involved early so they have an ability to feel engaged in what the vision of the project is.”* He/she further elaborated on this point by describing how even though some departments had important roles on the project, internal road bumps could have been prevented or minimized had these departments been consulted earlier:

Participant: “So, just an example is we’re finding that our Local History & Archives necessarily play a role in this project, and maybe so do some of our IT folks... they weren’t necessarily as fully engaged as they could’ve been early on. And so, if they had been engaged earlier on then some of the internal road bumps that we’ve had may have been prevented.”

d. New Work Roles & Activities Constituted the Project

In regards to the impact of the project on work roles and activities at HPL, the project forced Local History & Archives to re-examine their intake procedures so that the procedures would fit with the new requirement of ingesting digital stories.

Participant: “What is our intake process going to be? How efficient is it going to be to be able to take a digital object and publish it? And we need to make sure that [any new] processes we have in place can focus on adding value to that piece in terms of creation.”

In this sense, Local History & Archives had to examine the process of collecting stories and its parameters, and fit those with the current intake procedures. Sometimes this involved assigning intake responsibilities to individuals who did not work in the Local History & Archives department (e.g., story gatherers in the field). In this sense, personnel outside of the Local History & Archives department were responsible for collecting metadata information on the stories. This was new.

One participant explained that the task of collecting stories will need to be integrated across various tasks and functions in the library. For example, when doing a reference interview for the donation of photos, the person doing the interview will have to collect story metadata information. Staff will have to have the requisite skills to collect this metadata during the reference interview. This may include new ways of collecting metadata information, such as video-recording people talking about the material they are donating. As such, new work processes and routines are being formed as a result of the digital storytelling project. The project will also have an impact on the library’s collection policy. The mandate of Local History & Archives may have to change. The type of material that is ingested by Local History & Archives may have to change. The participant described how the LYCSYS initiative was challenging for cataloguers. It forced them to determine the parameters of project, and specify their roles and responsibilities. It also affected work flow, especially during a period of competing priorities.

When asked how the LYCSYS initiative would impact work roles activities five years from now, one participant described how digital storytelling would be integrated into HPL's work plans and how new mechanisms would be in place to create and collect stories. Work routines would change where the intake and rendering of digital stories are tightly integrated into regular tasks, and not treated like a special project as they are now. More staff would likely be hired.

As one participant aptly described, *"We're still in that 'forming storming stage'; we're not 'norming' yet. We're not performing."* New roles and work activities are in the process of being sorted out. The work is currently *"messy because we're learning [as we go]... and that's okay."*

e. Deliverables, Timelines, Ownership of Tasks, Project Scheduling Were Unclear.

Project management was lamented by some participants as a source of contradiction and tension.

Participant: "The project management piece, I think could have been done better... my sense, during those early meetings that I got to attend, was there was a sense of not knowing how to get something started. And, what the core concepts of textbook project management were. I think that was... it felt like it was missing to me. And I don't mean that to be critical. It's people gathering together with wonderful intentions, but not necessarily knowing how to get the thing out the gate. Those first key steps. I think that piece was missing."

Interviewer: If you knew at the start, things you know now, what would you change?"

Participant: "Getting some structure to it early on. Being realistic about what the goals are. I know, I think we may have spun our wheels a little bit more than we needed to at times. So really, nailing down what your vision is, and making sure you can set realistic goals."

When asked what advice one would give to any city cultural organization wishing to embark on a digital storytelling initiative, participants gave the following advice:

Participant: "Do the digital storytelling project but have clear expectations on what the project entails and implement strong project management principles. Meet often... keep the project on track. Specify roles of persons on the project."

Participant: "You need good project management... just because there are so many different activities... and you have to know if they're sequential or when there are approvals, and then there's deadlines and launch dates. Especially when you are looking at things like granting. Even just budget cycles. When you have a certain amount of money dedicated, you should spend it by a certain time. And any reporting that needs to come out."

f. Future Governance Was Uncertain

This tension and contradiction pertains to project governance after the Big Reveal in terms deciding how digital storytelling activity would be carried out. The LYCSYS initiative was a project. Projects, by definition, are one-time events. Decisions have to be made how to operationalize digital storytelling into the daily work activities and routines of the Hamilton Public Library. However, it was unclear how this future work would be structured and who should take ownership.

HPL Participant: "I'm definitely envisioning that there will be a team, whether or not they are also on the fourth floor with the Digital Media Lab, whether or not they are doing an open media desk for the library. Whether they're part of communications or DT, I don't know but I can see five years from now that we've got the equipment, the expertise, the ability to have staff and connections to continue to do these films and videos, and soliciting more."

One important question was how governance would be conducted going forward.

Participant: "[In terms of future governance] I'm kind of guessing it [the LYCSYS grant project] will end and then they'll be different groups set up. I'm not really sure because it's a question of the skill set. I think people are on the committee now that bring specific skill sets around technological implementations and stuff. And that won't be as necessary, and that you probably would have a maybe a smaller steering group that would focus on the strategic... moving the project along, for a more high level. And there might be some subgroups that deal with the ongoing maintenance of the technology, and gathering stories. Doing the "in-the-field" work. And that might be probably the best strategy."

Interviewer: "When it [the project] is done, what happens to the steering committee? Will it morph into something else? Will the same players be involved? Will there be a committee?"

Participant: "I think there should be, quite honestly. And, you know, maybe it remains as a steering committee, and then maybe we have some sub-committees that come out of that, so that we have more reach in the community for more stories."

Another important question was how digital storytelling activities would be funded in the future.

Participant: "We've received a bit of money for this particular implementation from the City but the money is not going to last forever. And, if we want to continue this over the course of time, there's got to be a sustainable model to keep it going."

One participant raised the need to conduct regular performance measurement on the uptake of digital stories as a means to ensure the LYCSYS initiative was sustainable into the future. Performance measurement would necessitate collecting performance metrics on the impact of the stories on a regular basis (such as the number of Facebook shares or Instagram photo shares each story generated) and then reacting to those metrics accordingly, especially by responding to any trends and patterns in the performance measurement data. The participant stated that performance measurement would help demonstrate sustainability and would be of high importance to *"any city councillor, or any city executive, who is looking at a social ROI for libraries, or for very specifically, for social storytelling."*

It wasn't clear if future story gathering phases would necessarily use cultural icons. The TCD representative from the City at the last steering committee meeting in September 2016 stated that TCD has a collection of cultural icons already developed, but no new icons would be created.

m. Congruencies

As described earlier in this paper, congruencies are forces that promote stability and the carrying out of activities. Data analysis identified six congruent forces that facilitated the LYCSYS initiative moving forward and reaching its original goals: i) cooperative partnerships; ii) sufficient funding; iii) senior management commitment / leadership; iv) good project governance; v) strong community support; and vi) flexibility. These are explained below.

1. Cooperative Partnerships

Strong cooperative partnerships between the three city cultural organizations involved in the LYCSYS initiative helped move the project forward. For example, TCD, the originators of the idea to leverage storytelling as a cultural asset as means to promote Hamilton as a place to be, benefited from HPL agreeing to take the lead role in implementing digital storytelling in Hamilton. HPL benefited from MUL's previous experience with A2M and from Detlor's background in project management which helped facilitate development of a project charter early on in the project. MUL benefited from having an opportunity to get involved in a project with the outside community. McMaster researchers benefited from having access to a digital storytelling initiative and city cultural organizations that were open to research (i.e., HPL, MUL and TCD provided opportunities for McMaster faculty and students to

conduct research). There was consensus among participants that by having the three city cultural organizations work together, more was accomplished than had they worked alone.

Participant: "We saw alignment that we could work together on this because it was advancing everyone's agenda in a way that if we worked alone, we wouldn't be able to."

Participant: "And I think the other thing that's been so successful is the partnerships. Right? This couldn't happen... I don't think we could be doing this in isolation... There is no way without having the expertise... other colleagues to confer with... you know, it's just created so many willing people to talk to us.... that has been probably the most.... the biggest... success factor."

Participant: "I think having the partnerships.... McMaster University, the City, the Library... this is strong... real buy-in... from partners. That leans credibility to funders of any type. They see you are committed to this."

Participant: "I think the partnership is amazing. So, I'm very, very pleased with that."

Several participants said that the McMaster research component of the LYCSYS initiative added value to the project, raised the project to a new level, and brought legitimacy and credibility to the project. Many thought getting students involved in the project was a value-add.

Participant: "The other piece I think is effective is... having you [the researchers]... engage in another layer of activity, i.e., the assessment of it. I think actually it will make the project richer because you can't help but think about it more when you know it's being put under the microscope."

Importantly, trust between partners was seen as a key necessitating condition for cooperative partnerships to happen.

Participant: "To get things off the ground, there was trust and relationships between the various partners... if we didn't have... some trusted relationship between the various organizations.... I'm not sure if anything would have happened."

Another necessitating condition for partnerships to happen was a spirit and desire among the city cultural organizations to build collaborative partnerships and work together to foster community and build community engagement:

Participant: "Yes. I think in Hamilton... so not only at the University... at the City... at the [Hamilton Public] Library, as with many other organizations, there is a real focus on engaging the community, and being in the community, and partnering. And for many years, not just even the last couple of years, I think Hamilton does it exceptionally well. I think even though we're a large city, over half a million people, I think we still succeed in working well together with partners."

What was interesting about the three city cultural organizations partnering together on the LYCSYS initiative was that it self-evolved. In a way, the "stars aligned" by having people in each of the three partner organizations who were interested in digital storytelling finding and connecting with each other. Finding these connections takes work and constant effort. One example of this is the research symposium held at MUL which brought together representatives from HPL and MUL. Another example is people interested in storytelling making efforts to go out and talk with other potential partner organizations.

HPL Participant: "You have to be out. You have to be communicating with folks that have like ideas, or who could be potential partners, and... So, in our case, we met at McMaster. It was like "whoo! there's somebody interested in storytelling!". Which I know has become more and more popular, but I don't think that matters. I think that, you know, we found that. And then, you know, having worked with XXX [from TCD] on, various projects, and now the storytelling project, it's just... the synergies were just there. The sun and the moon and the stars aligned. Quite well. But, again, you know talking from people that you know... you know what people are working on, and it's like "okay! I think that there's a good connection here."

2. Sufficient Funding

The provision of funds from the City (\$150K) and SSHRC (\$200K) facilitated project activities and research opportunities. The funding was pivotal in promoting stability and carrying out all the actions comprising the LYCSYS initiative.

Participant: "One of the things I'd say [about why the project was successful] is just getting the 150 thousand dollars.... from the Future Fund... We had applied for funding from the province... and I don't know if you remember that... and we didn't get it, but there were such strong alignment with our need to proceed this project, that we kept on trying, and people stayed around the table... [Without such funds], we just wouldn't have some of the same assets to jumpstart the digital creation."

Participant: "I think money is important, sadly. I think it would almost be impossible [for any city wishing to launch a digital storytelling initiative] to do it with no money. And I guess it depends on what they are trying to do and how big they make it. If they're looking to just replicate us [the LYCSYS initiative], I'm sure we could just sit down and

kind of run over what we are doing here. But I think they, whoever they are, will need money.”

Participant: “Understanding the money, I think is important because these things... they don't happen for free. And, you know, seeking out the grant funding and exploring what kind of grants are available has got to be... critical. Because otherwise, we'll never get the projects off the ground if there isn't any money. It's labour-intensive, and you're fooling yourself if you think it's free. All the staff time that's been involved in this. All in-kind. It's just... it's huge. And it's staff time that's not being used for another purpose. It has dollar-value.”

The grants not only provided needed funds to ensure work on the initiative was carried out, but the grants themselves imposed an incentive to get work done by their reporting deadlines.

Interviewer: “You mention that the grants were a great benefit of this project. But, in a way, the grants themselves have imposed deadlines.”

Participant: “They've defined [the work].”

Interviewer: “They made us work. I feel responsible to get some student projects going... to do my own work, and I have co-investigators, and every time I see them I ask them “have you done your bit yet?” And so, we're all going to do a piece, but we have to report. I feel like every year I have to do a little report and at the end of the project when we have spent all the money, I have to do a final report, and it gets vetted. So, I feel pressure to do work on the project. And I think HPL does too because they got the Future Fund. So they know they have to deliver something. So, in a way, the grants are good but they also have imposed [deadlines]... I don't know if we would be working so hard if those grants didn't come... 'cause we feel like we have to meet certain obligations... we're obliged to work on the project [because of the grants]. Otherwise, it [the project] could have frittered away.”

Participant: “I know, but I think it wouldn't have. I don't know if it would have. I think that without the grants, I question whether or not we would be doing this. I think grants are credibility; they're endorsement. For sure, they're financial means. But I think above that, it's commitment. It's obligation. It's credibility. I don't know, I feel it gives it legitimacy and it does give it, I know in some ways it's like maybe some stringent deadlines and timelines. But...”

Interviewer: “So if the grants did not exist, do you still think the project would be going?”

Participant: “I think... You know what, how many times did we meet outside of the hope of a grant. I think there was a will, and a commitment. We only ever got to the grant

phase because of that. So, I feel... In a way, I feel like maybe we would have kept meeting until some opportunity came up. I feel maybe it would have taken a lot longer."

Interviewer: "Yes, it's been a helping hand."

Participant: "It's been a huge enabler."

3. Senior Management Commitment / Leadership

When asked what needs to be in place to help secure a successful digital storytelling initiative, several participants pointed out the need for top-level, senior management support to provide the resources, help convince others to come on board, and make things happen. There was a general consensus that a champion or leader was required to kick start the project and keep it going. In the LYCSYS example, HPL was the lead organization that stepped forward and committed resources to make things happen. The following excerpts illustrate the need for strong senior management commitment / leadership.

Participant: "It is amazing that of all the possible things the library could work on, and there are many things... they prioritized storytelling. And they put money into it. And they put high-level staff into this, right? That's major commitment."

Interviewer: "What in your opinion was a requirement to make the LYCSYS initiative happen?"

Participant: "Senior management commitment... There are a lot of people that need to be, I think, convinced or won over... Even when you are looking at the three partners here, right, that just makes it... everyone has to say "yes"... a lot of "yeses" all around."

Interviewer: "What needs to be in place to make a digital storytelling project successful?"

Participant: "The leadership. So, we've got leadership fully involved. We've been able to get other leaders involved. We've been able to demonstrate the creation of the vision... the end product."

Leadership involves a degree of bravery to do something new, to embrace a new role, or do a new task. Senior management could easily have said "no" to the digital storytelling idea.

Participant: "The people who initiated this... were very brave. You know, there is leadership, but you can't negate the fact that there has to be a sense of bravery."

4. Good Project Governance

Many participants felt good project governance was an important piece that led to the success of the LYCSYS initiative. That is, many participants felt the steering committee played a pivotal role in keeping the project on track and moving forward.

Participant: "The monthly steering committee meetings [worked well]. The regular right discussions."

Participant: "[what's worked well on this project?...] well, I think the whole committee structure. I think the bringing in the different people. I think the fact that there is a project lead."

The steering committee met monthly and grappled with many of the contradictions and tensions described above. In response, the steering committee would devise solutions (i.e., ways of moving forward) to keep the LYCSYS initiative on track. One participant, when asked how the steering committee helped move the project along, identified several ways the steering committee was helpful in ensuring that work on the project proceeded: identification of a reduced, core set of four cultural icons; using the Music icon as a pilot to help steer the direction of the story gathering for the other three icons; and supporting the concept of test-driving iBeacon technology to disseminate digital stories.

Participant: "I think the initial identification of some compelling stories... that seemed to work well. It was early on, but I think somehow they came up with a core set... a small number of stories... that could be the pilot's. You know, so music and Tim Horton's, or whatever. You know? That core set. I think... and the fact that they moved along on one of them. I know they got the beginnings of a deliverable around music. I think that's good as a proof of concept, then people can play with that, and see if that really works. And test out the beacons. And then test out all the component pieces. Do a reveal. Communicate it. Get reaction. And then probably make some mid-course adjustments. So that... that part I think is effective."

The steering committee served as a good sounding board as the project deadline neared (i.e., the date of the Big Reveal). The steering committee discussed and agreed with changes to the project schedule and the restructuring of the project's goals to concentrate on the delivery of the technological infrastructure, as opposed to the delivery of digital stories by the date of the Big Reveal. The steering committee was supportive of getting the technical infrastructure in place as a priority with the understanding that the development of more digital stories would occur after the Big Reveal once the technical foundation was firmly set in place.

5. Strong Community Support

Community interest and support was strong for this initiative. This was a key factor in keeping project team members motivated and rallying work on the project to happen, especially when contradictions and tensions ran high.

Participant: "I'm very happy about the response from the community. So, [not only] from our general public, but as well as the people who've we reached out to, to be part of some of the more formal videos that we'll base our little vignettes on."

One participant commented that community support should be a necessitating condition before any city cultural organization decides to proceed with a digital storytelling community project.

Participant: "And I also think they [other cities that wish to launch digital storytelling initiatives] need to connect with the community... I think there needs to be very strongly a connection to the community grassroots. It will make the outreach so much easier, and so, even throughout, for sure, a litmus test of "Do our citizens want this?", "Does our community want this?" Just to make sure the answer is "yes"... I don't think that they [other cities interested in launching a digital storytelling project] should do it without that... this really is for the community."

The lead researcher (Detlor) witnessed strong community support for the LYCSYS initiative first hand when he helped interview participants for the iBeacons part of the research project. The public absolutely loved the stories. Many commented on the *"beautiful pictures."* These pictures were sourced from library archives. Most were fascinated by the history portrayed in the stories. Most commented that they learned something new. A few participants asked when the stories would be available to the general public. Several commented that they want to see more stories. Many read every single story (though at first they said they would only read a couple). Some experienced a significant emotional response to story messages (e.g., the stories brought back sad memories of a family member going off to war and made one participant cry; one participant of British origin beamed when she read the story about the Royal visits to Hamilton; another participant was very pleased and reminiscent when she read the story about the public washrooms underneath Gore Park as the story reminded her of when she was a young girl and her Mom took her there – this participant proceeded to tell her own personal story of how fascinated she was as a young girl by the opulence of those public washrooms).

6. Flexibility

Tolerance and acceptance of how the digital storytelling initiative morphed over time was a strong suit in helping work on the initiative to keep going. Flexibility was given in many aspects of the project. For example: the selection of which cultural icons to pursue; the reduction of the number of cultural icons from 25 to four; the decision to concentrate on

getting the technical infrastructure in place as opposed to generating numerous stories by the date of the Big Reveal; the method by which story gatherers could collect stories from the public; the variations in renderings of the digital stories collected; and the composition of the steering committee membership over the duration of the project.

Interviewer: "What, in your opinion, ensured the project was successful?"

Participant: "Ensuring there is adequate flexibility, so that as things come up, we're able to adjust our project accordingly."

6. Discussion

The findings presented above provide a detailed description of the LYCSYS digital storytelling initiative. Though it would be inappropriate to make broad generalizations of these findings to other digital storytelling initiatives, there is value in discussing major insights or discoveries from the findings that are likely to be of general relevance and interest to any digital storytelling initiative led by a city cultural organization.



One insight is that though **motivations** to conduct digital storytelling may vary between individual city cultural organizations, primary motivations likely include the need to fulfill some sort of strategic mandate (e.g., to be a community beacon; to conduct community engagement; to promote a city as a place to be as a means of fostering economic development). Secondary motivations may be the desire to leverage archival material or enhance partnerships between city cultural organizations.

Another insight is that a variety of **positive outcomes** are likely to result from city cultural organizations engaging in digital storytelling activity. These positive outcomes include enhanced community pride, gains in digital storytelling expertise, better support of city-based research, increased knowledge sharing between partner organizations, and improved perceptions and greater appreciation of city cultural organizations by the general public.

An additional insight is that there is likely a common **core set of actions** (i.e., sub-activities) that all digital storytelling initiatives led by city cultural organizations must carry out: communication actions, story actions, infrastructure actions, and governance actions. *Communication actions* involve the identification and set up of communication channels and marketing approaches to let the community know about the digital storytelling initiative. *Story actions* include the identification of cultural icons/stories to collect, the methods to collect stories, the development of story collection instruments (e.g., interview templates, workshop structures, story submission templates), the determination of story parameters (e.g., the length of a story; the minimum number of photos required; the extent to which the story aligns with strategic objectives; a list of metadata elements to collect on a story). *Infrastructure actions* deal with the design and implementation of a story repository and mechanisms by which to render the stories (e.g., a website; an app). *Governance actions* involve the co-ordination of work among project partners (e.g., creation of a governance structure; project management).

The findings illustrate how contradictions and tensions can reshape a digital storytelling initiative and impact the actions and outcomes of the digital storytelling activity. However, the analysis also shows how congruencies can help a digital storytelling initiative stay on track and move the activity forward.

The analysis revealed five **contradictions and tensions** in the LYCSYS initiative: i) choice of cultural icons and stories; ii) adherence to archival standards; iii) look and feel of developed outcomes; iv) technical obstacles; and v) project management concerns. As described earlier in this paper, contradictions and

tensions (i.e., “to-and-fros”) are normal for any new, large-scaled, multi-partnered project and should be expected. This is especially true in the LYCSYS case study where digital storytelling was a brand new activity.

Concerns around the *choice of cultural icons and stories* was interesting and is perhaps a generic issue that almost all digital storytelling initiatives carried out by city cultural organizations will have to manage. What stories should be told? From whose perspective should these stories be told? Should negative or less savoury stories be included? Should authenticity of the stories be a consideration? Should all stories from the public be accepted? These are grappling questions that probably need to be answered early on at the on start of a digital storytelling initiative before any attempts are made to collect a single story. Further, there are likely no “correct” answers to these questions. City cultural organizations will have to define for themselves what answers to these questions best suit their own specific situations and contexts. Answers for one digital storytelling initiative may be completely different than answers for others in different cities or regions. Having said this, the LYCSYS case study does provide insight:

1. It seems sensible to limit the number of stories (cultural icons) when first starting out to make the digital storytelling project more manageable.
2. Conscious oversight is needed at the project’s inception to determine the themes, perspectives and types of stories to collect. There probably should be good debate and discussion on this, with ample input and feedback from the public and partner organizations. At some point, discussion on this issue should stop as consensus will likely never be reached and the project must move forward. The strategy that motivates the digital storytelling initiative should align with the decision of what stories to collect.
3. The digital storytelling initiative should concentrate on the collection of *compelling* stories (cultural icons) rather than just positive ones. Compelling stories (cultural icons) can be positive or negative (unsavoury) and it seems that compelling stories are the ones that people want and the ones that make the greatest emotional impact.
4. Ensuring the authenticity of a story is an important goal. However, it is unlikely all stories can be verified for authenticity, especially those submitted by the public.
5. Stories collected from the general public should be accepted, within the normal limitations of free speech (e.g., no hate speech) and rules of politeness (e.g., no profanity). Cultural institutions that incorporate wide participatory content-creation from the general public in their digital storytelling formats are known to achieve a more sustainable and widespread interaction with their target communities (Watkins & Russo, 2009).

The tensions around the *adherence to archival standards* in the LYCSYS example points to a concern that probably most digital storytelling initiatives led by city cultural organizations will need to consider. That is, to what extent should metadata be collected on the digital stories collected? The LYCSYS case study

calls for a balance in the collection of story metadata information: one that recognizes the need to collect a core set of metadata elements that adhere to archival best practice but which are not so onerous that they deter or prevent stories from being collected. A recent report by Allard et al. (2016) from the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) sheds light on this issue. The report speaks to new U.S. government requirements for exposing and managing federally-funded research data so this data can be used, re-used, and exploited by future generations. Importantly, the report identifies significant implications these new requirements have for cultural heritage institutions. The report describes how U.S. government metadata requirements for the management of research data by cultural organizations are an unrealistic barrier, and how metadata “satisficing” is essential.⁴ Further the CLIR report describes how no institution or project has unlimited resources, and thus there needs to be some flexibility in terms of operational metadata practices that do not fully conform to the ideal. The report describes how digital curation professionals must make numerous decisions about metadata trade-offs. A common strategy is to identify a relatively limited core set of metadata elements that can then be extended in particular cases. In some instances, the best approach is to identify a fairly extensive set of desirable metadata elements, but then maintain the flexibility to accommodate items that provide a more minimal subset.

Tensions in the LYCSYS example concerning *the look and feel of developed outcomes* are probably another common contradiction that most digital storytelling activities led by city cultural organizations will experience. What the LYCSYS illustrates, however, is the need for clear guidelines upfront to prevent, or at least minimize, these tensions from occurring in the first place. Providing story gathers and story curators with clear guidelines on how stories should be rendered will better ensure a common look and feel across stories that meet certain professional standards, promote the development of stories that are as emotionally compelling and intriguing as possible, and better ensure that developed stories support the underlying strategy that motivated the digital storytelling project in the first place. These guidelines should provide expectations on acceptable boundaries regarding the length of the story, the number of images, the degree of emotional impact, the amount of text to display, the use of background music, and so on. Importantly, the strategy or underlying reasons for carrying out the digital storytelling initiative should provide input on these guidelines to ensure stories that are generated align with the strategic mandate of the project.

Technical obstacles should be expected, especially for initiatives like the LYCSYS example where a wide variety of new technologies was employed (e.g., the A2M repository database, iBeacons, the large interactive wall display). The use of newer ICT technologies, like the iBeacon app and large wall display used in the LYCSYS project, certainly added value to the project and helped brand the project as one that was forward-thinking and cutting-edge. However, several learning curves resulted from using so many different technologies. As such, digital storytelling projects may want to consider minimizing the

⁴ Satisficing is a term introduced by Herbert Simon in the 1950s to characterize a decision-making process that involves settling on an option that is “good enough” to meet a certain threshold of acceptability rather than attempting to find a single optimal solution to a problem. It applies particularly well to decisions about metadata, because it is impossible to predict precisely which metadata elements will be most valuable in the future. However, it is possible to make educated guesses about the types of metadata that are likely to be valuable. (Allard et al., 2016).

number of new technologies to mitigate technical obstacles and reduce the time and energy needed to surmount new learning curves.

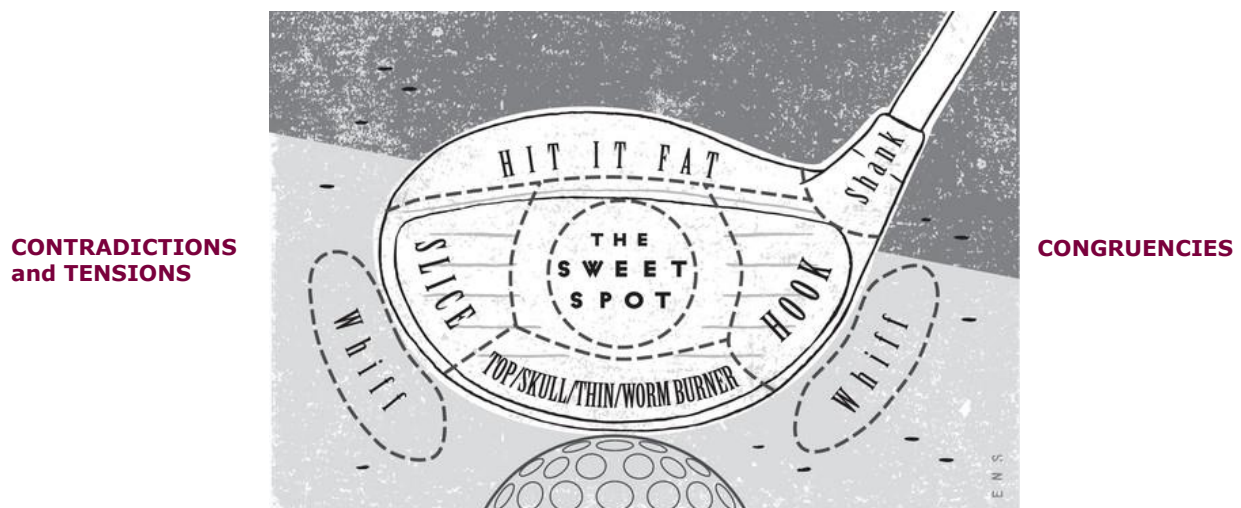
Project management is another area that all digital storytelling initiatives led by city cultural organizations likely will see as a concern. As the LYCSYS example illustrates, a project with insufficient guidance may lead to problems that affect the rollout and implementation of the digital stories. Project management is an especially important consideration as digital storytelling is most likely a new activity for city cultural organizations involved in the project. As such, the project will inherently involve a significant degree of change. For example, there is likely to be a change in roles for some city cultural organization workers, and a change in work processes. Budgets will probably have to be modified to ensure digital storytelling work is funded and sustained. This may necessitate an increase in staff and resources to certain departments or units. To manage this change, city cultural organizations should look to best practices from the change management literature. These include communicating the reasons for change to organizational workers early on in the project, getting buy-in from stakeholders before work commences, establishing clear roles (i.e., agreement on who does what) and expectations before work begins, and keeping stakeholders up-to-date as work proceeds.

The analysis also revealed six **congruencies**: i) cooperative partnerships; ii) sufficient funding; iii) senior management commitment/leadership; iv) good project governance; v) strong community support; and vi) flexibility. These congruencies collectively smoothed over any tensions and contradictions that occurred in the LYCSYS initiative (i.e., provided stability) and encouraged the activity to proceed and meet its original goals. As the LYCSYS case study shows: *cooperative partnerships* allow city cultural organizations to work together to overcome obstacles that may arise; *senior management commitment and leadership* help champion the project and provide the resources needed to get work done; *good project governance*, such as the establishment and active involvement of an steering committee, provides a digital storytelling initiative with oversight and direction; *strong community support* keeps spirits high and rallies those working on the rollout and implementation of the initiative to continue doing good work towards the delivery of expected outcomes; and, *flexibility* provides a digital storytelling initiative with enough elasticity and sufficient tolerance to keep things moving forward.

Ultimately, the LYCSYS case study demonstrates that contradictions/tensions and congruencies must reach a balance to keep a digital storytelling initiative moving forward. It is likely that specific contradictions/tensions and congruencies will vary across different digital storytelling initiatives. What is consistent, however, is the need to find that balance or **sweet spot** between the congruencies and the contradictions/tensions that may arise. This insight was clearly expressed by one participant in the LYCSYS initiative when describing the need to find a balance in the amount of metadata information collected for a story.

*Participant: "I think that we're going to have to find a **sweet spot** where, you know, we're not going to say we can't take your story because it's not archivally up to our standards to make it part of the project.... I think going forward, we need to have some **clear guidelines** about how we're going to take everyone's stories."*

The following image uses a golf metaphor to portray the finding of a sweet spot in the balance between contradictions/tensions and congruencies.⁵ The image highlights two key points. First, contradictions and tensions are normal in digital storytelling initiatives and should be expected in any such project led by city cultural organizations, especially since this type of activity will likely be new for these types of organizations. Second, congruencies can help counteract any contradictions and tensions that may arise. The need for congruencies was aptly described by one participant in the LYCSYS case study: *“You have to have the leadership. You have to have the plan. You have to have the strategy and the steps, and then you have the creative people to bring it altogether.”*



[Image Source: Wall Street Journal; Available at <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748704075604575356863337638270>]

The LYCSYS case study has led to several recommendations that are summarized below.

Story / Cultural Icon Collection Recommendations

- When first starting a digital storytelling initiative, limit the number of stories (cultural icons) to collect.
- At the onset of a digital storytelling initiative, determine what stories will be collected. This includes decisions not only on the theme of the stories (i.e., what cultural icons to use), but also on the perspective and flavour of the stories themselves. Importantly, these decisions should align with the project's original motivation.
- Concentrate on collecting and curating “compelling” stories, as opposed to those that are only positive in nature.

⁵ Golf was originated in Scotland and it should be acknowledged that the author's affiliation as a Visiting Professor with Edinburgh Napier University influenced the choice of this particular metaphor.

Metadata Recommendations

- Develop a reduced set of metadata requirements that balance needs between archival standards and operational/practical concerns.

Delivery of Delivered Outcomes Recommendations

- Provide clear guidelines for story collection and curation that address story parameters such as length, tone, perspective, emotional engagement, and alignment of a story with the digital storytelling project's overarching strategy.

Technology Recommendations

- When choosing various information technology components, consider minimizing the number of new information technology components to reduce learning curves associated with new technology adoption.

Project Management Recommendations

- Follow best practices from the change management literature (e.g., communicating the need for digital storytelling with key stakeholders at the start, getting buy-in from the stakeholders at the start; establishing clear roles and expectations with stakeholders at the start; keeping stakeholders up-to-date as work on the change proceeds).
- Ensure adequate budgets, staff and resources are in place.
- Confirm that an adequate governance structure is in place to provide oversight and direction.
- Follow project management best practices to facilitate development and implementation so that project delivery items are on-time, within scope, and within budget.
- Ensure project schedules, such as GANTT charts, incorporate scheduling of the following key activities: communication actions; story actions; infrastructure actions; and governance actions.

Congruency Recommendations

- Heighten all congruent factors. This includes make sure that cooperative partnerships exist, sufficient funding is available, senior management commitment and leadership is in place, community support is strong, and flexibility is provided.

The recommendations listed above are in line with the conclusions and advice advocated in a 2014 [report](#) by the Rockefeller Foundation entitled *Digital Storytelling For Social Impact* (Rockefeller Foundation, 2014). The report identifies “supply-side” issues in digital storytelling and, in response, calls a need for comprehensive strategic and tactical guidance on how to tell, store, share and curate compelling and motivating stories on a consistent basis. The report describes how many social impact organizations lack the capacity to create compelling stories that capture people’s attention and imagination. Few employ people with the knowledge and skill necessary to craft stories strategically and engage their stakeholders in conversations that lead to action. Many struggle to identify the right platforms to use to reach their target audiences. Few understand how to evaluate their success at storytelling. The report succinctly describes how social impact organizations often dive into storytelling without articulating clear goals, understanding the interests and motivations of target audiences, or setting measurable objectives. The report describes how help is needed to produce and share stories that contribute to an organization’s goals, and how to use technological tools to create, render, store and disseminate stories. Conclusions in the report speak to the need for strategic guidelines to craft effective content and design an engagement plan using appropriate platforms to reach the right people and mobilize them for the cause. The report calls for senior managers to understand the importance of dedicating time, talent and resources to designing storytelling content strategies and producing high-quality storytelling content.

7. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to explore and understand the phenomenon of digital storytelling initiatives led by city cultural organizations at one particular case study site using Activity Theory as a guide. Overall, Activity Theory provided a robust and holistic framework for understanding and describing the LYCSYS digital storytelling initiative. That is, Activity Theory provided a clear structure and vocabulary to describe and assess various aspects of the LYCSYS initiative with regard to motivations, goals, actions, tools, rules, divisions of labour, congruencies, tensions and contradictions. The analysis of the LYCSYS case study yielded several recommendations for practitioners who plan to launch similar digital storytelling initiatives in their own cities. These recommendations emphasize the finding of a “sweet spot” in the development and implementation of a digital storytelling initiative led by city cultural organizations where congruencies mitigate any contradictions and tensions that may arise.

Participants interviewed for this case study spoke very highly of the LYCSYS initiative and its potential for positive long term outcomes for the Hamilton community. This spirit is captured quite eloquently in the following interview excerpts:

Participant: “This is a very fascinating project to work on. It's fun. It's stories. It's people. It's the community. And it's got a technology piece. And you see other cities around the world doing this type of work. It's really new.... there are so many positives to it.”

Participant: “I love this project so much. I really do feel that this [project] is pivotal. It's big. I think it will bring major benefits... And I'm really proud. I'm very proud of this initiative and I think it's amazing that we can do this....I'm very proud. I feel like we're actually doing something.”

Participant: “It's a great project. I really... I have to say, it's one of my favourites!”

Longer term plans for this research involve the investigation of digital storytelling practices led by other city cultural organizations both locally and further abroad, considering institutions which are well versed in their story-telling programs as well as those who are less experienced. Various aspects of digital storytelling initiatives will be explored. These include, but are not limited to, understanding:

- how digital storytelling initiatives at city cultural organizations emerge (i.e., the history of the initiative);
- the purpose and goals of digital storytelling initiatives at city cultural organizations (e.g., to promote a city, to leverage archival collections, to serve as leaders in the community, to raise awareness of the city cultural organizations themselves);
- the process by which stories are developed, gathered, and curated;

- how digital stories are disseminated to, and accessed by, the public (e.g., the types of information technology used, the functionality afforded by the technology);
- how digital stories are marketed to the public (i.e., how the public knows about the digital storytelling initiative);
- the governance structure surrounding digital storytelling initiatives;
- a city cultural organization's effect on the digital stories produced (e.g., city cultural organizations may alter the authenticity of a story, decide which stories to accept/reject, promote certain stories over others);
- the effect of digital storytelling on municipal cultural organizations themselves (e.g., changing roles);
- challenges that are faced by storytelling organizations with respect to technology, finances, digital data management, story relevancy, reliability and authenticity, legal and ethical issues, and the establishment of important story parameters (e.g., length, structure, and metadata; the selection of cultural icons and stories; the provision of consistent strategic messaging across curated stories; understanding and knowing how to write for diverse audiences);
- outcomes of a digital storytelling initiative (e.g., response from the public; the quality and quantity of stories produced).

Activity Theory will provide a common conceptual framework for comparing and contrasting the phenomenon of digital storytelling initiatives led by city cultural organizations across multiple case study sites. The goal is to yield a theoretical model that explains the activity system of digital storytelling initiatives led by city cultural organizations, and identify best-practice recommendations for organizations that are initiating or maintaining digital storytelling initiatives in their communities.

The LYCSYS case study, along with the future research stream outlined above, is expected to provide a comprehensive source of information to allow deeper insight and understanding of digital storytelling activity led by city cultural organizations.

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