



# TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING

PRINCIPLES, PRACTICES, & PROTOTYPES

## FOR DESIGNING NARRATIVE EXPERIENCES WITH THE AUDIENCE







# Transmedia Storytelling

*Principles, Practices & Prototypes for Designing  
Narrative Experiences With the Audience*

A thesis submitted to the School of Design, Carnegie Mellon University,  
for the degree of Master of Design in Interaction Design.

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A photograph of a vintage-style bar scene. In the center, a mannequin of a man with a mustache, wearing a green fedora, glasses, a white shirt, a patterned tie, and suspenders, stands behind a bar. He is holding a small green object in his right hand. In front of him is a wooden sign that reads "CHARLEY WEAVER BARTENDER" in blue and black letters. Below the name is a heart-shaped plaque that says "ELSIE KRAACK WAS HERE". To the right of the sign is a glass display case containing a "MEMBER BENEFITS" card. The background is dark and moody, with a green light source visible behind the mannequin.

# ABSTRACT



# Abstract

*“The Artwork of the future...transplants the player into a dramatic space, by all means of his visual and oral faculties; making her forget the confines of reality; to live and breathe in the drama which seems to the player as life itself, and in the work where seems the wide expanse of a whole world.”*

Richard Wagner, *The Artwork of the Future*, 1849

The Internet has changed the way we experience stories, although like any new technology, it was used to curate long before it was used to create. As entertainment industries collapse, producers both castigate the Internet as the culprit and embrace it as a panacea. For narrative designers, the Internet is a global stage where the house lights are on 24/7. It is a mediated performance that self documents and offers an endless supply of props for audiences eager to become participants in immersive experiences. Most importantly, it outlines the future for a new form of narrative art called transmedia storytelling.

For producer Turo Drakvik, “This form of storytelling is native to the Internet in the same way that the novel is native to print.” Transmedia narrative content unfolds in non-linear arcs across multiple platforms that are best situated to evidence the storyworld, and it blends media arts with performance-based arts and game systems. The role of the audience has been fundamentally changed. Rather than spectators, they are now encouraged to be invested co-creators of the experience.

My thesis focused on experiments that examine how storytellers might use the Internet and digital media platforms to create participatory storyworlds. To explore this emerging medium, I created the first transmedia comedy—a 4 week immersion called Love and Luck(y)—and documented roles, artifacts, and principles for future storytellers.



# Acknowledgements

A huge thank you to Nick Durrant, Gill Wildman, and Haakon Faste for being the most supportive, generous, and brilliant extraordinary advisors.

Thank you, Nick, for the brainstorming sessions at the Mardi Gras, the never ending supply of imagination and inspiration, and for helping me visualize the often tangled web of ideas in my head, and from deviating from the way things are normally done around here to show me that there are other, more interesting ways that things could be done. In terms of illuminating experiences, this one was Kraken-sized.

Thank you, Gill, for pushing me to think, explore, imagine, and make, getting me out of my head and into the world I was creating, and for forcing me to take breaks from time to time. You drew the absolute best work out of me, moreso than any body ever has before. (Julie wants me to thank you for the sugar cookie recipe.)

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Thanks to Julie Harbay, my patient and loving wife who married me in November of my second year, and supported me through every struggle and display of seemingly inhuman hysteria I could perform. The majority of the stress is over. Now we can plan that honeymoon, yes? All my love, all my life.

Thanks to my writing mentor Hilary Masters, for over a decade's guidance on how to be a better man, as well as a better writer. Without him as an early influence, I'd probably be making my living as a musician right now. Thank you, friend.

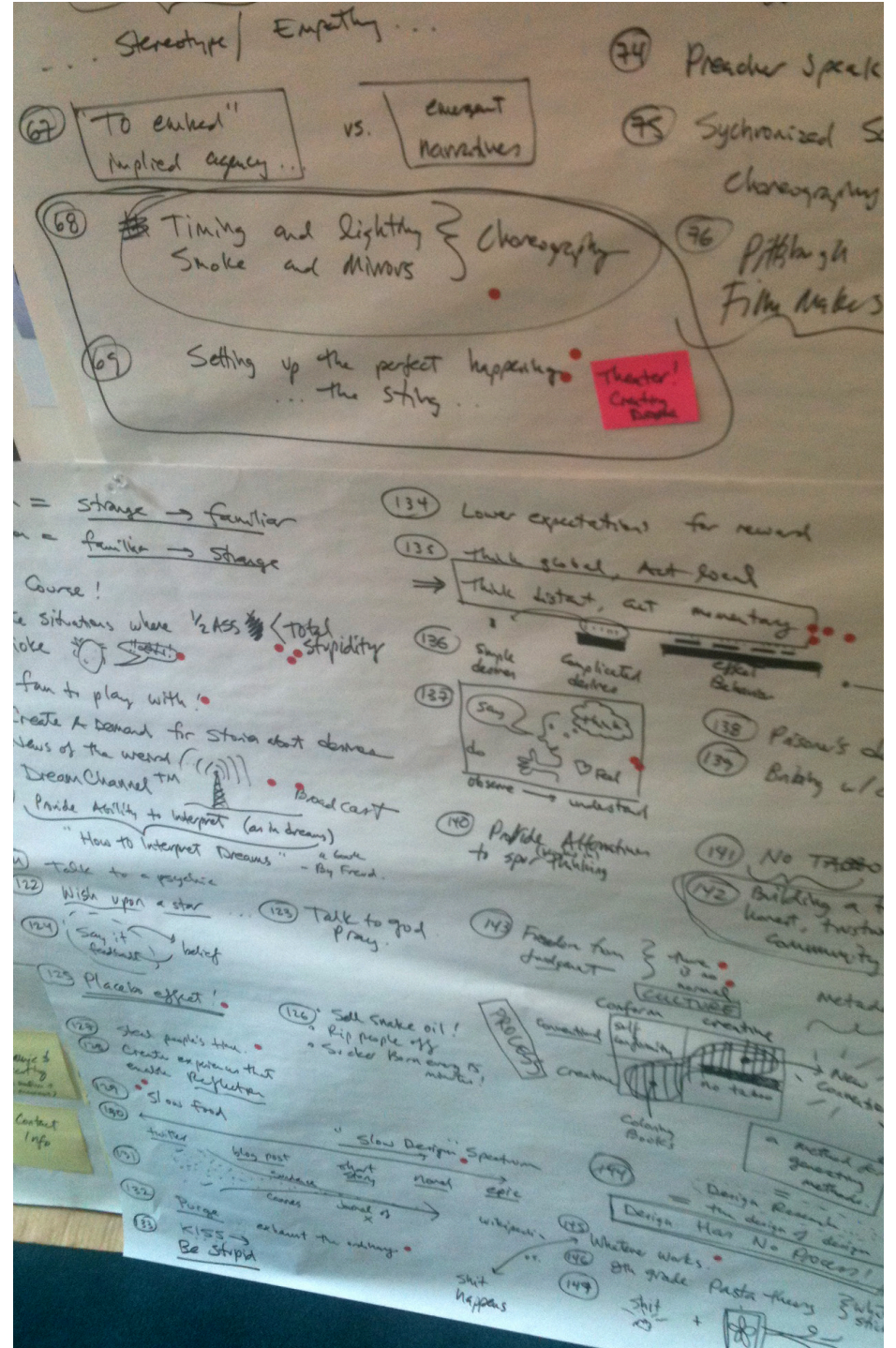
Thank you to Kynamatrix for the generous \$1,000 grant.

And finally, thanks to my oldest friend, Carver, who was the best dog a guy could ask for, and who was a MacGuffin of sorts for nearly all of my 20's. In a world where love doesn't last, he was a king.

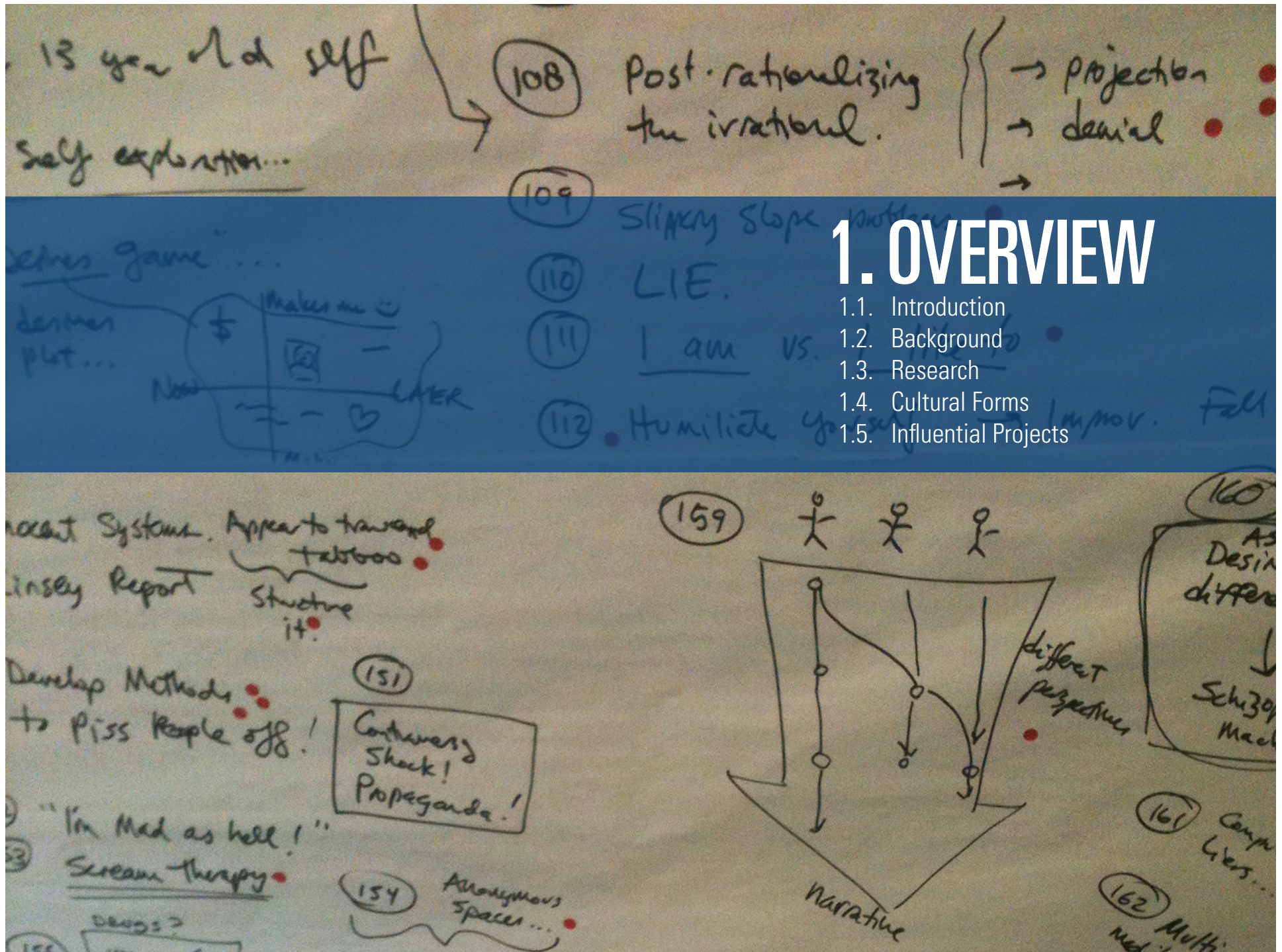


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# 1.1. Introduction

*"If stories are universal, the way we tell them changes with the technology at hand. Every new medium has given rise to a new form of narrative.."*

Frank Rose, *The Art of Immersion*, 2012

This is a time of great transition in the media. Existing business models for creative industries have been made obsolete with the rise of the Internet. For conventional media, the one-to-many broadcast formula is dead, and out of the ashes has risen a participatory story space that encourages audiences to interact directly with narrative experiences and become part of the production (Rose, 2012). Audiences are no longer passive consumers, and as a result, future narrative design must incorporate the audience as legitimate directors, writers, and producers of the progressive experience. Creative industries are suffering the utter collapse of their business models brought on by digital democratization of content. From music (from compact discs to Napster, iTunes, and Spotify) to films (from DVD/BluRay to Hulu, NetFlix, and YouTube) and now the publishing industry (from books to eReaders and apps), the swift rise in digital distribution has left creative production industries in tatters. Increases in bandwidth and download speeds which occurred between 1998 and 2008 signaled a trend of purchasing and consumption patterns, which was made visible with the success of the iPod, and fueled through new social media marketing efforts.

Historically, writers created for the page. Film directors and producers created for the cinema. Television producers created for the living room. That is to say, the production team in each medium knew the display format and context. All of that is changing. Creative content producers now have to consider display technologies, multiple contexts of use, social interaction opportunities, and game systems. Likewise, fiction writers now have to think about creating stories for interactive screens, tablets, and mobile devices, not just pages. These screens require new interaction methods and metaphors to build coherent experiences, and the interaction methods themselves can become part of the fiction rather than simply activity that occurs on a screen.

As creators move from producing for a known media format in a specific space to producing for multiple platforms/screens in increasingly smart environments, the introduction of a participatory audience has blurred the roles and relationships between creators and audiences (Jenkins, 2006). Audiences using personal media devices are now co-producers and involved interpreters of the storyworld, creating a feedback loop that must be incorporated from the outset through design (Moggridge, 2012). We live in a connected world, with the ability to leverage millions of other connected participants through our mobile devices. This connection has fueled the rise and success of alternate reality games and video gaming (Shirky, 2011).

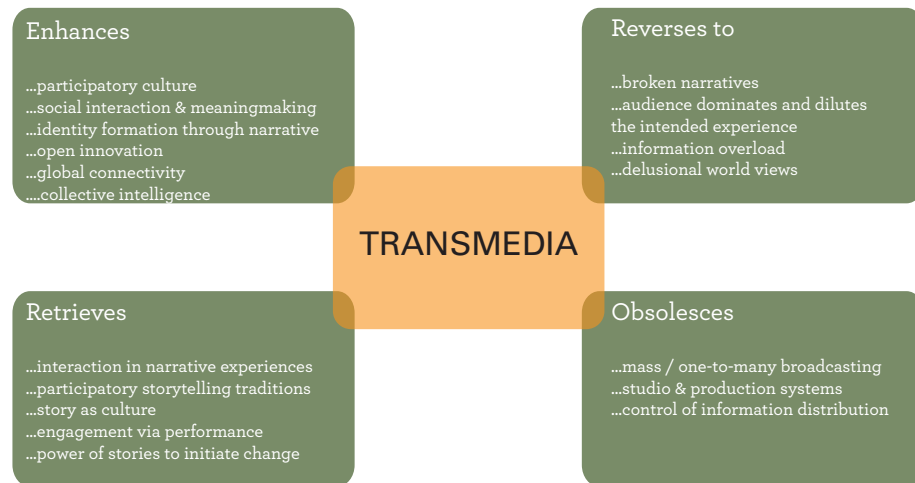
My thesis explores opportunities for design, and sets challenges for the subdisciplines for interaction and experience designers to address potential alternative futures for industries that produce and distribute digital stories. As the formgivers for meaning and experience in the digital world, interaction and experience designers will play two key roles in shaping transmedia storyworlds. They will (1) design the experiential qualities of new media platforms for production and distribution of new narrative worlds, and (2) shape the future for display technologies and interface design for emerging narrative properties.

Transmedia storytelling requires new, contextually adaptable interfaces and media platforms that allow a storyteller and the audience to co-create plot, characters, artifacts, and arcs. This places the designer in a hybrid creator and director position, a role where they are expected to finesse the sensual, experiential qualities of the particular medium through which the experience will unfold.



I used Marshall McLuhan's tetrad of media effects to situate transmedia storytelling in current practice (McLuhan and Fiore, 1967). McLuhan used this tetrad as a tool to consider media formats with the following four questions:

What does the medium (1) enhance, (2) make obsolete, (3) retrieve that had been obsolesced earlier, and (4) flip to when pushed to extremes?



McLuhan's tetrad helped me to map the forms of media that transmedia storytelling would affect, and also predict the types of output that would occur if transmedia was pushed to the extremes, such as nonsense narratives, broken or chaos stories, and total dilution of a world through information overload.

Transmedia obsolesces controlling mass media, because the content will be distributed in multiple ways, across multiple channels. The inclusion of audience generated content enhances the participatory culture of the story community, and retrieves the historic performance and theatrical aspects of storytelling.

Future serial narratives (such as television shows) might play out across city spaces, and may be delivered in smaller chunks, so that the narrative "lives" with you and unfolds as you move throughout your day. Cinematic stories of the future may debut in small theaters or even our living rooms and may resolve via global serious alternate reality games. As the technology to create, distribute, and circulate continues to grow, the need for interaction designers using proven human centered design practices will only increase (Shedroff, 2001).

## 1.2. Background

Arguably the two most respected transmedia critics are Henry Jenkins and Frank Rose. Henry Jenkins, former co-director of MIT's Comparative Media Studies program, is responsible for reintroducing the phrase transmedia into the media world and documenting the rise in a participatory culture with his book *Convergence Culture* (2006).

Frank Rose, a contributing editor at Wired, wrote *The Art of Immersion: How the Digital Generation is Remaking Hollywood, Madison Avenue, and the Way We Tell Stories* (2012) with a deeper focus on the intersection of storytelling, technology, and changes in media marketing. Both books worked around the premise that the stories that we were used to consuming via media platforms had primarily implicit worlds, leaving us as audience members with nothing to do but consume what was offered. Transmedia storytelling makes the world explicit and encourages audiences to co-create the narrative in a variety of ways.

And yet, storytelling is just one example of transmedia. Other examples of transmedia include:

**Transmedia franchising** | *The Matrix*, *Indiana Jones*, *Star Wars*, *Lost*. All franchises created new products or narrative offerings that expanded the world and attracted new audiences.

**Transmedia theater** | Multi screen experimental theater such as Simon McBurney's work with Complicite, and immersive theater experiences where the audience can choose which character to follow and which arc to pursue.

**Transmedia music** | Trent Reznor's *Year Zero* and Arcade Fire's *The Wilderness Downtown*, which is an application that leverages Google maps and home addresses to create music videos of the user's childhood neighborhood.

**Transmedia marketing** | Audi's *Art of the H3ist* was an immersive game designed to debut Audi's new A3. *Why So Serious?* was an alternate reality game to promote and tease *The Dark Knight*.

### *The Death of Traditional Media*

The Internet has been the not-so-quiet assassin of multiple traditional media formats (Drakvik, 2011). The Internet made possible fan communities, wikis, blogs, fan fiction and other more direct forms of interaction with existing story worlds. It gave audiences license to dabble and create new stories using the products of their favorite existing stories. This became most apparent with the rise in fan fiction during the early 2000s. When an episode of *the X-Files* betrayed the storyworld that had been built previously, fans could go online, rewrite it to fit their own desires, and post for the entire world to comment on. Audiences became conscious editors and re-mixers of their favorite narrative brand, which explains the progression to alternate reality games as means to market and influence new audiences for storyworlds like Batman (with *The Dark Knight*) and companies like Audi and Coca-Cola. The Internet provided audiences with a platform to go beyond detached consumption and become invested creators.

Then social networks came along, giving anybody and everybody a platform to create public representations (or characters) of themselves, while also providing huge new pipelines for sharing information and media. The strongest example of fan networks pooling their intelligence around an experience is with the television show *Lost*. *Lost* was conceived as a transmedia world at its inception, though even the producers admitted they had no idea how rabid the fans would become, acting as critics, fact-checkers, and eventually co-creators for story lines. As the show progressed, the producers used fan feedback to inform the narrative progression of future episodes, allowing fans a first step into their favorite fictional world. The rise of the fan as a participant, and not just a consumer, is a phenomenon impossible to ignore today for creative producers.



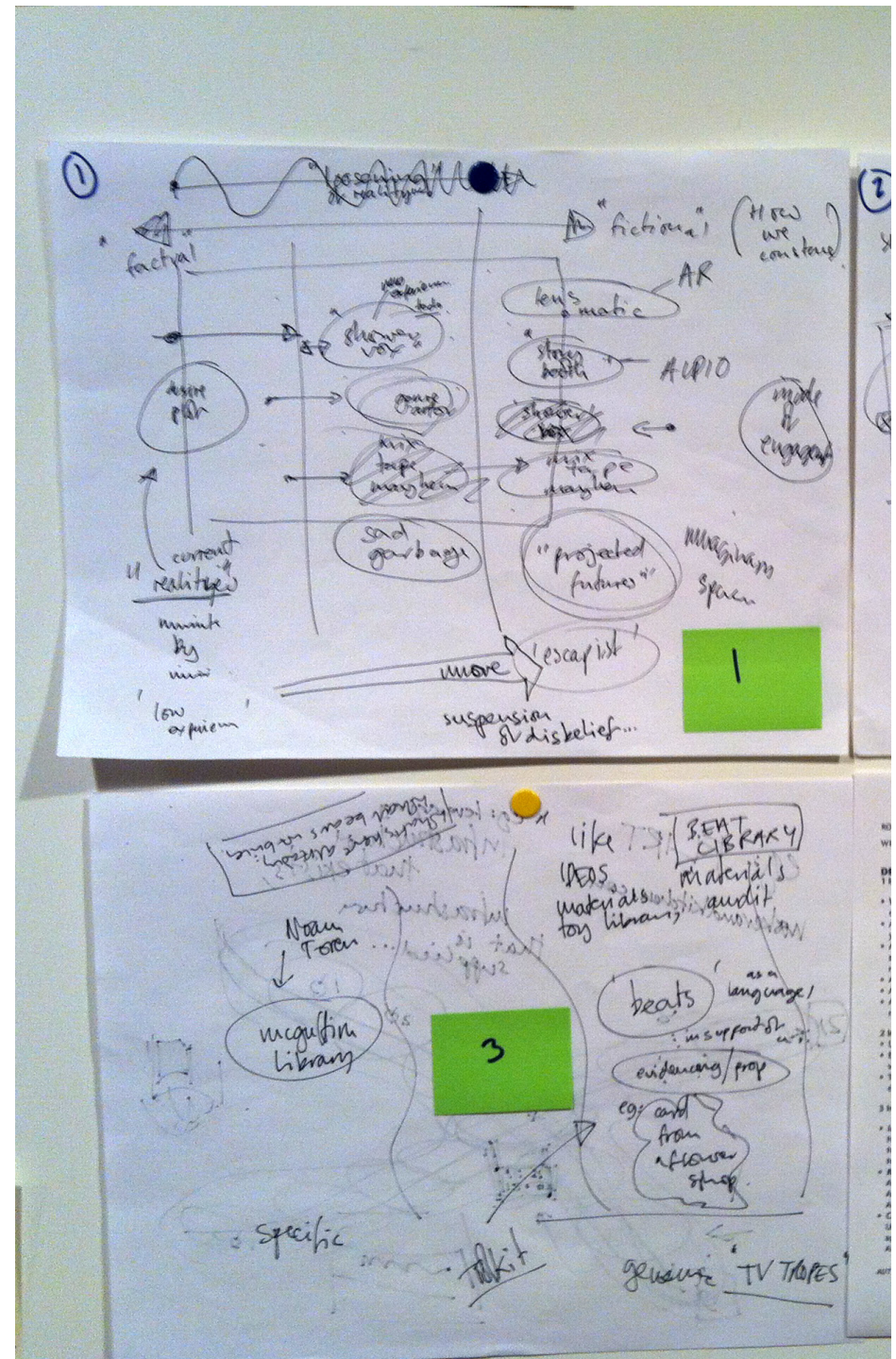
The primary goal I set for myself was to explore how the Internet could be used by digital storytellers to create audience-driven, immersive narrative experiences. I examined frameworks and pattern languages for traditional storytelling. I pulled apart theory and mechanics related to writing, theater arts, performance arts, and film to understand how legacy principles might be repurposed in this era of digital storytelling. I was pleased that so many of the barriers that historically stymied storytellers are actually alleviated with certain combinations of technology.

However, this is a design thesis, and once I looked at narrative theory and repurposing techniques from other formats, I focused on the role of design in creating artifacts and evidence through which transmedia storyworlds could be experienced and enriched.

I had many narrative interests at the outset. I knew about things like reader-response theory, which looks at how people interpret narratives and use prior experiences to make sense of what they are reading or watching. I was interested in the lines that get blurred when a story moves off the page and unfolds in the real world, and types of responses we have when a story feels like it “hits home.” I was interested in the line between participants and spectators, and how people might move back and forth across that line in narrative experiences.

But over all, I was interested in moving beyond the word “interactive” as simply a modifier for narrative experiences. Too often, “interactive” refers to an app or eReader that features a novelty interaction that doesn’t actually advance the narrative. My personal premise is that an iPad app for a story that restricts a participant’s interaction to tapping on a thin glass screen is hardly interactive. For me, stories become interactive when they dabble in the land of performance arts, where the audience is able to influence the story, play characters, share related stories, grow communities through use, and co-author the experience with the storyteller.

I opted for a process that involved making and testing things, capturing and reflecting upon feedback and responses from participants, and then redesigning the artifact or experience based on the results. Because this is a relatively new field that lacks comprehensive research, the principal method of learning is taking apart examples, finding what worked and what didn’t, and creating experimental prototypes to test my beliefs about what might work.



## 1.3. Research

*“Transmedia requires you to think about a story maybe the way an architect thinks about a building... A transmedia story is kind of empty and meaningless until it’s occupied by people, and so you have to kind of design around behaviors, you have to design around more basic kind of desires. People don’t sit down like they do in a theater and go “oh I’m really looking for new Transmedia experience,” what happens is they fall into that because they’ve been designed so well that they attract people and just next thing you know they’re thinking “Wow I’m living in this fantasy world.”*

Mike Monello, Partner, Campfire

*“All that was once lived has become mere representation...The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images.”*

Guy DeBord, *Society of the Spectacle*, 1967

The *Society of the Spectacle* argues that we largely live our lives through representations rather than direct experiences, and I for one couldn’t agree more. Guy DeBord believed that images thrust upon society by mediating controllers had replaced true person-to-person interaction and fostered a desire to consume to compete, rather than interact to experience. DeBord defined the spectacle as a global system at the intersection of advanced capitalism, mass media, and the governing bodies that controlled the mediation of our daily lives. I wanted to take Debord’s work and use it to create opportunities for experience and performance, so that participants would engage with each other, rather than engage with the story solely through a mediating influence, like a tablet or mobile phone.

### *(A brief) Transmedia History*

University Professor Marsha Kinder at USC coined the term transmedia in 1991 to describe a potential new method for storytelling for stories with multiple existing worlds, citing the value in consumers acting as players who are free of the commercial manipulation found in television programs and in films. It wasn’t until Henry Jenkins published “Transmedia Storytelling” in a 2003 issue of *Technology Review* that the term gained momentum.

### *Transmedia Roots in Franchising*

Hollywood has used transmedia techniques to market franchises and expand storyworlds and more deeply engage existing audiences for years. Advertising and marketing agencies have used transmedia techniques to brand products and services for companies such as Audi, Sony, and MTV. The vast majority of

transmedia consumers are deep divers—hardcore fans—and yet they only account for approximately 10-15% of the audience base (Jenkins, 2006).

Designing transmedia experiences for mainstream audiences remains a challenge. Ian Ravenscroft is a transmedia writer, who summarized this challenge by saying, “If transmedia is really going to work as a mainstream consumer concept rather than a marketing endeavour or a cult experiment, it will have to involve stories designed from the ground up to be both interactive and platform agnostic. Otherwise, all we’re really doing is selling comic books to completists.” (Ravenscroft, 2011)

True transmedia experiences require interaction between the storyteller and the story design through some sort of mediated or unmediated performance. According to narratologist Marie Laure-Ryan, “Narrative meaning is the product of the top-down planning of a storyteller or designer, while interactivity requires a bottom-up input from the user. It will consequently take a seamless convergence of bottom-up input and top-down design to produce well formed narrative patterns. This convergence requires a certain type of textual architecture and a certain kind of user involvement...The ideal top-down design should disguise itself as an emergent story, giving users both confidence that their efforts will be rewarded by a coherent narrative and the feeling of acting of their own free will, rather than being the puppets of the designer.” (Laure-Ryan, 2006)

I agree with both Ravenscroft and Laure-Ryan about the need to disguise elements of the top-down design such that participants feel free to explore and contribute, rather than be led on a hunt, and this is supported by the criticisms of marketing-driven alternate reality games that simply force participants from one quest to the next. They are not games in the sense that play is the focus—they are games in the sense that players are being manipulated to achieve one goal. It becomes a competition, rather than an exploration.

As new media designer Olivier Grau has observed, inspiring and enabling spectators to become participants is “the result of a combination of developments in art, design, and technology, intensified by their interaction. The result of these developments is a new medium that appears to be both threatening in its destruction of old media, and promising in the creative horizons it might develop.” (Oddey, 2009)



### *East Coast vs. West Coast*

Much like the rap world, transmedia is a bi-coastal form, where the east-coast faction tends to view storytelling over a shorter duration, likely due to the publishing and advertising as the dominant forms of content production in New York. Conversely, the West Coast faction is driven by Hollywood and the longer form narrative, where franchising and marketing extend the storyworld indefinitely and backstory and character building is highly valued (Fawkes, 2011).

The East Coast faction focuses more heavily on transmedia storytelling and narrative systems—the native creation of original content, told organically across a variety of channels in such a way that the content is told on the channel that is best designed to communicate that component of the story. The East Coast faction tends to come from the independent film area, meaning there is a great emphasis on the live performance elements and the use of guerilla tactics to stage and capture the experience. For these practitioners, the media art is not enough—the book, the film, the CD. It's about the experience that occurs when the media art is fused with the performance arts.

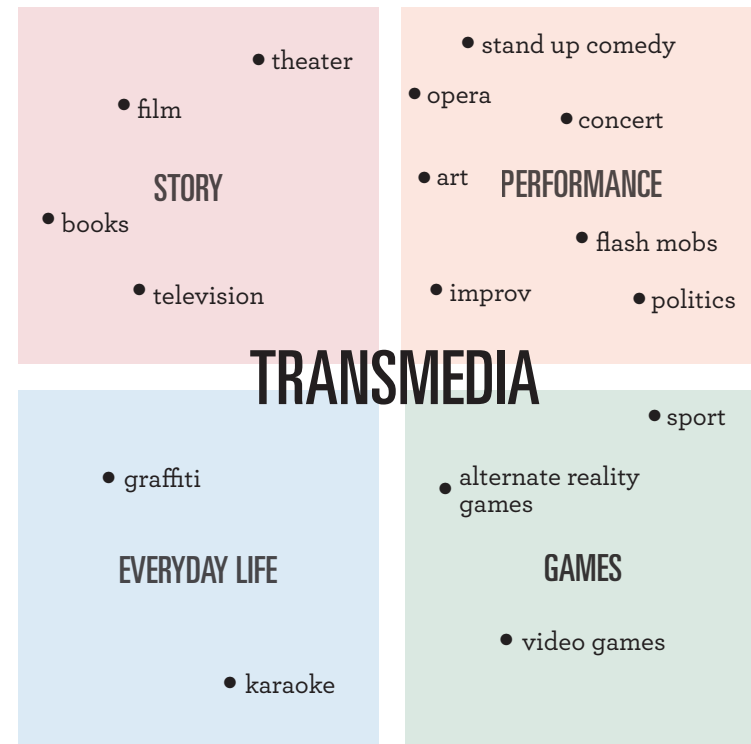
West Coast transmedia projects are well funded, often coming from studio and media marketing departments. East Coast transmedia projects, usually consisting of original property and content unrelated to an existing storyworld, have yet to identify consistently successful business and funding models (Clark, Jenkins 2012). Thus at a higher level two distinct varieties of transmedia practice have emerged, forming opposite poles on a spectrum of funding and authorship/ownership models. The East Coast faction owns the content but have no proven method to secure funding to develop storyworlds in robust ways, while the West Coast faction have deep marketing pockets that allow them to create immersive experiences, but do not own the content and must adhere to IP limitations. For these practitioners, transmedia is about attracting and engaging audiences.

## 1.4. Cultural Forms

This thesis focuses on transmedia storytelling and the interesting design challenges at the intersection of traditional arts, performance-based arts and games. Media arts are easy to explain. They are objects that you can play or pause such as movies, and things you can pick up and put down, such as books. Performance based arts are connected to the audience, but don't hint at what the outcome of the experience might be (Clark, 2011). The new element for storytellers is games, which provide structure for the experience. Taken together, these three types of arts identify the narrative world, the designed moments of performance available to the audience, and the boundaries and outcomes around which the world is set. I plotted existing cultural forms using these properties to understand how different cultural forms influence and contribute to transmedia, and how many of these forms are actually genres that exist within the practice of storytelling.

I plotted existing cultural forms to understand the types of art that combine to create compelling transmedia. Plotting this information illustrated how recent cultural forms have gravitated towards the 'performance' arena as society becomes more comfortable with the concept of immersion and gaming, as well as more conscious of itself as a spectacle.

Through conversations with advisors and designers Nick Durrant and Gill Wildman, I shaped a plot to better understand the meaning of performance in cultural forms, and how something such as a public or political protest could be a form of performance. From that discussion, I added cultural forms that weren't strictly narrative based, such as politics.





# 1.5. Influential Projects

Although transmedia is a relatively new field, I drew inspiration from several projects. Each of these experiences engaged audiences and blurred lines between real and reality, and each used new types of technology to tell a story, rather than to just present the narrative. These projects range from 1938 to 2012, and there is much to learn from each project.



## War of the Worlds (West Coast)

Orson Welles' 1938 retelling of the classic novel caused mass hysteria and panic. His use of radio created the perception of a more personal relationship between storyteller, audience, and story. The public outcries of deception that emerged after the storytelling later formed an important transmedia principle regarding ambiguity.



## Why So Serious? (West Coast)

An alternate reality game that encouraged players to following clues and challenges over the months leading up to the release of *The Dark Knight*. It involved over a thousand touchpoints between players and the storyworld experience, where the participants became citizens of Gotham during the Joker's rise to power. More than 10 million people in 75 countries played the game and furthered the experience.

## MISSING



On October 31, 1994, Heather Donahue, Joshua Leonard and Michael Williams faked their deaths in Maryland's Black Hills Forest to shoot a documentary film on a local legend, "The Blair Witch." They were never heard from again.

One year later, their footage was found, documenting the students' five-day journey through the Black Hills Forest, and capturing the terrifying events that led up to their disappearance.

EVIDENCE EXISTS...

LOG ON TO [www.blairwitch.com](http://www.blairwitch.com) TO SEE AND HEAR!

- Audio and video footage of the students' terrifying journey through the Black Hills
- Interviews with authorities in the area
- The journals kept by missing students/filmmaker Heather Donahue

## Blair Witch Project (East Coast)

The Blair Witch Project is heralded as a case study for co-design with an audience, prior to the film even being released. The audience accessed the storyworld before the film was edited, meaning the film, its marketing, and its release was largely shaped through audience interests and input.



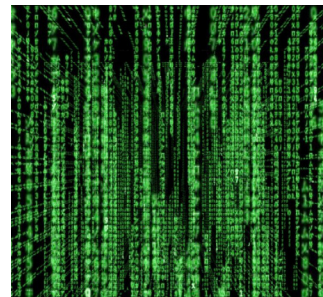
## World Without Oil (East Coast)

A serious alternate reality game that simulated the first 32 weeks of a global oil crisis, where participants documented their personal stories as imagined realities of life in such a crisis. The game included blog posts, video, audio, and multiple forms of interactive media.



### Art of the Heist (East Coast)

Audi used an elaborate nation-wide game to announce the new A3. Instead of debuting the car at an auto show, the car was “stolen” and clues were planted in digital platforms and public spaces to encourage audiences to locate the thieves and solve the mystery.



### Matrix (West Coast)

The Matrix was one of the first motion pictures to use transmedia principles to grow the world and expand the potential for audience interaction. By the close of the series, this involved spinoffs, video games, alternate reality games, comics, young adult novels, and sequels.



### Year Zero (West Coast)

Trent Reznor’s experience involved alternate reality games, USB sticks left at performance venues, tour t-shirts that revealed messages after several trips through the washing machine, all in support of a concept album that portrayed a dystopian world of the future.



### Lost (West Coast)

Lost was perhaps the first transmedia-type experience on a massive scale. The storyworld was carefully built and mapped, with various pieces distributed across a tight timeline. Clues and affordances were built into the story and the related websites to allow audiences to dig and uncover new content as the series progressed. As audiences became more connected to the creators, future plotting incorporated audience interaction.





## 2. SYNTHESIS

- 2.1. Transmedia Roles & Artifacts
- 2.2. Perception of Deception & Ambiguity
- 2.3. Transmedia Design Strategy



## 2.1. Transmedia Roles & Artifacts

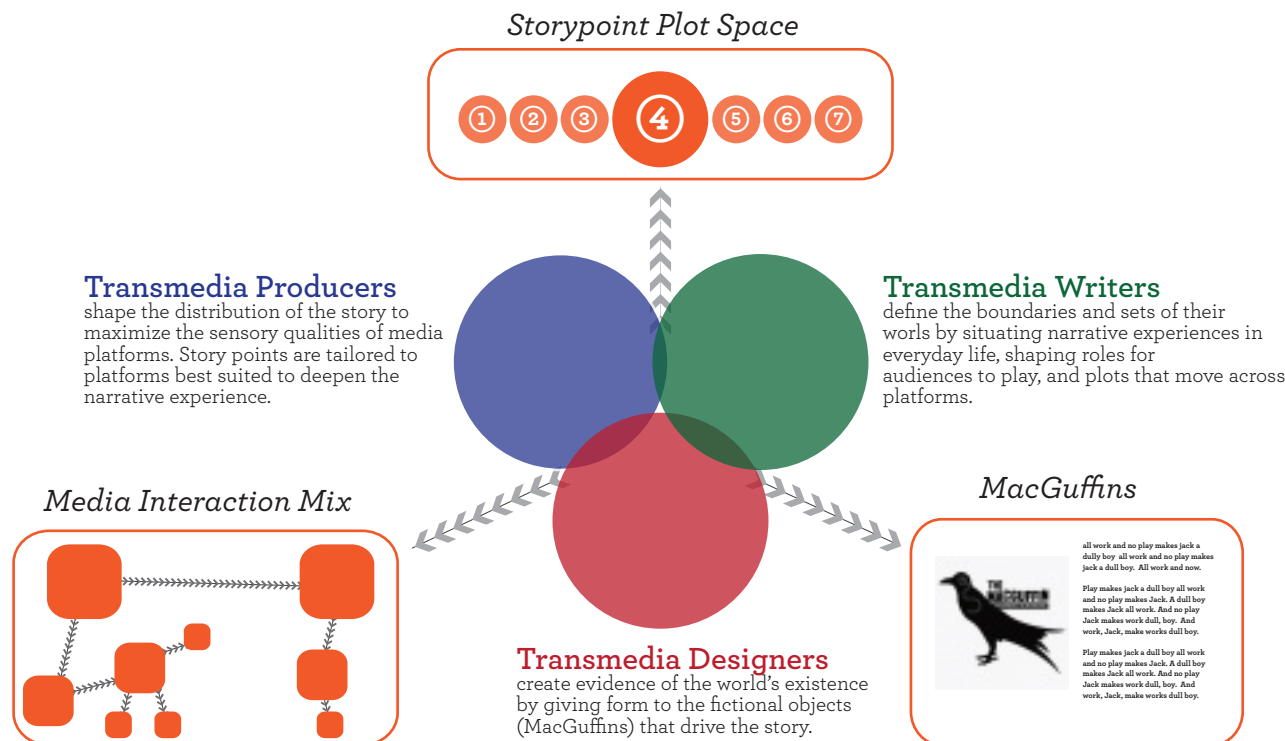
*“Our general philosophy is don’t necessarily be the storyteller, don’t think of yourself as a storyteller, but think of yourself as building a world and experiences that get people your story to tell.”*

Mike Monello, Partner, Campfire

To make this thesis work, I was going to have to build a world that told a story. I couldn’t create guiding principles for transmedia designers without engaging participants. Durrant and Wildman suggested I keep track of story ideas, and explore the types of fictional objects that might appear in that world. They suggested I begin documenting workbooks for each story idea so I could start to pull apart the qualities of stories told via digital platforms.

Durrant pointed me towards Bill Gaver’s work on cultural probes and the use of small experiments to test concepts. I took his concept of using ambiguity as a generator for ideas (Gaver, 2000) and allowed myself to create some truly outlandish storyworld concepts.

The workbooks rather quickly began to organize across three areas: one for the storyworld plot points, one for the types of objects that would drive the story, and finally a mix of the media platforms that might be used to tell the story. It became clear that the creation of transmedia storyworlds required three distinct roles—a transmedia designer, writer, and producer—each with their own unique artifacts, including MacGuffins, which are social objects that build communities within the storyworld. These roles and artifacts are described in the following pages.



## 2.1. Transmedia Roles & Artifacts » **Writer**

The transmedia writer defines the boundaries and sets of their world by constructing a storyworld plotting space for their story, and situating the narrative experiences in everyday life, shaping roles and objects for audiences to explore. The transmedia writer shapes narrative experiences that move across media formats and make use of existing infrastructure to help ground the story in a physical space. The transmedia writer also designs story arcs and characters that can be grown and explored in multiple formats. Finally, the transmedia writer works with the producer to orchestrate the distribution of the experiences that evidence the world.

The following examples illustrate some of the 30 MacGuffin/story concepts that I created during the exploratory and generative phases of this thesis. Look at how the image integrates within the provocative captioning and storytelling. The captioning for these early storyworld prototypes is an art form in its own right. The tone sets the genre, and engages the imagination with a balance of intrigue and suspense.





## 2.1. Transmedia Roles & Artifacts » Story Concepts

### Towing the Dead

The worst part came after they found the plane. One Josiah B. Hill, seated in 19F had enough time to snap pictures and stash his camera in his waterproof carry on before metal met ocean. The NTSB said his photos were too heart wrenching to see, but the American public demanded the release. The American public quickly agreed the photos should have never been released. President Romney quickly grounded every American Airlines flight to check for more devices.

While the NTSB and the American public sorted out the aftermath of the doomed flight, Earl went to work finding the cars in the LAX parking lot in need of their final tow. Earl wasn't expecting to find a camera on the front seat of a car belonging to one Rufus Rheingold, former occupant of seat 19A, capturing an entirely different final flight.



### Hey, I'm Down Here

When Marshall Allen's dog Lucky won a local competition and appeared in a commercial for the local Ford dealership, the video hit YouTube and went viral based on Lucky's ability to actually respond to human questions with human-sounding answers. They suddenly found themselves sifting through piles of fan mail for a damn dog. As Lucky's fame grew, Marshall and his wife had the brilliant idea to start an online agency that provided the elderly and apartment dwellers with opportunities for canine interaction.

While Lucky was busy spending time with the elderly and going for extended walks with several lonely city goers every day, his owners began to spend more time together, rekindling their marriage and losing touch with their best four legged friend in the process. The first half is told from Marshall's perspective, but as his relationship with his wife improves and they spend less time with their faithful best friend, the second half narrative switches radically and is told from the point of view of, you guessed it, Lucky, the wonderous canine.



## Jimmy Tsonga & the Shimmy Congas

Bullied teen Henry Lei was done talking to the guidance counselors and the unsympathetic teachers. He found strength in GarageBand and a Roland studio keyboard that his parents bought him when they moved from the south side of Chicago to the small Rampart section of East Los Angeles.

It didn't take long before he was weaving new stories out of sound, dreaming up fake bands with exotic names. He had a salsa band (Jimmy Tsonga & the Shimmy Congas), a small blues trio (Rock Throckmorton Tin Roof Trio), an electronica DJ (DJ GBS), and even a YouTube channel dedicated to the future of music created by robots. He released MP3s of the bands on YouTube for his family, and watched as the hits and comments began to skyrocket. One day, a man named Richard Jenkins emailed from the Palm Fronds Inn in Las Vegas to say that he wanted to book Jimmy Tsonga for a two week stand. He was prepared to offer \$2500 plus airfare for the two weeks for the entire band. And so, armed with his laptop and his Roland, 16-year old Henry headed east.



## Now in Early Release

After the platinum success of their third studio album, Stupidity Tries wants to go back and do something uniquely their own. Something that is a throw back to before they made it big. What better way than an interactive game to give away 100-tracks of new music, solo and acoustic tracks, and special features. They decide to hide one track in each of their most popular cities, and allow fans to swap and organize tracks from this album. The album would only be complete after their fans played the games and connected with other fans all over the world.

The 100 tracks would be encoded in a format that did not allow for capture on any device except a mobile phone. The tracks would have to cross oceans and cultures via carriers and fans, using a new phone to phone bumping technology.

Rumor of the new fan album leaked when a treasure map was discovered as a hidden download on the band's website.





## Neutralized Citizen

In 2016, non-governmental issued cell phones were banned due to the 80% spike in brain cancer over the previous decade, and the government decided that the only way to safeguard the American people was to do away with cellular technology altogether. The Bell corporation brought their remaining 20th century technology out of storage and populated cities with the last of these communication booths. Citizen Voice Accounts (CVA) were freely accessible by a simple thumb scan and a one sentence passphrase.

Caleb Sherman waited six hours to check for word from his wife Naoimi about her new job back East. When he stepped in and closed the door, swiping his thumb over the reader, he was shocked to hear that he didn't exist. He uttered his passphrase again. The system, which was integrated with the Office of Government Services, thought he was a fraud, and deactivated his life account, invalidating his license. Fifty miles outside Las Vegas at one of only three communication booths in the state, with \$23, no ID, and no way to get his wife's message, Caleb started his trek home to Los Angeles.



## In Motion

An hour after Cam Mehliot won his sixth Tour de France, a blurred photo surfaced showing the champ engaged in a ride with local cyclists in Normandy, some 400 miles away, at the same moment he was said to be winning the Tour de France, raising the question (yet again) of the rumors surrounding his birth certificate and the various look-a-likes spotted around the world, and whether he was really human at all.

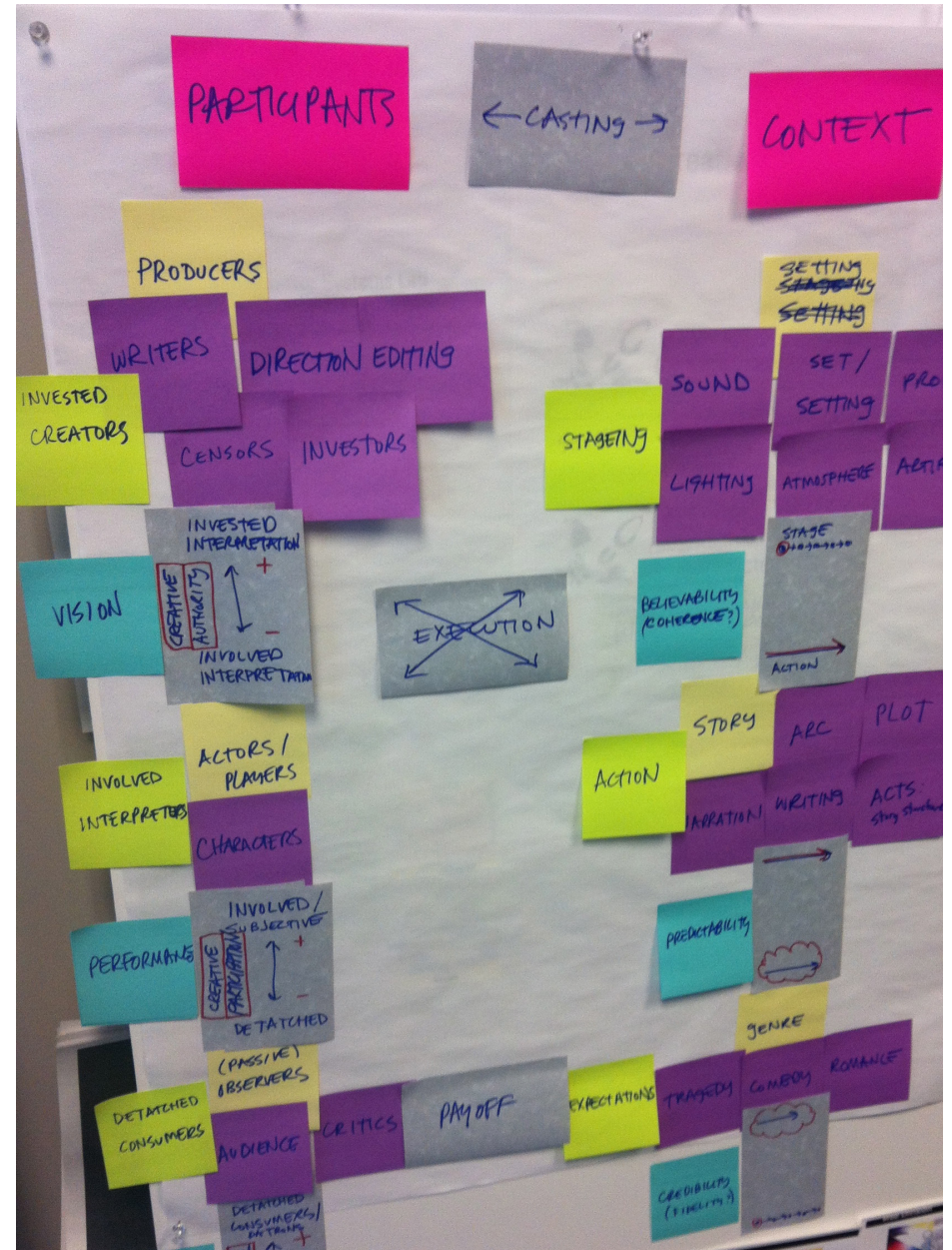


## 2.1. Transmedia Roles & Artifacts » Storyworld Plot Space

As can be seen in the previous examples, simply story concepts are that much more engaging when paired with images. But concepts and images are not enough to build out an immersive world. The storyworld plot space is the high level world view of the storyworld, created by the writer. This story workspace becomes the central hub for the team to build, monitor, and manage the on-going storyworld. The writer adds the arcs to show how the narrative shifts over time, how the characters grow as the story progresses, and where the audience will be able to inhabit the world and create characters. The narrative can be altered here by shifting story points around, by changing arcs, adding characters, or incorporating new characters and arcs created by the audience's interaction. This is simply a way to organize the creation, production, and distribution of a storyworld across time and platforms.

The concept of a storyworld plot space was inspired by the BBC's mythology engine that was created for the popular *Sherlock* television show. Their creation of an interactive mythology space provides a visual and immersive experience with the entire *Sherlock* storyworld. The engine is so robust in fact that it includes mass-produced props that were used in the shows, and that audiences can purchase, which provides another opportunity to inhabit the created world.

On the following page, I've shown the storyworld plot space for one of my low-fidelity prototypes, a transmedia storyworld called **Towing the Dead**.





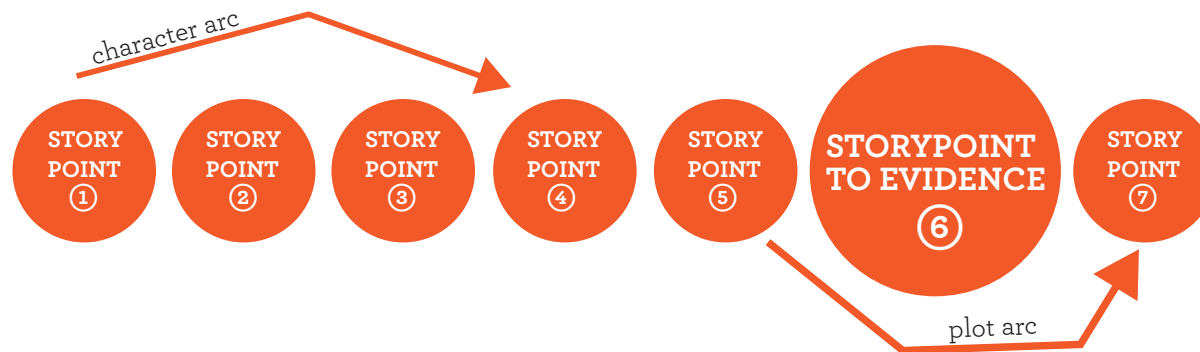
## Towing the Dead

- ① The plane crash wasn't the worst part. One Josiah B. Hill, seated in 19F had enough time to snap pictures and stash his mobile in his waterproof carry on before metal met ocean.
- ② The NTSB said his photos were too heart wrenching to see, but the American public demanded the release. Insiders whispered of talks to settle the score with North Korea once and for all, but others said President Romney didn't have the balls to take the fight to them.
- ③ Not that much of it mattered to Earl Carver, who was going through something of a mid-life crisis. He'd inherited his tow company from his dad, and felt like he'd spent the last 20 years just living out his dad's lackluster dreams. He hadn't seen his brother in over 20 years, and Earl didn't have the money for proper treatment for his wife who was suffering from early-onset Alzheimers.
- ④ While the NTSB and the American public sorted out the aftermath of the doomed flight, Earl went to work finding the cars in the LAX parking lot in need of their final tow. Early wasn't expecting to find a camera on the front seat of a car belonging to one Rufus Rheingold, former occupant of seat 19A, capturing an

entirely different final flight. The camera captured the plane's final moments from what appeared to be inside the plane.

- ⑤ What Earl saw didn't jive with what was being shown in the media. In fact, the media was struggling to put out honest accounts since many witness accounts didn't jive.
  - ⑥ Nobody seemed to understand what they'd seen or captured. It appeared that one passenger had never boarded the flight, but somebody had been sitting in his seat according to the final manifest. The evidence simply didn't hold up.
  - ⑦ When Earl returned home the evening that the NTSB released their official findings, he was stunned to find his brother, whom he hadn't seen in over 20 years.
- "What do you mean what am I doing here? We've been having dinner nearly every night for the last decade, remember?" his brother said.

Only Earl didn't remember.

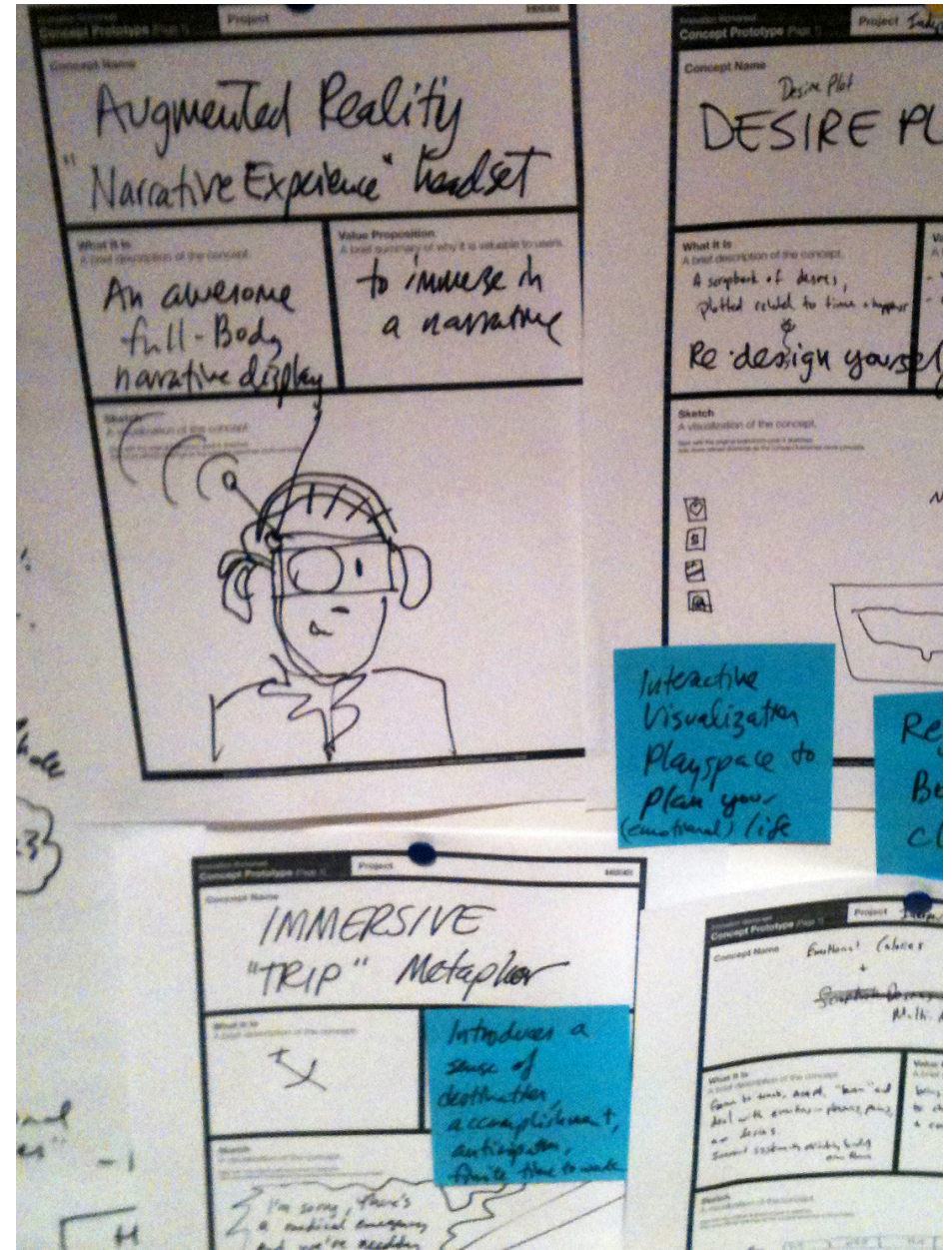


## 2.1. Transmedia Roles & Artifacts » Designer

The transmedia designer creates the service evidence of the storyworld's existence by giving form and shape to the fictional objects (referred to here as MacGuffins) that drive the story and enrich the experience. Designed objects may be physical, digital, or a mixture of the two depending on the specific story. The designer must be subtle enough to design objects that might exist, but that also illustrate the themes and nature of the fictional world.

This role is especially suited for interaction and experience designers. They will create prototypes of the MacGuffins and social objects that occur in the story, tweaking their nature, their qualities, and their look to engage the audience. The designer also manages the technical system view of the media interactions, orchestrating the implementation and delivery of story elements based on their media mix. The designer works with the producer regarding the specific media platforms that can be used to tell the story points.

The designer has a difficult challenge here. The goal is to get the audience to tell your story, and to engage in multiple experiences and artifacts that show evidence of the world as a fictional place that can be explored. However, like any design issue, there are consequences to the actions taken as the designer. An engaged audience will remind the transmedia team when they forgot to do something, or when the subtle nature of an interaction is out of character. These are learning opportunities for the transmedia team, but also risk breaking the willing suspension of disbelief that drives audience engagement.





## 2.1. Transmedia Roles & Artifacts » MacGuffins

Albert Hitchcock coined the term MacGuffin to refer to incidental objects in films that advance the narrative, but in and of themselves are not actually important to the narrative. It is my hypothesis that MacGuffins will play the exact opposite role in transmedia storyworlds. MacGuffins are the social objects around which audiences congregate to share their stories and experiences, as well as the objects that will transition audiences from platform to platform. Examples of transmedia MacGuffins include the Oracle from *The Matrix*, and the stick figurines from *The Blair Witch Project*.

Maintaining a MacGuffin library is crucial for the transmedia designer. It's a virtual scrapbook of visuals and objects that could serve as narrative devices. One of the greatest values in maintaining a portfolio of MacGuffins is their use as brainstorming tools when the team is stuck. They can be quickly swapped in and out of various stories, allowing the team to think about the storyworld in a very new way to encourage different ideas and outcomes.

For example, concepts from my storyworld explorations that occurred in the future and that were fairly fantastical in nature tended to lend themselves towards value fiction/sci fi qualities, where the portrayed society was an outlier portrayal of our current society. These concepts allowed me to play at societal expectations and examine potential outcomes based on decision making in the present. Concepts that were situated in the past and that were believable exhibited characteristics of creative re-tellings of true events. Concepts situated in the past and labeled as 'whacky' tended to lean towards the genre of conspiracy theory stories.

I took from this the concept of using ambiguity to shape and satisfy audience expectations. Nobody is interested in a story that concludes predictably, with little fanfare or excitement. No, the greatest stories are those that tweak our expectations and present an alternative view for the world we thought we knew. This plotting of MacGuffins helped me to start to define ways to engage audiences, pique their interests, and play with their expectations to deliver a meaningful narrative payoff.





After creating my initial round of 30 hybrid MacGuffins and storyworld concepts, I organized prints of all 30 concepts on a 2x2 axis. Concepts were plotted based on the x-axis based on their space in time, with the past on the left, the center representing the present, and the future on the right. I then mapped them on the y-axis on the spectrum from 'believable' at bottom to 'wacky' at the top. I did so to explore experiential qualities of each concept based on their place in time and the suspension of disbelief required to buy into the concept.

The next two pages show a series of objects that I thought were intriguing as MacGuffins, and several of the stories that I built around these objects.





## 2.1. Transmedia Roles & Artifacts » MacGuffin Concepts



### Past Cam

What a unique find! A Hasselblad 500C in extremely mint condition. One with a past, the seller indicated. Magic Mike's Curio Emporium (Hicksville, NY) promised deals and history galore! A lifelong tinkerer, Tom took the camera home and immediately took it apart, thinking it might make an interesting storage drive for his photographs. He cut a USB port and fitted a 500GB flashdrive inside the camera before sealing it up.

He connected the Hasselblad to his machine and moved a folder of images from the summer to the new drive. When he tried viewing them on the new drive, he couldn't believe what he saw. Surely something was wrong, something horribly wrong. That wasn't him and it certainly wasn't his family. With trembling hands, he picked up the camera and looked through the viewfinder, where a new story was playing out, with Tom as the lead character.



### A Last Ditch Attempt

A Brooklyn resident for seven mostly uneventful years, Jeff Miller decided it was time to employ a new tactic to find his soulmate. He tacked flyers to telephone poles from Bushwick to Crown Heights. Each night was a waiting game as he dozed early, waking frequently to the humming glow of his mobile screen. The gag calls never ceased, even after the police found his phone, but Jeff promised the skeptical old couple across the hall that this was the answer for him, that this was his way of finding somebody to spend the rest of his life with. They shook their heads at his talk of cosmic interventions. One day, he told them, I'll find somebody special and you'll never see me again. They smiled thinly, shook his hand and offered him all the luck in the world.

The call came one day. He polished his best black shoes with a damp rag, ironed his favorite tie, and went out to embrace destiny. And, as promised, the old couple never saw him again. Later, of course, he was to be found.



## Last Texan Standing

Legendary oil man J.R. “Poppy” Ewing III (R-TX) was fond of brass buckles, brass knuckles, and 10-gallon hats. Never one to let a little marital sacrament get in the way of a good time, J.R. was frequently the center of attention in South Dallas before he kicked off his Presidential campaign. He won in a landslide by promising an influx of funding for posthuman robots for every household. He promised a world where robots performed every daily chore and freed humans to lives of passive leisure and consumption. Damn near made it happen too, until the senior quartermaster discovered Poppy with the features writer from the Dallas Sun Observer in a small closet off the Oval Office.

And so J.R. earned the dubious distinction of being the only President to ever quit, leaving 11 months into the job. He was last rumored to be running a Tiki & rum joint called El Presidente Poppy with his latest wife Carmelita.



## Kinderhagenfleinne, WA

Carolyn Klein was a rabid connoisseur of all things kitsch, which meant she never met a garage sale she didn’t like. She stopped at one just outside of Bainbridge Island a few months back and found a most unusual (and it must be said, creepy) piece of porcelain work. She’d never heard of the sculptor Gerhardt Rockwell, nor the town of Kinderhagenfleinne, WA which was etched at the base of the piece.

Weeks later, after her son-in-law taught her to use her new computer, she started a blog and threw her questions out into the great abyss one night before bed. Who was Gerhardt and where was this town? She found several websites on porcelain figurines, and posted her questions there too. When she got up the next day, her blog had been deleted, as had her questions on other blogs. Meanwhile, she could swear the little girl’s dress had been a solid yellow when she bought it. She tried to access her email account and got a “service interrupted” message. While rebooting her computer for the third time, there came a knock from her door.





## The Starlight Lounge and Diner (Silver Lake, circa 1951)

Many adults remember the Starlight fondly as a place where kids could bring their most inventive recipes to test out with the many cooks. Never before had a diner served peanut butter, banana, Dorito, cherry jelly, and marshmallow fluff sandwiches next to strip steak and cheddar jalapeno grits.

Laid off after a 10 year stint building the information security team at a startup, Colm Finnegan took a long hard look at his bank account, his empty house, and his next 10 years. After a boozy night of big ideas with his unemployed colleagues, talk shifted to the nearly abandoned building on Sunset, and the memories some of them had of the diner as kids. A plan was hatched, but Colm had one caveat--if he was to take control of the investment and project, he insisted that they go after Sterling Arrow, a one-time soul singer and current owner of Mobile Soul, a soul food truck parked at the corner of Sunset and Vine, for their head chef. A ex-bank robber turned mobile food truck vendor? What could go wrong?



## Reboot

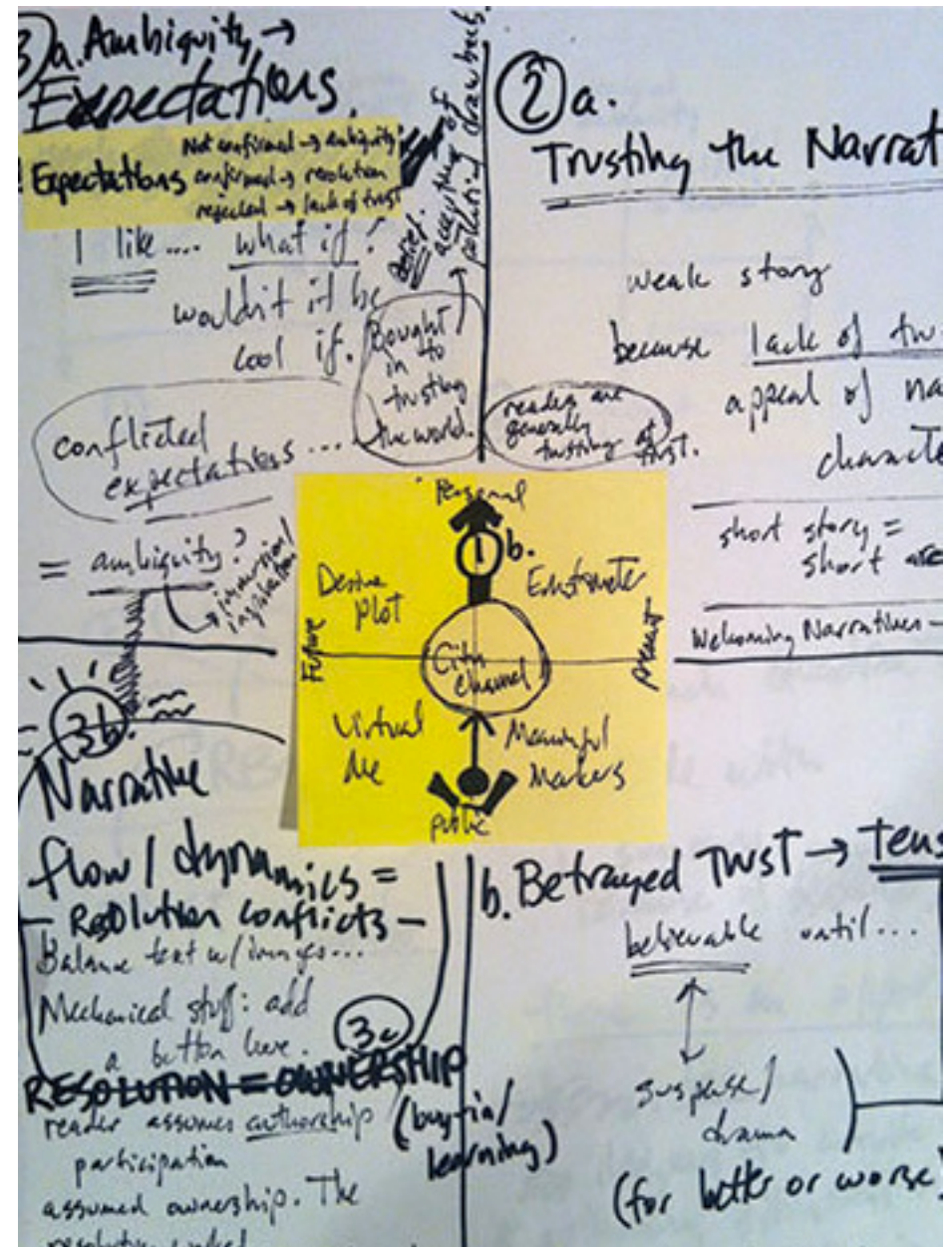
Okay, does anybody know what this is and how I can reprogram my husband? This thing came with our new Miele washing machine. He said it was some kind of reboot device if the washer went haywire. We threw away all the packaging and sure enough, a year after we bought it, the cycles got messed up and it only washed clothes for two minutes before shutting down completely. You had to manually restart the cycle every 2 minutes for ages just to get one load washed. My husband claimed you just plugged this thing into the back of the machine, let it run through a cycle, and then plugged it into your laptop and somehow it would reset itself. We did that, and my husband tried to plug it back in to reset the washing machine, but something snapped. He's been utterly silent since then. Don't get me wrong, I kind of enjoy the quiet, but this is ridiculous. Anybody have this same problem?

Becca Byram (Chicago, IL)  
12/12/12 at 1:12 am

## 2.1. Transmedia Roles & Artifacts » Producer

The transmedia producer shapes the distribution of the story to maximize the sensory qualities of media platforms. Story points are tailored to platforms best suited to deepen the experience and engagement with the storyworld. How does media act in some cases as a delivery mechanism versus as a component of the world itself that the audience can interact directly with?

The transmedia producer creates a production cycle and distribution timeline, understanding what content will be released, by what mechanism, in what way, and to whom. If the serial narrative will be broken up and distributed using multiple platforms and physical spaces as audiences move throughout their day, the producer works with the writer to determine if the location at which the content is released should be related specifically to the theme of the content itself. For example, if a 4 minute clip takes place in a coffee shop, could the clip be released to the first 100 people in specific coffee shops every morning? Or if a clip includes a commute to work, could it be made available strictly to those traveling on designated city busses?



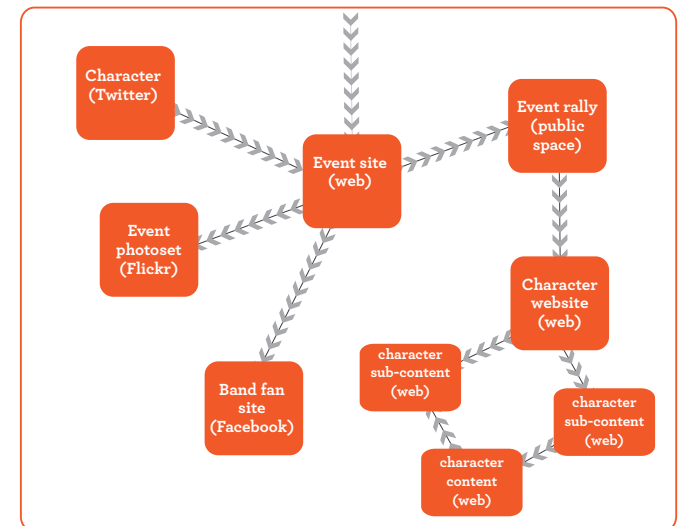
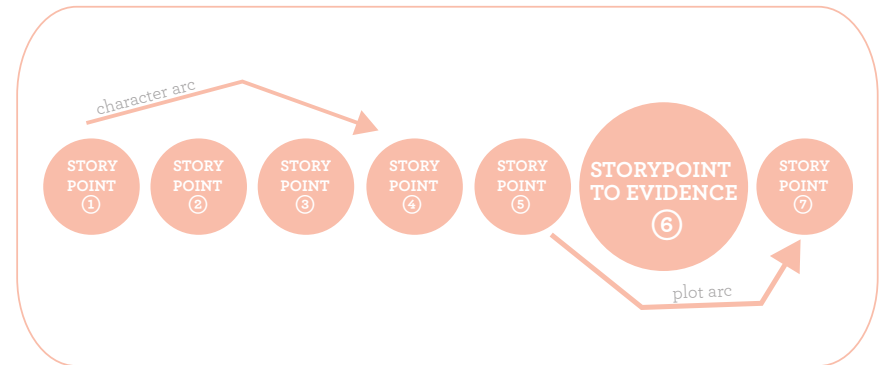


## 2.1. Transmedia Roles & Artifacts » Media Interaction Mix

The media interaction mix is the quiet hero of transmedia. Transmedia storyworlds must be orchestrated to fit the available platforms in such a way that they reach the desired audience. Understanding who the audience is, how they play, and what the affordances are of the various media platforms is the key function of the media interaction mix framework. The producer and writer must decide where to start in launching the storyworld, what the “rabbit holes” might be that tease the audience and draw them in, and what distribution schedules fit with the intended audience.

Using a storyworld plot as an example below, I show how the team picks a story slice (in this case, ⑥) through which the story is told, and then assembles a media mix to grow the world through experiences.

A story might be a low budget, interactive serial narrative that plays out via an iPad. In other cases, the storyworld might be cinematic, leaving certain story point slices (such as backstory) to be played out via alternate reality games. The selection of media platforms must be appropriate to the tone of the narrative content. So for example, even though a character who may be on YouTube, wants to release a video, the team needs to think through the available platforms (in this case, YouTube, Vimeo, Yahoo Video, Google video, etc) and select the one that makes the most sense based on the intention of the video content.



## 2.2. Perception of Deception and Ambiguity

The conversations between the writer, designer, and producer roles are mediated by the tools and artifacts that stem from the interactions between each role. The writer and producer work together to build the storyworld plot space. The writer and designer work together to create the MacGuffins. The designer and the producer work together to develop an effective media interaction mix.

There is a fine line here between fact and fiction that has occurred in just about every new media experiment that I've encountered that involves storytelling and technology, and it involves perceived deception, expectations of trust, and reactions to experiences that are part of a fictional world rather than the tangible world we live in.

Consider that reality shows that appear unstaged are actually carefully staged to heighten the dramatic tension. Nature shows have enhanced audio tracks to arouse the audience's sense of place. Music is used to cue danger. Orson Welles used ambiguity when he took to the airwaves in 1938, and the result was citizens scrambling to pack and flee for their lives. Ambiguity and deception were used to increase the lure of the rabbit holes and keep audiences intrigued and engaged in popular ARGs such as *Why So Serious?* and the *Art of the Heist*.

Managing the expectations of audiences who encounter these moments of ambiguity is a tough job for designers. What's the appropriate level of ambiguity to keep audiences in a suspension of disbelief for the right amount of time necessary to achieve dramatic conclusion? What happens when the audience gets bored? What happens when they feel deceived by a character or storyline? I wrestled with these issues when I created and debuted **Love and Luck(y)**, my transmedia comedy.

What I learned is that no two storyworlds are the same, and that understanding the appropriate amount of ambiguity depends on the audience you are looking to attract, as well as the one that finds your story. It's a matter of performing small experiments with content to understand how deeply they are interested in immersing themselves and creating characters of their own.





## 2.3. Transmedia Design Strategy

My research shaped a simple strategy for designing transmedia storyworlds. I used this strategy to create my low and high-fidelity prototypes, and refined this strategy as I designed and evaluated the effectiveness of my final design solution.

The strategy is deceptively simple, but the order is crucial. The world has to be mapped and shaped before evidence can be released. Prematurely release of evidence can cause the narrative world to break down, especially when the storytellers don't have an answer for feedback or audience interaction that pushes at the boundaries of the story.

The process of creating and debuting a world is hardly linear, however.

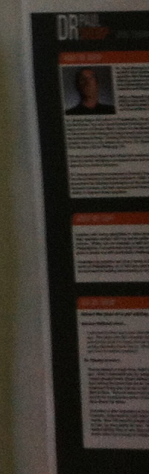
The story itself changes with each new participant, and every new interaction that occurs. The challenge for the transmedia team is to build in the opportunity to quickly take the new interactions, assess them for their value and impact on the story, and then quickly design follow up material that incorporates elements of the new interactions.

Transmedia storyworlds are flexible and open to change, unlike novels and cinematic experiences. This flexibility has to be designed into every aspect of the world, including its creation, design, and distribution.



### 3. NARRATIVE EXPERIMENTS

- [illegible]





## 3.1. Concepts » MacGuffins » Stories » Workbooks

For me, visuals led the initial ideation for my 30 transmedia concepts and MacGuffins. It won't for everybody, but that is how I chose to approach the early shaping of storyworlds, with one exception—the story **Towing the Dead**. The idea of the tow driver who must find the cars of victims following an aviation accident was a story that I've had kicking around in my head since I was an undergraduate creative writer. I had never been able to do the story idea justice until I started thinking about it here in terms of images as evidence, and matched that up with the rise in cameras built into cell phones. It added a new opportunity to tell the story through found evidence and user-generated imagery, which added to the overall conspiracy theory lens that I used to approach the story.

The focus on visuals started while checking out the Posterous account of the great experience designer and filmmaker Mike Monello at Campfire. His images of Coney Island immediately grabbed my attention with the surreal landscapes and characters, replete with inventive and cryptic graffiti. I brainstormed ideas about the places and objects in many of his images, and then turned to Flickr and other public photo sharing sites to search for oddball objects, engaging city spaces, and just plain odd captures of events around which I might wrap a story.



With the roles defined, a simple strategy in place, and a growing list of MacGuffins and story concepts, I began narrowing the concepts to identify one world to build out as a high-fidelity prototype. Of the 30 concepts that I created, I looked at each to determine if it was just an object that might appear in a storyworld (a MacGuffin) or an object around which an entire world might be built. Initially, 10 concepts felt like they were stronger candidates as MacGuffins, and were separated from the more story-centric concepts.

Of the remaining 20 stories, 11 felt like they would be too time and cost prohibitive to build as prototypes given the thesis scope, so I eliminated them from the potential final prototype pool. The stories felt strong, but I lacked the materials and time to properly create evidence that I could put in front of people. I was going to have to pick one concept to evidence and build, and it had to be one that would allow me to create enough material to engage audiences.

Through conversation and ideation with Nick Durrant, Gill Wildman, and Haakon Faste, I whittled the list down to 4 concepts for low-fi prototyping based on how much I liked the stories, and how feasible the design of the world was given my time constraints. My intention was to then select one for hi-fi prototyping.

I created story workbooks (a visual repurposing of what Hollywood producers call continuity guides) to capture bits of the world that would need to be designed, character descriptions, plot points, and notes about platforms and methods that would best serve the genre and concepts within the storyworld.

The following pages illustrate the four storyworlds I built out for low-fi prototyping. They illustrate the need to break the world down into components for the writer, producer, and designer, and show how these areas begin to coalesce as the storyworld is developed.





## 3.2. Claim Loss Before Leaving » Plot

Marco Fernandez hadn't lost the velvet tuxedo jacket. He just misplaced it. Marco explained to Sal Valentino that the thin, stainless case with the instructions for his trip to Havana had been sewn into the lining of the inside breast pocket. Marco was reminded that he had exactly 72 hours before the embargo with Cuba was lifted and the contents of the case would be useless, not to mention Marco himself. Valentino wasn't the only one who was holding him to a clock.

Marco was a simple businessman, a cigar importer between Havana and Canada. He spent a few months in Miami every year, catering to the needs of his most demanding US clients, before heading back to Havana for 6 months with his family. He couldn't tell Valentino about the other assignment. The coat check ticket had come from the swanky catered penthouse party hosted by Ivan and Karyn Vennable, a local couple who bought and sold historic and exotic automobiles for (rumored) rulers and dictators all over the world. He couldn't remember how he'd gotten to their place, but he remembered leaving their place with a jacket. He remembered clearly the conversation with Ivan, about the danger Marco's family would face if he didn't go in and take care of this bit of business.

The Vennable's had taken Marco's older daughter, and claimed that if he didn't find Domingo "Cherry" Matura, a resourceful mechanic on the outskirts of Havana who apparently created a synthetic gas and a new combustion engine that powered cars without using traditional oil or gas, by the time the embargo was lifted, he could collect her in pieces. The need him to kill Cherry and bring back the schematic for the engine and the recipe for the oil. The Vennables knew what Valentino's plans were, and stole the jacket and kidnapped Marco's daughter to ensure his compliance.

What Marco doesn't know is that Valentino needs him to retrieve Castro's ledger. Sal has it on good authority (from a one-time Kennedy mistress and current madame to the Cuban elite named Filomena Apel) that the ledger contains a hidden notation about a certain \$2M payout from the Valentino family weeks before the Kennedy assassination. Sal needs the ledger, and the now-dangerous Filomena out of the way.



## 3.2. Claim Loss Before Leaving » Production

### SERIAL STORY

- This film is shot specifically for digital download and incorporates opportunities for audience interactivity to shape the outcome through decisions and interaction in online ARG experiences. People can track Marco on several journeys via an app that leverages Google Maps. Audience interactivity and voting helps him to find the location of the mechanic and get back to Havana in time.
- Consider the role of camera crew here. It should be distinct when it is on Marco vs. when we see some main characters. Poppy probably has his own camera crew, so that interface and display would be much different as a capture technology. Marco might use some type of tracking or camera device to keep in touch with the Vennables.

### INTERNET CONTENT

- Last Texan Standing (see that story workbook) content is a companion world to this one. For example, ex-President Ewing's son Juan Pachange has set up a "hackable" network inside Havana that gives audiences a door into the Cuban experience, as well as some interesting cultural landmarks in Havana. Players must access/hack this network to gain content from within Cuba.
- We must be realistic about what would be on YouTube from Cuba. Perhaps some video shot by travelers and later uploaded about their trips?
- Web site for the Vennables and their car business.
- FLICKR stream of photos from inside Havana

### AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT POINTS

- Games leverage Google Maps and an app that encourages them to help plot courses for Marco as he moves throughout Cuba. He has a dodgy cell phone that audience members can connect with to send him info and updates as rioting and uprisings hit Havana prior to the embargo being lifted. He needs input from the audience to navigate around pockets of uprisings just to find the mechanic.
- Set up a game that mirrors the changes in Cuba and ask participants to experience the lives of Cuban teens.





## 3.2. Claim Loss Before Leaving » MacGuffins

**Cherry's combustion engine** | the schematic shows a new design that will power a car with this new synthetic blend of water, extract from a plant that is indigenous to Cuba, and a chemical compound that is still unknown to all but the mechanic.

**Cherry's Oil/Gas** | Cherry has figured out how to mix the dirty Cuban water (which contains some type of chemicals that have simply been introduced into the public water supply over time), the extract of a highly slippery local plant stalk, and a chemical compound that is totally unknown to anybody but Cherry.

**Castro's ledger** | this has never left Castro's side. It goes back to the days of Che Guevara. It contains a list of all his activities, his work, and, according to Filomena, an account of his expenses, including a certain \$2M gift from Rocco Valentino a month prior to the Kennedy assassination. Need to show components of it—pictures of entires, show the age, etc.

**Claim loss ticket** | this came from the Vennables party, and they've told Marco to keep it handy, since it contains the key to getting the information on Cherry that he will need once landing in Havana.

**Velvet tuxedo jacket** | Marco's trusty jacket, in which the thin, business card sized case currently resides. Marco grabbed the wrong coat in his drunken haze, and must return to the Vennables to retrieve his jacket before he misses his flight to Cuba. The jacket was handmade by Marco's favorite tailor outside Havana, Hugo Montoya.

**Unencrypted Havana network** | Ewing's son set this network up to create a map/social network of Havana for those off the island.

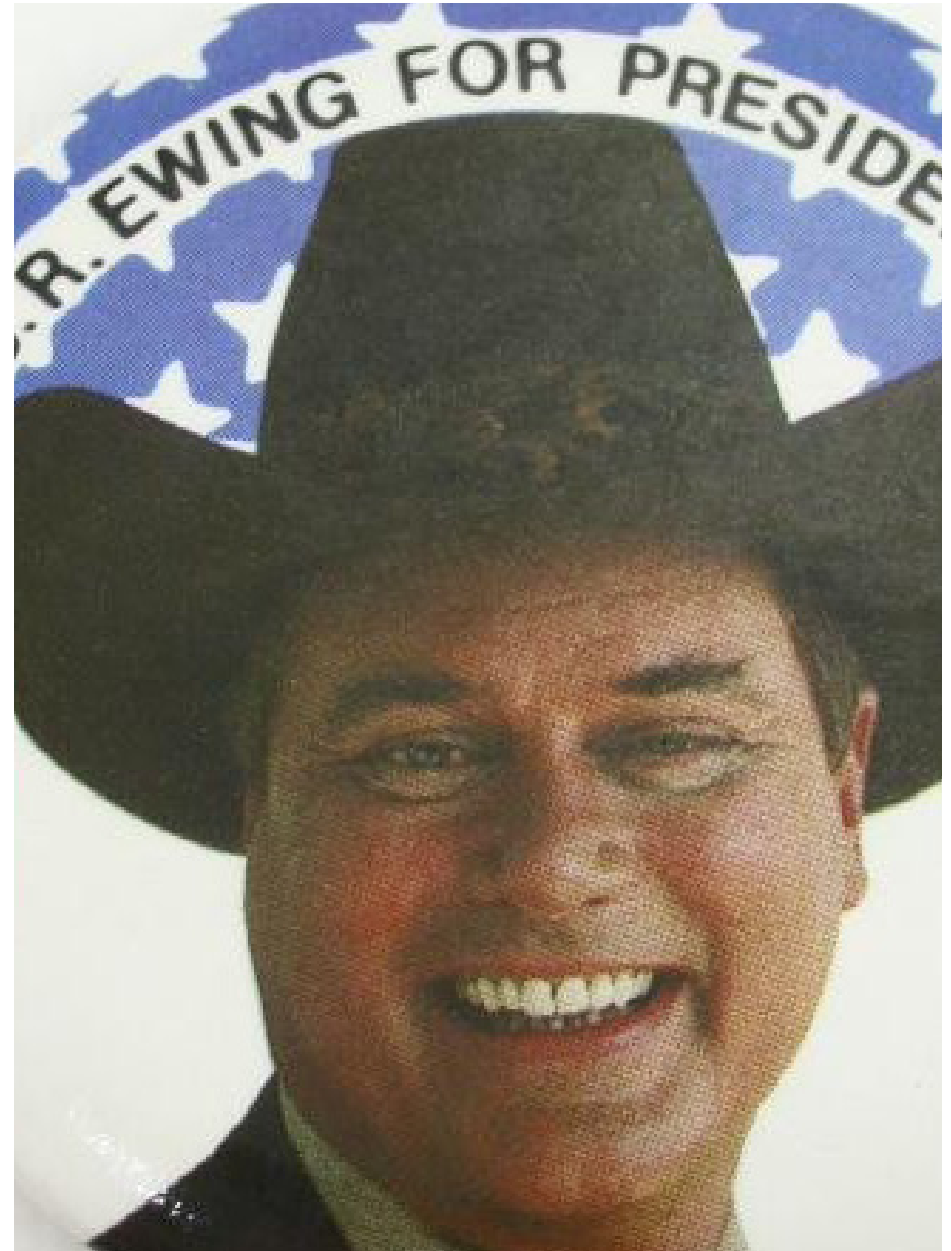


## 3.3. Last Texan Standing » Plot

Legendary oil man J.R. “Poppy” Ewing III (R-TX) was fond of brass buckles, brass knuckles, and 10-gallon hats. Never one to let a little marital sacrament get in the way of a good time, J.R. was frequently the center of attention in South Dallas before he kicked off his Presidential campaign. He won in a landslide by promising, among other things, an influx of funding for posthuman robots for every household. He envisioned a world where robots performed every daily chore and freed humans to lives of passive leisure and consumption. Damn near made it happen too, until the senior quartermaster discovered Poppy with a beat reporter from the Dallas Sun Observer in a small closet off the Oval Office.

And so Poppy earned the dubious distinction of being the only President to ever just up and quit, leaving 11 months into the job one hot Sunday night. His VP wisely followed suit, leaving Speaker of the House Will Jennings (D-KY) to the job. Poppy left behind pounds of legislation that was later enacted by his successor, which transformed the agricultural business and opened new opportunities for local farmers and urban revivalists. It was later discovered that the Ewing legislation, as it came to be known, was actually drafted as a gag that Poppy planned on presenting to specific Republican members of his congress as a end-of-year piece of rush legislation.

It’s no secret that he was running a tiki rum joint called El Presidente Poppy with his second wife Carmelita in a heavily traveled tourist section of Havana, Cuba. Having grown quite close to Fidel Castro, Poppy is considering Castro’s offer to serve as President of Cuba upon Fidel’s passing. When Fidel’s health takes a rapid turn for the worst, Poppy is summoned to Castro’s estate and told that power would be ceded to him in 72 hours, once certain affairs were taken care of with the Cuban people. “My revolution is over. It’s time for you to create a new beginning for the people of Cuba.”





## 3.3. Last Texan Standing » Production

**Last Texan Standing** would be explored ideally through one portal that would allow you to explore every facet of Poppy's life, and it would be presented largely via found footage, images, and video clips.

### CINEMA

- As there are three sections to this story, any one could function as a film, while the other two could play out as interactive story experiences on an application, or via a reassembling of found footage. So, the meta-narrative could be that one of Poppy's trusted friends died, and the content that the friend had stored is now about to be released.

### INTERACTIVE STORY APP VIA THE WEB

- Perhaps the story of Poppy's presidency is told via an interactive narrative that combines found video and documents related to his 11 month stay.
- The official J.R. Ewing Presidential Library site would be the primary interface for the interactive story component.
- The RoboGuest site (Coming Soon (Again!) in 2013!) is another portal into the story world. Provide a spec sheet for audience members to fill out. "What tasks or chores would you like to turn over to the first truly smart sentient robot for the home?"
- Poppy's son Juan Pachanga has set up an illegal wireless network in Havana that has been hacked and is what players must use to help Marco find his way in the country.

### AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT POINTS

- Juan Pachanga's internet site/portal into Cuba
- Poppy's presidential library site
- El Presidente Poppy, the rum bar/cigar lounge artifacts
- Cigar labels from Poppy's brand



## 3.3. Last Texan Standing » MacGuffins

**RoboGuest** | Schematics and a shadowy corporation and partnership with the Spacecraft Corp. Can explore conceptual videos and promos, RoboGuest option sheets, and corporate partnership details.

**Presidential MacGuffins** | Buttons, videos from supporters during his run, multimedia testimonials for his policies, news articles from his time as Mayor and Senator, voting history prior to presidency, oval office decorations.

**Post-Presidential Poppy MacGuffins** | Poppy's cigar labels, literature and web presence of his rum bar El presidente Poppy, his own line of white rum

**Cuban Revolution** | News from inside and outside the impending Cuban revolution that will open relations with the US for the first time in 50 years.

**President Poppy Ewing Library** | The library contains the majority of his oval office furniture and his library. However, it is run via a website because Poppy's wife took the majority of furniture when Poppy skipped town.

**El Presidente Poppy** | Poppy's business for the last 20 years. He produces his own line of cigars and Havana rum for his bar.





## 3.4. Towing the Dead » Plot

The plane crash wasn't the worst part. One Josiah B. Hill, seated in 19F had enough time to snap pictures and stash his mobile in his waterproof carry on before metal met ocean. The NTSB said his photos were too heart wrenching to see, but the American public demanded the release. Insiders whispered of talks to settle the score with North Korea once and for all, but others said President Romney didn't have the balls to take the fight to them.

Not that much of it mattered to Earl Carver, who was going through something of a mid-life crisis. He'd inherited his tow company from his dad, and felt like he'd spent the last 20 years just living out his dad's lackluster dreams. He hadn't seen his brother in over 20 years, and Earl didn't have the money for proper treatment for his wife who was suffering from early-onset Alzheimer's.

While the NTSB and the American public sorted out the aftermath of the doomed flight, Earl went to work finding the cars in the LAX parking lot in need of their final tow. Earl wasn't expecting to find a camera on the front seat of a car belonging to one Rufus Rheingold, former occupant of seat 19A, capturing an entirely different final flight. The camera captured the plane's final moments from what appeared to be inside the plane. What Earl saw didn't jive with what was being shown in the media. In fact, the media was struggling to put out honest accounts since many witness accounts didn't jive. Nobody seemed to understand what they'd seen or captured. It appeared that one passenger had never boarded the flight, but somebody had been sitting in his seat according to the final manifest. The evidence simply didn't hold up.

When Earl returned home the evening that the NTSB released their official findings, he was stunned to find his brother, whom he hadn't seen in over 20 years.

"What do you mean what am I doing here? We've been having dinner nearly every night for the last decade, remember?" His brother said.

Only Earl didn't remember.



## 3.4. Towing the Dead » Production

### CINEMA

- What happened to flight 678 is a cinematic mystery. We spent part of Act 1 getting to know the various characters, passengers, and pilots on the day of the crash. Act 1 concludes with the crash.
- Interruptions occur in the middle of the film, during scenes related to how the government is dealing with the crash info. Audience members maybe directed to a website to view “uncensored” and “illegal” copies of the scene, or perhaps the audio is cut, and audience members are given something on the way in to the theater that comes in handy during these moments.
- This film could also be distributed in several ways, such that on any night, you could view it totally out of order and experience the story in a new way. You could start with Early, giving you the experience of his change in life, and see how the crash had such an impact on him. Or you could start in the traditional way with Act 1 but aim to shock the audience. Or you could start with Act 3, and interweave elements of Acts 1 and 2 to create a more confusing but designed cinematic experience.

### AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT POINTS

- Audiences are encouraged to contact the Office of Travel Safety, and somehow because the interactions on screen and the submitted content, the communication is projected as part of a scene.
- The film incorporates scenes designed to give the audience time to interact and piece together what they are seeing.
- This interactive content is set up by some type of organization—the Peoples Organization for the Truth of Flight 678.





## 3.4. Towing the Dead » MacGuffins

**Manifest** | Somebody was on that plane who wasn't supposed to be, and somebody who was supposed to be on the plane—who checked in—turned up dead in a Malibu hotel earlier that afternoon.

**Cameras & phones** | both play a big part...what did each capture, what is seen, what is interpretation, what is heresay? Could we utilize mobile devices as cameras to tell components of the stories? Could we send them pictures during the show? This includes pictures and videos that could be posted online, on blogs, and Flickr.

**News Articles** | Reports from the crash site are inconsistent due to the weather and the overabundance of eyewitness reports. The most comprehensive account seems to be from a ship captain who was three miles out in the Pacific at the time of the crash. In addition, communities begin to form against the NTSB findings, saying they are technically impossible. A conspiracy theory begins to emerge.

**Reconstruction site** | NTSB has a hanger in LAX where they are reconstructing the plane and assembling the baggage for family members. Earl doesn't believe what the government begins to tell people, and seems to believe that he has the evidence that this was a terrorist incident.

**Mismatched evidence** | Nobody seems to be able to agree on what they saw when the plane went down, whether it was on fire or not, in pieces or not, etc. Why did everybody see something different? The accounts aren't conflicting, we just realize that the accounts are different because we are seeing/hearing/watching them through different character eyes and are influenced by their thinking. So Earl's perspective of the accounts are skewed in his way, as are Hank's. The tension in this mismatched evidence is what causes Earl to think it's a conspiracy, when in reality, it's just the abundance of photos that show so many miniscule differences, and with so many public and digital platforms, the sheer volume of content causes the public to swell and panic.



## 3.5. Final Design Rationale

I eventually combined **Last Texan Standing** and **Claim Loss Before Leaving** because they felt like they could potentially take place in the same world, with the action occurring 20 years apart. In fact, both storyworlds felt richer, and by viewing **Last Texan Standing** as the backstory, **Claim Loss Before Leaving** suddenly had a new series of themes and tensions that drove the narrative that it wouldn't have had otherwise, while also heightening the US vs. Cuba historical story lines.

While all four storyworlds felt interesting, robust, and good candidates for a transmedia storyworld, I decided to focus on **Love and Luck(y)**, which is described in the following section.

First, it felt like the story most conducive to me building a series of probes and design interventions with the time I had. It felt the most commercial, in the sense that I could see it working as a serial narrative like a TV show or webisode. It felt light, funny, and most importantly, it was the only comedy. Nobody's ever done a transmedia comedy before, as far as my research showed. On that basis alone, I felt like I was working in a new space, tackling perhaps the hardest genre to get right.

Second, I have a dog who is 11 years old, and is more personable and loving than the majority of people I know. It occurred to me that dogs are often portrayed rather poorly in film and television. They are often giving a humorous accent, and are situated as wise sages in the story, which we all know is simply not what dogs are. Creating a realistic transmedia comedy that uses a dog's actual personality as a mirror to draw out characters and their stories for those around him seemed like an interesting challenge.

Third, it was doable. As much as a transmedia story about the fall of Cuba, or about a disgraced, larger-than-life Texan president who quits the job felt interesting, the task of evidencing that world in a way that didn't get me sued was a bit of a stretch. I wasn't sure that I'd be able to get enough evidence in front of audiences for those types of stories.



How could we  
across v

How could we embed tangible narratives  
in real world experiences?

① Treasure Maps!

② Signage...  
Wayfinding...

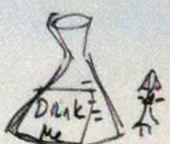
③ Linking  
Artifacts...

The Building Communicates to you...

④ Antropomorphic Architectural Dialogue

⑤ Ubiquitous temporal "Cues" ("go left" SMS)

⑥ Bossy Agents → They instruct you what to do...

⑦  Drink Me

⑧ Voice of God  
"You don't want to do THAT."

THANKS!  
Ella Shen  
James Markham  
Christie Ann  
Jared Payer



A photograph of a dog, possibly a pit bull mix, sitting in the passenger seat of a car. The dog is looking out the window. It is wearing a black collar with yellow and red accents, featuring the Pittsburgh Steelers logo and the word "Steelers" in yellow. A blue seatbelt buckle is visible on the dog's chest. The background is a blue gradient overlay.

## 4. LOVE AND LUCK(Y)

- 4.1. Worldbuilding
- 4.2. Making/Evidencing
- 4.3. Observing
- 4.4. Evaluating
- 4.5. Redesigning



## 4.1. Worldbuilding

**Love and Luck(y)** is a 4 week immersion in story and character that I created as a prototype and series of experiments to test my early frameworks and hypotheses about transmedia storytelling, the roles, and the tools for creators. By using a “make, evaluate, observe, redesign” approach, I was able to put small components out in the world and reflect upon the responses and reactions in order to iterate and redesign the artifact.

**Love and Luck(y)** is a transmedia comedy about a husband, a wife, their neurotic Dalmatian, and the world’s first dog talk therapist, named Dr. Paul Shemp. The husband and wife (Matt and Catherine Halloran) had their own lives that played out via Twitter, blogs, and videos. Obsessed with his goofy dog Lucky, Matt frequently posted clips of the dog doing funny things, interacting with neighbors, and testing Catherine’s leftovers while she was gone at work. The dog therapist, Dr. Paul Shemp, had a web presence with testimonials from former patients/clients, a YouTube stream of interviews, and a blog with tips and advice for local dog owners. It involved multiple entry points into the storyworld, opportunities for participants to play roles and create characters that enriched the world through social interaction and contributed content.

### *MacGuffins*

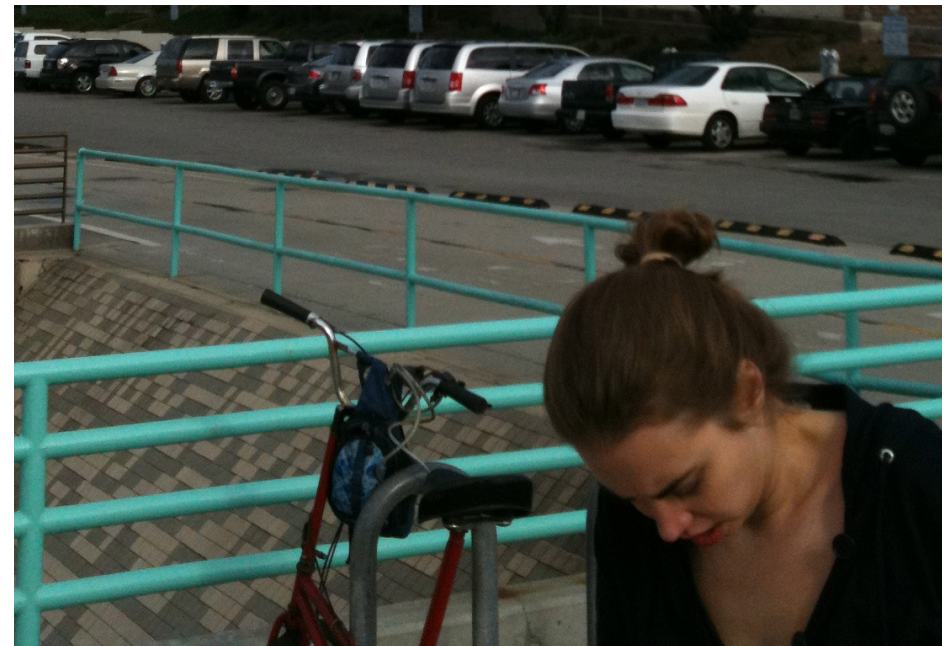
- Dr. Shemp website & blog
- Dr. Shemp YouTube channel
- Dr. Shemp flyers
- Matt Halloran Twitter stream
- Cat Halloran Twitter stream
- Video of Dr. Shemp interviews
- Video of dog therapy sessions
- User-generated testimonials

### *Media Mix*

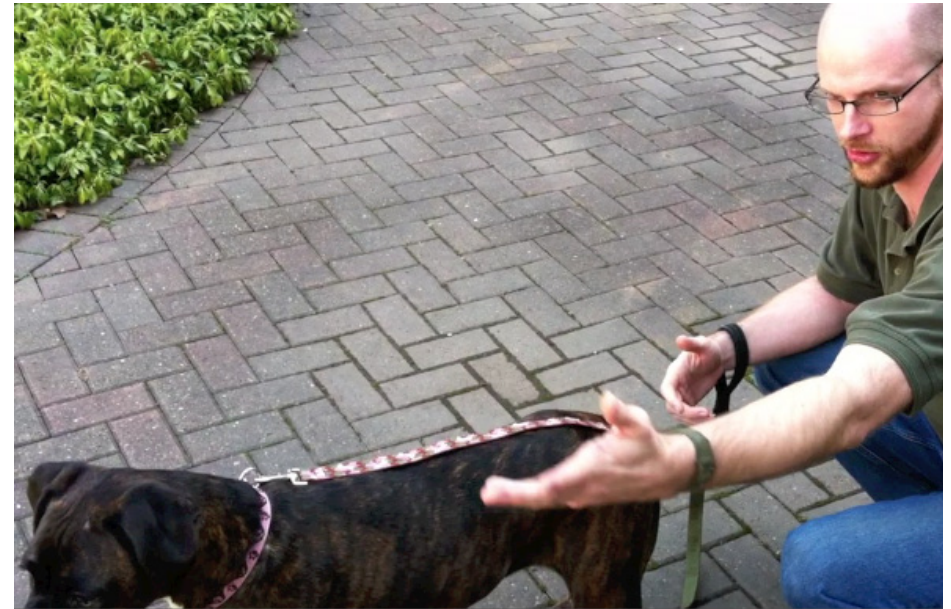
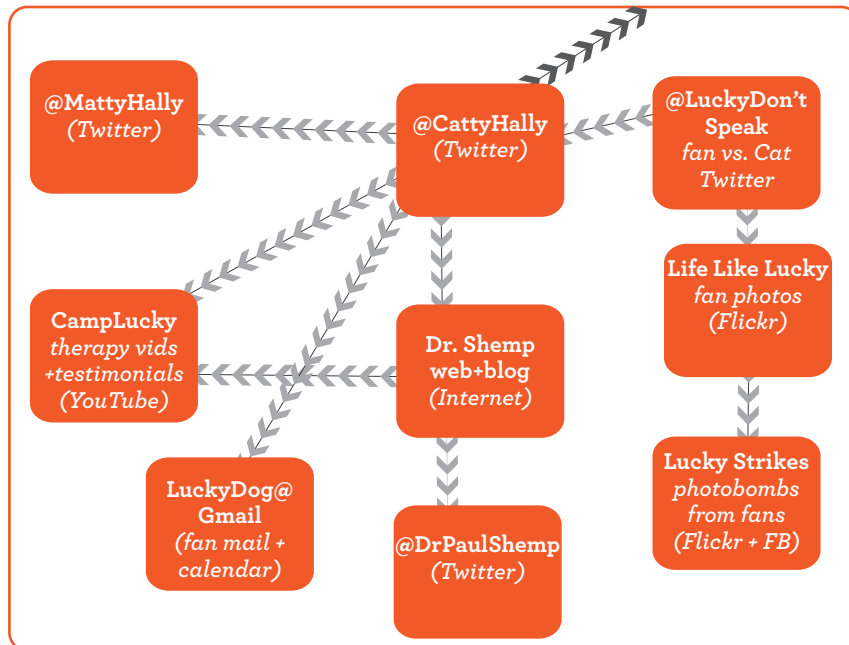
- YouTube
- Twitter
- Facebook
- WordPress
- Print

The plot was simple. Matt meets Catherine, shown below, and they get married. Catherine hates Matt’s dog, Lucky. Matt loves Lucky more than life itself. He enters Lucky in a competition. Lucky wins, and becomes a national star when a video of him singing goes viral. As the dog is shuttled from appointment to appointment, Lucky begins to show signs of depression. Matt hears about Dr. Paul Shemp, who uses talk therapy tactics to help dogs and their owners. However, within a few months, Lucky’s ten minutes of fame are up, and soon Matt notices him struggling to climb stairs. He’s taken to the vet, who discovers a cancerous growth. Shortly thereafter, Lucky dies at 11 years old.

This story was broken down into 7 unique storypoints. Connections between points were outlined via character and plot arcs. I picked a story point that felt robust enough to foreshadow the future and outline the past. I chose the plot slice of Lucky’s early rise, Cat’s struggles with her husband’s canine fanaticism, and the introduction of Dr. Paul Shemp. I was able to articulate the character’s pasts (through YouTube, Twitter, and other evidence of their history) and foreshadow the future for all characters.



## Love & Luck(y) Storypoint Plotter + Media Interaction Mix



*"I had to get over my own neuroses and my issues first. My stress caused Leela's aggression. Since I learned how to stop from projecting my aggressions on her, she's been the calmest dog you can imagine."*

— **Love and Luck(y)** participant



## 4.2. Making/Evidencing

I began evidencing this storyworld with Twitter postings and a blog by the doctor. This served as his introduction to the Pittsburgh community, and felt like a natural approach to seeding the narrative world. By his fourth blog post, and his 10th Twitter post, I printed flyers to post around Shadyside and Lawrenceville announcing his residency in Pittsburgh.

I captured interviews with the Doctor and a Post-Gazette freelance writer named Bern McCrory, who overheard me talking about the story concept in a coffee shop, and wanted to play a role. I videotaped a therapy session between the doctor and Lucky, which I uploaded to YouTube.

As participants began finding various pieces of the story, I shaped the ongoing narrative with Lucky and Dr. Shemp based on the reactions and commentary I found. Cat seemed like too much of a stick in the mud. Dr. Shemp occasionally made comments that seemed a bit daft. Whenever the audience commented on these issues, I'd have Catherine post a series of tweets on something unrelated to the core narrative, fleshing her out and allowing her to reconnect with participants.

When Dr. Shemp started to get a little nutty in his commentary, I'd simply have him take a walk in Shadyside, and comment on some of the amusing things he saw. Those posts seemed to humanize him a little more and allow participants to engage with him a bit more honestly.

In fact, once the video went to YouTube of Dr. Shemp's interview, a Twitter user submitted a faux video testimonial for the good doc, and it was done hilariously in character.

At that point, I realized a line had been identified and crossed for this participant, who was willing to take time out of their day to create a video and play a part in this unfolding fiction.

### Love and Luck(y) Web MacGuffins

Dr. Shemp's website was loaded with testimonials, biographical information, articles that he'd written, and past speaking engagement info prior to his move to Western PA. The site linked to numerous videos and interesting articles that he thought were of value to his readers.



The testimonial page included humorous and touching testimonials about how Dr. Shemp's practice of talk-therapy for canines made a difference in many family's lives. Some testimonials were generated by participants, while others were generated by me.

## Love and Luck(y) Web MacGuffins

Want immediate feedback on your dog's behavior? Fill out Dr. Shemp's behavioral quiz and receive an aggregated score to let you know where your dog needs work and where some problems might exist that talk-therapy could aid. This survey was adapted from similar, freely available content.

52



## Love and Luck(y) Print MacGuffins

I created flyers that advertised Dr. Shemp's services, his history, and his contact information. I put these flyers up in 3 spaces in Pittsburgh. My intention was to use these as the "rabbit hole" that would open up the narrative to new participants and players.

# DRPAUL SHEMP

"We all take our emotions and frustrations out on those around us. Our dogs often bear the brunt of our stresses, and act out in aggression based on their owner's mood. My work aims to help dogs and owners reach a happier balance through communication. I have worked for over a decade with show horses and other large animals in zoos across the country. I recently decided to focus more on the relationship between humans and their pets, rather than pets in large institution settings"

- Dr. Paul Shemp, Ph.D.  
Somatic Psychology

paulshemp.blogspot.com  
dr.paulshemp@yahoo.com  
@DrPaulShemp (twitter)

### Hello Pittsburgh dog owners!

Contact me now to set up a free consultation to evaluate your dog's well being using traditional talk-therapy methods. I have been employing these methods to improve the happiness of animals for nearly a decade.

I recently relocated to Pittsburgh and look forward to working with YOU and your dog to helping you both find the right balance of emotional happiness.



"Paul made all the difference when Ham lost a front leg in a sledding accident with the kids."



"Coors is one pitbull that nobody is afraid of, thanks to Dr. Shemp."



"Colter hasn't bitten anybody in a year. Thank you Paul!"



"Murray misses you Paul! Thank you for your wonderful attention to canine emotions!"

The testimonials on the page were written tongue-in-cheek, but they were still a bit too believable as testimonials for a fictional person. Participants saw the flyers and assumed this was a real person and attempted to engage the doctor as a person rather than a character in a work of interactive fiction.

## Love and Luck(y) Digital MacGuffins

Dr. Paul Shemp was primarily evidenced in digital media through a series of canine talk-therapy sessions, which captured his approach to engaging with pets and getting them to verbalize and express their frustrations. These videos were posted to YouTube, and were promoted through Doctor Shemp's website and blog. The tweets with links to his videos were frequently retweeted by participants, as well as other transmedia storytellers who "found" the storyworld by piecing together elements of my portfolio site.



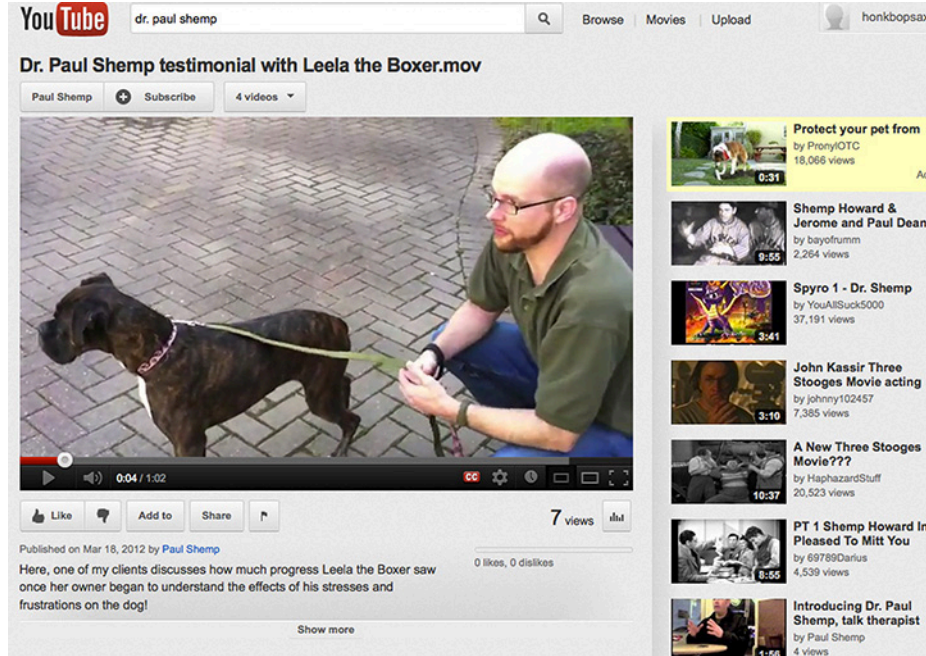
Dr. Paul Shemp also appeared in a series of video clips taken during an interview with local freelance writer Bern McCrory, who overheard me talking about my transmedia story concept and wanted to play a part in the narrative. Dr. Shemp conveyed his belief that humans take their aggressions out on their pets just as surely as they do other humans, but animals and humans lack the tools or process to essentially apologize for their actions, making them easy targets for abuse.





## Love and Luck(y) Digital MacGuffins

Dr. Shemp had a YouTube channel comprised of testimonial videos, which were submitted by participants engaged in the transmedia experience, and clips from his interview with Bern McCrory. Viewers could explore his personal beliefs on somatic pet psychology, learn about the work he did with previous clients, and find his blog, which spelled out in greater depth what he was doing as a practicing pet talk therapist.



## Love and Luck(y) Twitter Interactions

Dr. Shemp's Twitter presence was the first piece of evidence that I released. It gave him the most immediate exposure to a large audience, and by having him follow various pet-related companies, his story was picked up and retweeted without me having to do much additional work. I knew that getting him on the radar of several companies and rescue/human societies was a good way to gain visibility and engage participants.



## Love and Luck(y) Twitter Interactions

Matt Halloran, Lucky's owner, was your common, goofball Twitter user, but he occasionally posted pictures of Lucky and short video segments of Lucky speaking. One week into the experience, Matt began following Dr. Shemp and the two realized they lived 6 houses apart from each other.

Matt posted the news about Lucky's contest win, and occasionally posted pictures from the various cities they were in while Lucky was shooting a commercial.

Catherine Halloran was like Old Faithful on Twitter. You could count on an eruption every day at roughly the same time. Catherine's Twitter stream became the lens through which Dr. Shemp's exercises were dissected. So while Dr. Shemp never discussed specific elements of therapy with patients, Cat would lampoon the types of activities that she was asked to do, such as singing Balkan folk melodies to Lucky, and practicing emotional "exchanges" with Lucky by cooking Lucky dinner once in a while. She never did end up following Dr. Shemp's stream.

*"Have to place treat on Lucky's nose and coo Balkan folk music? NFW."*

### Tweets


**Matt Halloran** @MattyHally 15 Apr  
@DrPaulShemp stopped by to do a quick session w/ Lucky dog after the trip from Los Angeles. PGH is lucky to have such a wonderful dog doc.  
Expand


**Matt Halloran** @MattyHally 27 Mar  
Taking L dog to Los Angeles next week for the shoot. Bought a special crate that is supposed to be soundproof. #broke  
Expand


**Matt Halloran** @MattyHally 27 Mar  
@CattyHally I've got a great attorney.  
[View conversation](#)


**Matt Halloran** @MattyHally 24 Mar  
Cold and rainy spring day. Perfect for brewing up a second batch of Fat Lucky Stout.  
Expand

### Tweets

**Catherine Halloran** @CattyHally 24 Mar  
For this week, I am supposed to go nose-to-nose--with a dog who is routinely nose deep in his own crotch--and match his breathing patterns.  
Expand

**Catherine Halloran** @CattyHally 24 Mar  
Done singing the folk melodies to Lucky. @MattyHally got a funny video. If he posts it, I'll divorce him. #notkidding  
Expand

**Catherine Halloran** @CattyHally 24 Mar  
@MattyHally Now he can start contributing towards our mortgage. If I go, I'm flying first class and you and stink bomb can ride coach! :)  
[View conversation](#)

**Catherine Halloran** @CattyHally 16 Mar  
Jesus. Learning a folk song to sing to the dog when I get home as part of the therapy. #shootmenow  
Expand



## Love and Luck(y) Blog Interactions

Dr. Shemp's blog was the primary place for character and narrative development in this storyworld. Besides posting links to favorite pet products, videos about the value that dogs bring to the human experience, and stories about his walks in his new neighborhood, Dr. Shemp posted frequently about the nature of talk therapy, and how powerful stories are in the way we see ourselves and our surroundings.

I researched the practice of talk psychology with large breed work animals, such as horses, to understand the purpose (establishing calm and connections between workers and their animals) and let those observations guide the narrative that played out on this blog.

Dr. Shemp kept track of walks around Shadyside, named some of the dogs he met, and posted pictures of his new home, all to create the impression that he was a regular guy who just happened to believe that dogs could understand what he said.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21, 2012

### Why Talk Therapy for Dogs?

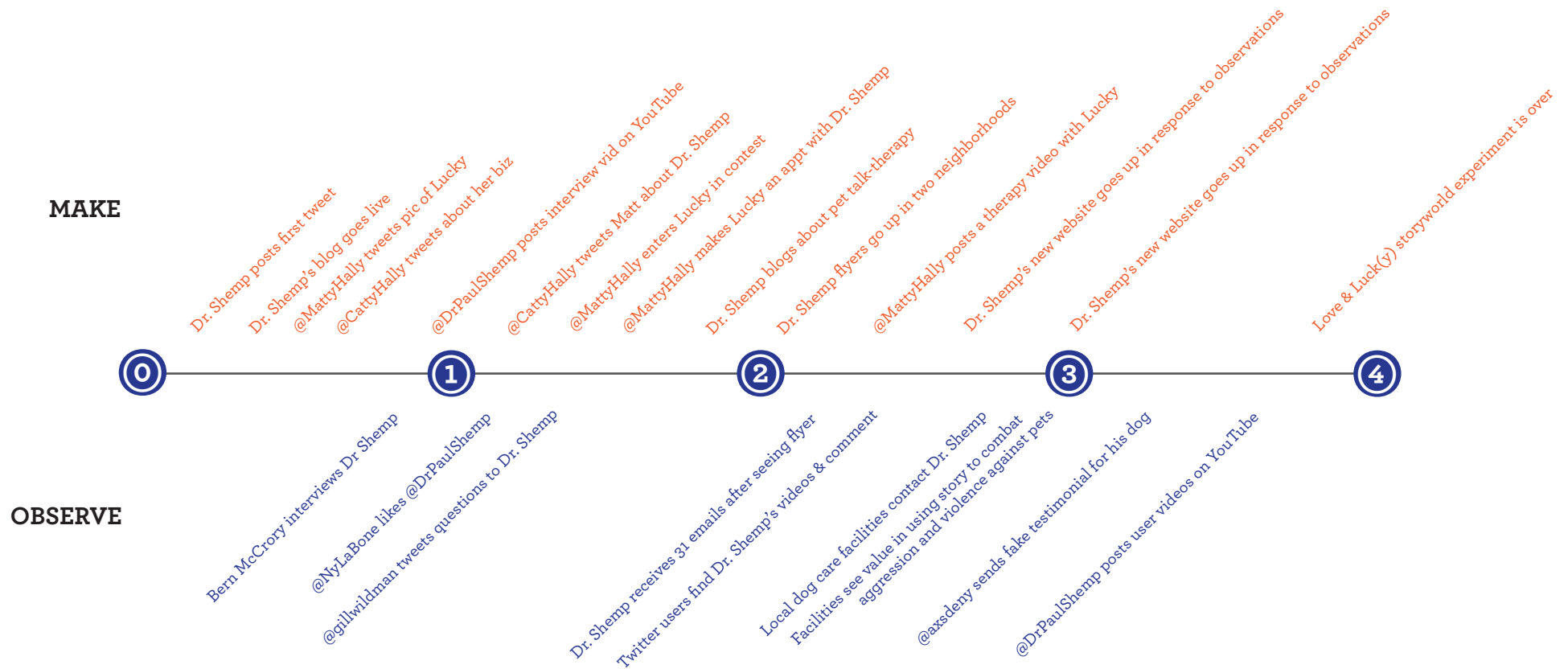
I wanted to expand upon something that you may have read in my Post article last week. And that is, "Why talk therapy? Why dogs?" Sometimes, even in talking to strangers we unlock memories and events from the past that shed some light on the actions we take in the present. Following my chat with Bern McCrory, I remembered an incident that occurred when I was 6, and on the day my mother brought home the Golden Retriever who would be by our sides for the next 16 years. My father was a welder by trade, and often brought the mill home with him. He'd be stressed, tired, his fingers and knuckles would be cramped and twisted from arthritis, and I imagine his heart and mind weren't much better.

My father had clearly forgotten that they had agreed to get a dog for us. He came in, slamming his work pail on the counter, kicking the door closed, and dropping his grimy work bag on the floor with a tremendous thud. He began bellowing at my mother about the foreman, the work conditions, and the pain in his cramped hands. Dexter (as we'd named the dog) has been spending the day getting familiar with his new family, and in an act of what was nothing short of puppy heroism, charged into the kitchen and growled meekly at the lumbering presence. They had themselves a short face off, whereupon my father's face crumbled into a wet smile and Dexter bounded over, ready to feel new arms scooping him up.

I remember even then thinking about how our emotions, our actions, have so much to do with not only our human companions, but our canine ones as well.

## Love and Luck(y) Production Schedule

The following graphic illustrates the timeline for production and implementation of the Love and Luck(y) storyworld. Content in orange refers to material that I created and distributed. Content in blue refers to user-generated content that came in as a response to my work.





## 4.3. Observing

Within a matter of days of posting the flyers in Pittsburgh, I received emails from many residents who thought the doctor was a real person. The intimacy of the enquiries and the types of stories they were telling me were an indicator that the storyworld was being taken too seriously. I contacted them back to tell them what was going on--that this was an interactive story, and a piece of fiction. I had blurred the line between real and reality as a creator.

However, exploring the tension between private and public communication in a narrative world was a valuable design lesson. This was a key principle that emerged in my design, and led me to go back and redesign a public facing message board with which participants could post stories or questions.

It also lead to the discovery of one of the primary principles of my thesis--the need to carefully design the perceived relationship between audiences and characters. Characters that seemed real drove audiences to seek direct communication--they viewed characters as having the potential to solve problems, rather than characters to engage with in a fictional world.

A second principle that originated in the observation phases was the use of game mechanics to establish the world as a work of fiction rather than an extension of reality. For example, creating outlier characters to indicate the boundaries of the storyworld help audiences view the world as a work of fiction, and something that they can become part of.

Through the 4 week unfolding of this narrative, Dr. Shemp was contacted for speaking engagements, 37 individuals in Pittsburgh emailed via his website to set up appointments, and he gathered many Twitter followers. Participants wanted to contact him to ask personal pet-related questions, rather than somebody that they would engage with in a fictional world. I had not written the character and designed the media mix to illustrate that he was a character, not a real person.

### *Statistics*

- 37 private emails
- 36 followers on Twitter
- 49 views on YouTube
- 16 requests for canine therapy sessions



*"Is it possible that my dog could favor my youngest over the oldest? She doesn't seem too interested in playing with the oldest anymore. Should I be worried?" – a 46 year old mom in Greentree, PA*



## 4.4. Evaluating

As audience feedback arrived in the form of emails, Twitter messages, and blog comments, I redesigned elements of the narrative (focusing on the doctor more rather than the couple) and the artifacts of the story. People were interested in Dr. Shemp, and were playfully curious about what a talk-therapist might mean for animals who can't talk.

Though I approached the story thinking it was going to be about the young couple, or perhaps even the dog, once I got the MacGuffins and narrative out there, the focus quickly turned to the Doctor. I had to quickly adjust and brainstorm experiences and narrative content for his character development, rather than for the young couple.

In addition, though the videos posted to YouTube were engaging and funny, they weren't necessarily advancing the narrative, which meant I had not developed appropriate media interactions to allow the audience to drive the story forward. This is where I needed to introduce more game-like structures and outlier characters to indicate that this was actually a fictional world.

I asked myself why so many people would be willing to share such personal narratives about their canines, especially with somebody they had never met. I realized that I needed to create indicators of his being a fictional device, and that in creating such a realistic portrayal, people were more open to sharing personal narratives. They were willing to share when they assumed the communication was personal and direct, so I had to ask myself how willing they would be to share if the communication was public, as on a testimonials link on his blog or website.



*“He pees every time I yell at him. I yell, he pees. Then I yell some more, and he pees. It’s probably me, but are you saying I need to not yell, and then he won’t pee?” – a 53 year old from Munhall, PA*

*“He seems sad sometimes, and I don’t know why. I feel like I should know why. Maybe he just wants to be out with other dogs, instead of being inside and being just a pet.” – a 15 year old from Pittsburgh, PA*

*“You think Lucky is cute and funny? You try picking up what comes out of him after he’s eaten a Raid ant trap and a grocery bag full of bananas and twelve-grain bread.” – Cat Halloran*



## 4.5 Redesigning

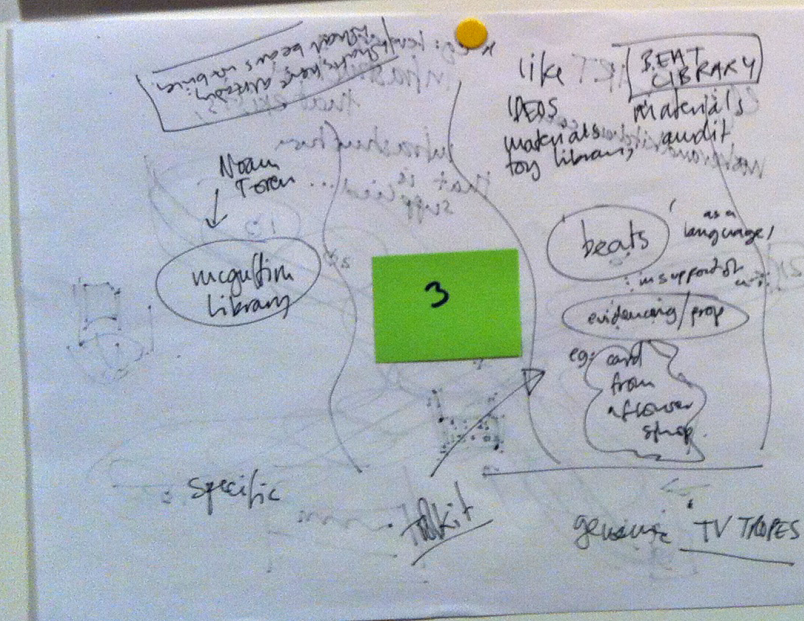
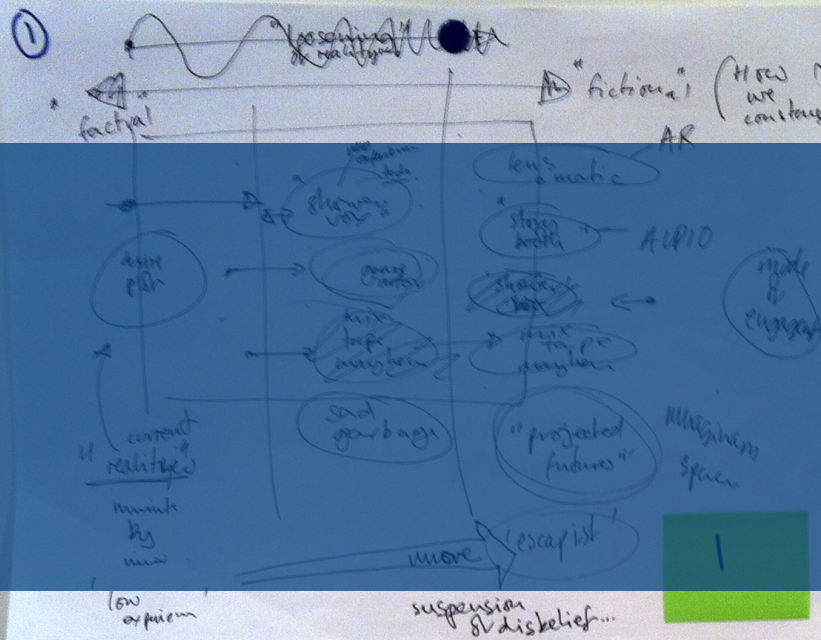
One of the main goals of the **Love and Luck(y)** narrative experience was to get audiences to interact and create narratives of their own within the world I created. To do that, I had to build in public interaction opportunities by inviting comments and stories on Doctor Shemp’s blog and website, as well as on Twitter. I had to make sure the character was consistently soliciting questions, feedback, and stories from participants, rather than just serving to advance the story. I took feedback from participants to redesign elements and evidence of the storyworld to better engage the audience. For example, I scaled back the appearance of direct communication between audiences and characters, shaping affordances to drive participants into more public forms of communication. I removed the flyers and replaced a section of the website with a “Post Your Story” section, where participants could publicly post stories about their canines. Locating the communication opportunities in a public space forced participants to self sensor the type of narratives they were providing, and allowed me to capture their stories and engagement to grow the narrative. In doing so, one participant submitted a testimonial that outlined how the doctor’s principles helped him to better understand his dog’s needs.

Once I redesigned the evidence of the world, it became clearer that this story was indeed fiction, and participants began to contribute as characters, including the submission of a user testimonial for Dr. Shemp by a local engineer and web developer. This told me that there was some comfort in sharing information even once the story had been established as fiction, and that participants were willing to share for the pleasure of the experience, and not just to solve a problem.



# 5. DISCUSSION

- 5.1. Observations, Insights & Principles
- 5.2. Conclusion



ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART COMPUTER RELATED DESIGN  
WHAT WE HOPE TO SEE IN STUDENT'S GRADUATING FROM THE COURSE

DESIGN	ANALYSIS & UNDERSTANDING	PROFESSIONALISM
<p>1 Imagination for people ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In their social and cultural context</li> <li>• Willing to be inspired by observing people, cultures and contexts</li> <li>• Able to affect people by what you design, in the way you intend</li> <li>• Able to use user-based techniques to develop ideas: scenarios/storyboards / performance / participatory methods</li> <li>• Able to design things that fit people's needs and desires</li> <li>• Able to design things people can understand and use</li> <li>• Able to design things that are rich, pleasurable and meaningful</li> </ul> <p>2 Imagination in designing for the technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding technical feasibility</li> <li>• Enjoying the challenge of matching technical limitations with human needs and desires</li> <li>• Thinking of new ways technology can be used in everyday life</li> </ul> <p>3 Imagination in the medium—giving ideas and systems form</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New ways the medium could be used</li> <li>• New means of expression or communication</li> <li>• New forms within the medium</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Resolution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to resolve competing requirements</li> <li>• Able to use the medium communicatively</li> <li>• Able to use the medium expressively</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Crafting the Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using the language of interaction effectively &amp; appropriately</li> <li>• Able to make something beautifully crafted</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>1 Understanding of issues of Interaction Design:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to see your work in terms of general issues</li> <li>• Ability to write up your work in terms of issues</li> <li>• Ability to generate from the particular example or project to more general issues</li> <li>• Understanding of interaction design in terms of other social &amp; cultural issues</li> </ul> <p>2 Awareness of other work in the field</p> <p>3 Critical evaluation—of your own work</p> <p>4 Critical evaluation—other work in the field</p> <p>5 Potential to contribute something</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Original</li> <li>• Extensible or publishable outside College</li> </ul>	<p>1 Identify with the needs of clients and users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to solve problems presented by projects</li> <li>• Be aware of the feasibility of your designs in social, economic, cultural and technical terms</li> <li>• Able to design something robust, appropriate, pleasurable</li> </ul> <p>2 Communicable your work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to document work clearly</li> <li>• Able to present work clearly &amp; engagingly, in ways appropriate to your audience</li> </ul> <p>3 Have developed an effective working method</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to involve users appropriately in your design method</li> <li>• Able to work in a team</li> <li>• Able to plan effectively</li> </ul> <p>4 Be knowledgeable and skilled</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be competent with the tools you need to use</li> <li>• Know about the technology you are designing for</li> <li>• Develop your understanding of related areas</li> </ul> <p>5 Have a professional attitude e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a passion for your work</li> <li>• Communicate your process</li> <li>• Keep developing your skills</li> <li>• Be responsive to the context of your work</li> <li>• Be reliable: don't give up, don't offer excuses</li> <li>• Take an ethical stance</li> <li>• Understand the effects of what you design on society</li> <li>• Have highest standards</li> <li>• Know your limits—get help when you are out of your depth</li> <li>• Be self-critical</li> <li>• Control your ego</li> <li>• Enjoy your work and your life!</li> </ul>



# 5.1. Observations, Insights, and Principles

Transmedia storytelling is in its infancy, lacking a mature language, principles, and guiding tools for future storytellers. My thesis aimed to address those deficiencies by creating a series of small experiments that would produce new knowledge and guides. I was shocked by how quickly the audience became participants, and how willing they were to contribute content and characters that developed the storyworld, even after the world was revealed as a work of fiction.

By releasing small elements slowly, the transmedia team can monitor how frequently audiences are interacting with the content, and adjust the release of content accordingly. The type of storyworld and the genre of story also affect how frequently new pieces of the story are released. To get it right, the transmedia team must release bits and pieces, and monitor the response to determine the engagement level. This means that the team must always have additional material ready to go in the event the audience is aggressively searching and contributing.

The issues that I uncovered shaped seven principles for transmedia storytellers to use as guides as they create experiments and storyworlds of their own.

## *1. Direct communication implies intimacy for your audience*

Giving your audience a direct line of communication to a character blurs the line between fact and fiction. Creating public spaces for participants to communicate (“Post your question for Dr. Shemp!”) and submit information allows them to form communities together.

## *2. Without proper care and feeding, the storyworld fizzles out*

It’s tough work maintaining an immersive storyworld. If you have a character called George the Garbage man who posts every morning at 5 am, and you take a day off, George had better have a good story to explain his absence. On Twitter, that is. Be ready to explain your hiccups, and incorporate them into the narrative. The transmedia team must keep on top of the audience-generated content to ensure that questions are answered and the content that audiences are searching for is addressed.

## *3. Story first, platform/technology dead last*

Design for the story, not for the technology, because technology changes every six months. The story must be platform agnostic, and must focus on the experience of the narrative, not the technology designed to convey the narrative. The human love of story and connection is timeless. Keep the story front and center. Or, as Brian Solis has written, “As Marshall McLuhan once said, ‘The medium is the message.’ Now, the medium is not only the message, the medium is the experience. And that is why we cannot simply design for the medium, we must design the experience where the medium becomes an enabler to the journey and the end as devised.” (Solis, 2012)

## *4. Ambiguity is a valuable design tool*

Ambiguity in text and design allows you to play with some of the more subtle qualities of the artifacts and narrative arcs to manipulate audience expectations. Design characters that seem like outliers in your universe and use them to tease at the fictional aspects of the story you’ve created.

## *5. Anticipate emotions and design audience conversion points accordingly*

When you open your world to the world, human emotion and experience becomes a material that you can’t anticipate. People take things they see as personal, and react emotionally. Topics may touch an unexpected nerve, while others might be as provocative as you imagined. However, you must provide options at every story point to satisfy all audience members with options to continue in the narrative or exit on their terms.

## *6. Time is a powerful new material for digital storytellers*

That serial narrative of yours might not have to “go live” at the same time every week. Maybe you break it up and make a game of it for the audience to reconstruct the narrative by embedding clips and chapters in their physical environment. By playing with time, and leveraging the plethora of connected devices we have, you buy yourself space to incorporate the feedback and data that you are getting from your co-creating audience members.

## *7. Leverage your story to build a community*

The story that transmedia writers tell is only half the story--the much more interesting half takes shape when the world is opened and audiences can step up and play a part. It’s a huge Internet of things out there.

## 5.2. Conclusion

**Technology enables us to curate the stories of our past, share our history and traditions, and lay the foundation for the desired narrative of our present.**

Transmedia storytelling is certainly one answer to how narrative designers will create immersive narratives in the future, but it's not the only way forward. This new form of storytelling has yet to find its legs, but there are noticeable interests, projects, and successes outlining the shape of things to come. In the case of **Love and Luck(y)**, it enabled total strangers to form communities around stories about their pets, allowing them to break out of isolation and engage new interests and friends. This confirms recent research by Jane McGonigal in the field of narrative based play and game structures (2010).

For years, creative storytellers, gamers, and narrative designers have sought forms that offered greater levels of immersion for participants. In some cases, this shift was financially driven, such as the transmedia marketing/franchising examples mentioned in section 1. Immersion was used as a novelty to hook audiences and encourage them to consume more. Multiplatform campaigns for existing creative properties were used to organize existing consumers and find new content and opportunities for them to consume further. However, the use of transmedia to create new worlds is in its infancy, but poses an interesting opportunity space for digital interaction and experience designers to allow participants to move between the inside and outside of the storyworld. As storytellers, we have the power to shape cultures and communities with something as innocent as a talk therapist for dogs. Our words and worlds have the potential to bring people together all over the world based on a few sentences and a picture or video.

What I'd like to see is more storytellers and writers embrace the digital world to tell stories that allow audiences to share something meaningful and interact with strangers in the process. My story isn't half as interesting as the story that somebody tells me based on the story I told them. And on and on it goes. We tell stories to establish ourselves, our history, and our experiences. We respond to stories here with stories from our past, establishing kinship and connection. We do this every single day.



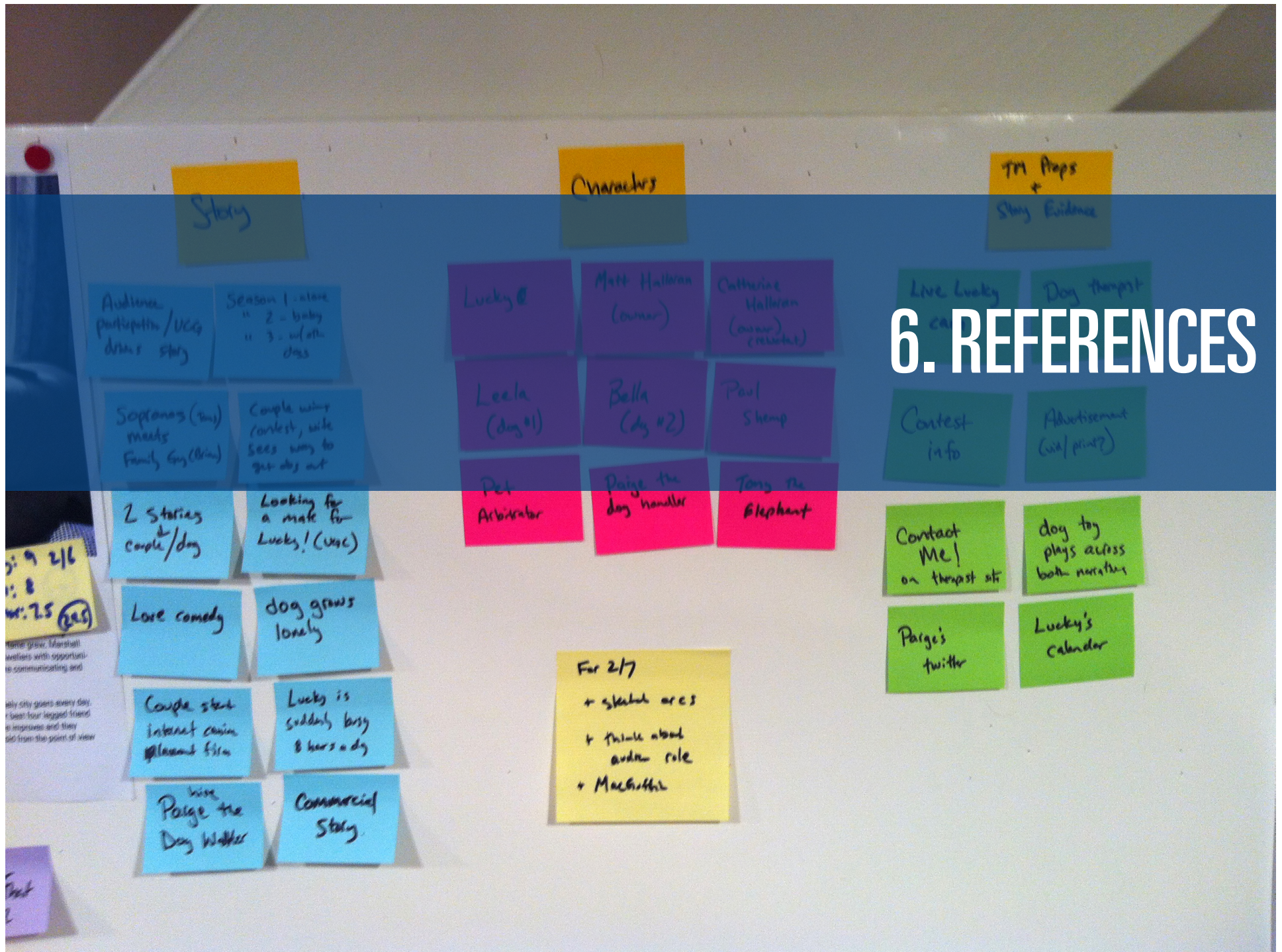
There will likely be an adoption curve that can be plotted and mapped in the years to come, once transmedia storytelling gains acceptance as a new form of narrative art. The nature of play, and the connection between games and our ability to transform societies, is rapidly evolving (McGonigal, 2011). My thesis work showed that, given an engaging MacGuffin that functions as a rabbit hole (a canine-specific talk therapist, for example), and a story with likeable local characters to interact with, audiences will consider stepping into the world, if only to explore for a moment. If they like what they find, or if what they find triggers a memory or event that matches a story in their past, they just might be willing to do more than explore. They may be willing to interact, and not just with the storyteller, but with each other as a participatory audience.

As the technology we use to display stories has changed, so has the relationship between the storyteller and their audience. The distance between the two has shrunk, placing the audience in a participatory space to tell their own story. This is important because the storyteller must now learn to incorporate affordances for interaction in their storyworlds, regardless of the technology being used. They must take on the responsibility of herding new communities based around objects, and know when to step back once the community is growing.

**Transmedia storytelling is the bridge that empowers societies all over the world to shape and manifest the desired story for our shared future.**



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# 7. APPENDICES

7.1. Key Terms

7.2. Photo Citations



# 7.1 Key Terms

## Arc

A narrative term that describes the progression of a story over time. Arcs resolve as the fiction progresses, though not all arcs start at the beginning and end at the end. Works of fiction often include multiple mini-arcs that deepen the plot, or character arcs that show transformation of a character. Arcs are one way of mapping the unfolding narrative world. Arcs illustrate change in themes and characters over time, and are a necessity for good storytelling.

## MacGuffin

A social object around which the narrative revolves and through which audiences participate directly in the storyworld. Hitchcock coined this term to mean the objects in film that advance the narrative, but actually have no purpose beyond that. In *Psycho*, Marian Crane steals \$40,000 from her boss, which sets in motion the events of the film. However, the \$20,000 is simply a MacGuffin that gets Marian Crane to the Bates Motel, where the real action will occur. MacGuffins in Transmedia have a deep purpose in advancing the narrative and building communities around stories and objects. A MacGuffin here could be a picture, an object, a piece of furniture, and even a character depending on the storyworld and how it is designed.

## Mediated vs. unmediated experiences

An experience between creators and audiences that is shaped via a mediating artifact. For example, reading ghost stories around a campfire would be a mediated (book of ghost stories) experience. Telling an original ghost story would be an unmediated experience, and one that produces performance.

## Storyworld Plotter

A digital workspace for transmedia production teams to design and shape the progression of the storyworld. It maps the storyworld at a high level, showing the major story points, the arcs between story points, the objects that shape and transition story points, and the various character arcs that the writer chooses.

## Media

Media is something that exists “in the middle” between a person and an experience, and shapes the perception and display of the experience to an audience. In transmedia storytelling, media is an artifact that exists between the creator and the audience, an object from which the meaning originates or is suggested, initiating the reader-response effect. When there is nothing “in the middle,” artists are working in the areas of performance or experience (McLuhan, 1964; Clark, 2011).

## Spect-actor

Augusto Boal created this term to describe the dual role of participants in forum theater (Boal, 1979). Spectators had the power to become actors at any point in the theater experience, lending them additional power as both participant and consumer.

## Story points

Fiction writers are taught to examine the progression of their stories in a basic linear progression--“A caused B, B caused C, C caused D...” Transmedia storytellers must break their stories down into similar high level points, such as “Couple meet and fall in love” and “car crash reveals infidelity by wife” in order to tinker with the media mix and designed artifacts.

## Storyworld

The storyworld includes all aspects of a transmedia story, including the characters, the side plots, the spaces within which the narrative might unfold, the mythology, the themes, etc. Transmedia storytellers are world builders more than storytellers.

## Transmedia

Transmedia storytelling is the creation of non-linear narrative experiences designed to unfold across multiple traditional and social media platforms, including YouTube, Flickr, Facebook, and many others embedded in digital computing platforms, and in the physical world. These storyworlds are often driven by visuals, fictional objects, and digital products.

## 7.2 Photo Citations

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### *Cover*

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### *Page 2 / 38*

Mike Monello @ Electric Eden (<http://electriceden.posterous.com/charley-weaver-bartender>)

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(left) Studio Keyboard Korg M3 @ 3 Sons Productions (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/3sonsproductions/3877315490/lightbox/>)

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(left) phone booth @ afiler (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/afiler/2256671712/>)  
(right) joggers and cyclists still out and about @ dirktherabbit (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/63056271@N03/6086735468/>)

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(left) my father's hasselblad @ paumelia (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ykjc9/2770507778/>)  
(right) jeff one lonely guy @ siteevyoo (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/sittevyoo/6299977980/>)

### *Page 28*

(right) kids watching a dog sell lemonade @ Click Mort (Gloria Mundane)  
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Mike Monello @ Electric Eden (<http://electriceden.posterous.com/hey-get-it-get-it>)

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