

# Collaborative Stories at the SSLA Conference

Saskatchewan School Library Association

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SASKATCHEWAN SCHOOL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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Storytelling in a contemporary context does not necessarily involve wise elders sharing their wisdom and view of the world with others. Nowadays, storytelling is not just for older adults with years of experience. Modern technology makes the gift of storytelling accessible to all ages and all levels of expertise.

### Keynote Address: Collaboration and Mash Up

The importance of storytelling was the message delivered by the keynote speakers at the Saskatchewan School Libraries annual conference on April 15 in Saskatoon. Darren Kurpotwa and Dean Shareski began the session by explaining how they had “met” online, developed a friendship based on their common interests, and gradually became co-presenters. They used technology to eliminate the challenge of the physical distance between them. One lives in Manitoba, the other Saskatchewan. They have collaborated on many projects and co-presented at several conferences although one or the other of them has had to appear via video link. Dean and Darren showed the audience how, through “collaboration and mash up”, they were able to plan the session and the participants would in turn be able to tell and share their stories. The SSLA was fortunate to have them both in person for the conference. Consequently, after their keynote address, each presenter offered a hands-on session to half of the participants at a time.

### Presenters

Darren Kurpotwa is a curriculum consultant at Manitoba Education. His leadership and vision in the field of educational technology are known worldwide through his professional blog - [A Difference](#).

Dean Shareski is the digital learning consultant for Prairie South School Division. He is an internationally renowned speaker about effective ways to teach and learn with technology. Visit his [blog](#).

### Storytelling via You Tube

Darren and Dean selected many examples from You Tube (<http://www.youtube.com>) to show how people are using the power of video to tell their personal stories. Using entertaining, often mesmerizing example videos (collected for the participants at <http://ssla2011.posterous.com/pages/youtube-videos>), they demonstrated three features of You Tube:

1. You Tube is an open platform. Anyone can upload anything they want. Because of this feature, there is a wide variety of silly nonsense posted on You Tube. However, after this initial stage, people do post better quality materials. To turn an old phrase, the videos range from the ridiculous to the sublime.
2. You Tube provides feedback. You Tube provides an authentic audience for work posted there. People post videos asking for help and comments and receive wide- ranging responses from average people and experts in their field.
3. You Tube provides material that people remix and mash up into new content that is in turn reposted.

Unlike traditional forms of media, Dean and Darren characterized the internet as two-way interaction. The internet is no longer just a place to find information but also is a venue to upload content, to interact with others globally, and to form relationships. Educators need to capitalize on these features in order to provide their students with opportunities to exchange ideas, find an authentic audience, connect with people regardless of location, and tell their stories.

## Collaborative Stories

The presenters created a Google Doc for participants to create and share their own stories. They provided engaging topics to choose from such as:

*Wardrobe malfunction* - stories about clothing issues  
*Bates Motel* - bad vacation stories  
*See Spot run!* - pet stories  
*Brushes with greatness* - celebrity stories  
*Green is the colour!* - Saskatchewan Roughrider stories  
*On golden pond* - Saskatchewan lakes and cabins  
*You shouldn't have!* - gifts you didn't want or need  
*You do what?* - unusual hobbies  
*Stories about "getting school"* - school stories  
*Dinner is served* - cooking stories

## Darren's Session

### Five Card Flickr

In talking about the importance of pictures in telling stories, Darren quoted *Rule # 10 Vision trumps all other senses* by Dr. John Medina. "We are incredible at remembering pictures. Hear a piece of information, and three days later you'll remember 10% of it. Add a picture and you'll remember 65%." (Medina, 2011) To practice this, Darren played Five Card Flickr with his session group (<http://5card.cogdogblog.com/play.php?suit=5card>). This website offers a choice of five pictures to start a story. Choose one picture to begin the story, and then Flickr offers five more pictures. Select the

second picture to continue the story. This continues until five photos have been selected. Then a form opens offering a dialogue box in which to enter a title and type the story. It is challenging and fun to work as a group or individually to tell the story suggested and illustrated by the photos.

## Dean's Session

### Six Word Stories

In a variation on a similar theme, Dean challenged his session group to tell a story in just six words (<http://www.sixwordstories.net>) and then, to illustrate it by choosing an appropriate photo from Flickr (<http://www.flickr.com/>). He suggested using the Compfight search tool (<http://compfight.com/>) to search for pictures that are available for use through the Creative Commons license. Dean stressed the importance of giving credit for the photos and suggested using Open Attribute (<http://openattribute.com>) as a handy tool for helping to create the citation for pictures. Using Picnik (<http://www.picnik.com/>) participants superimposed their six words on their chosen photo like an inspirational poster.

### Google Search Stories

Dean encouraged his participants to create a Google Search story (<http://www.youtube.com/user/SearchStories>). It is challenging to tell an effective story this way and it takes time and careful planning.

### For Another Time....

Time ran out before Darren had a chance to share the materials he had prepared on using Google Maps to tell stories linked to a particular place. Likewise, for Dean who planned for participants to use Voicethread to tell stories orally.

However, the presenters posted resources for the conference participants at <http://ssla2011.posterous.com/pages/your-presenters> to use throughout the day and to refer back to in the future. Participants left the session motivated to inspire their students to tell stories facilitated by the ideas and skills they had gained from Darren and Dean.

## Resources

Medina, J. (2011). *Vision/brain rules*. Retrieved from <http://www.brainrules.net/vision>