**Storytelling and/as Resilience**

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**ABSTRACT**

The implications of storytelling have been underexplored in LIS. Storytelling involves a teller, an audience, and a story that emerges in the dynamic exchange—laughter, gasps, suspenseful silence—so that each storytelling moment creates a unique version of the story. This panel expands pedagogical and theoretical understandings of the value of storytelling as tradition, practice, and means of cultivating resilience.

This panel brings together experts in storytelling, resilience, and storytelling as resilience to demonstrate that story and storytelling deserve conceptual prominence in LIS. This panel format will be focused on a question-and-answer response, asking each panelist to introduce their work briefly and then engage the questions including: How has the LIS tradition of storytelling contributed to community resilience? What stories are missing, underrepresented, devalued, suppressed, oppressed, or written out of LIS storytelling? How might LIS education benefit from taking seriously the relationship between teller, audience, and story in both practice and theory?

Dr. Nicole Cooke’s work on storytelling, from autoethnography to fake news, brings together the urgent necessity of developing greater LIS cultural competence in services to diverse populations with the potential power of storytelling for positive social change. Her research engages the importance of telling untold stories, including those that challenge racism as status quo, and bringing everyday lived experiences of racism to light in order to change LIS professionals and support the resilience of those minoritized by the field. Dr. Cooke also engages storytelling as a tool for understanding information behavior and enacting social justice. Her recent book, *Fake News and Alternative Facts: Information Literacy in a Post-Truth Era* (ALA Editions. 2018), examines how some stories operate as information threat and suggests paths toward resistance and resilience for information professionals. (Cooke, 2018) Her teaching engages storytelling as pedagogy in teaching cultural competence and, as Augusta Baker Chair, leads an annual community-focused storytelling festival celebrating the legacy of one of Augusta Baker as one of the leading storytellers in the history of LIS.
Dr. Janice Del Negro is a nationally acclaimed storyteller and a professor at the School of Information Studies at Dominican University in River Forest, Illinois, where she teaches storytelling and related graduate and doctoral courses. Her research interests coalesce around the examination of storytelling in three arenas: the history of library storytelling, the contemporary storytelling revival, and the library story told through narrative. Dr. Del Negro, as both insider and observer in these communities, has written extensively on these topics and with Dr. Ellin Greene on the fourth edition of the classic storytelling textbook, Storytelling: Art & Technique (fully revised fifth edition forthcoming in Fall 2021). (Del Negro, 2021) Recently Dr. Del Negro’s research interests focus on an examination of storytelling during COVID, in both the contemporary storytelling community for adults and in youth services programming in libraries. How do pandemic considerations alter the delivery of oral narrative programming? What is the relationship between storytelling, storytellers, and resilience? How do story deliverers understand the relationship between storytelling and technology? Does the delivery mechanism alter the presentation and reception of stories? The surprisingly effective move from face-to-face to virtual storytelling has created new conduits between tellers and listeners and is a strong example of the power of story as well as the resilience of storytellers, librarians, and listeners.

Dr. Beth Patin’s work on resilience draws on concepts of storytelling during extreme events and crises. “We know ourselves only through stories” (Justice, 2018 p. 34). Narratives tell the stories of a community and after a disaster or crisis, they preserve the experiences of the community for those in the future. Recently, in response to the protests about police brutality and systemic racism in the United States, many information organizations are examining their historical relationship with racism and how this has in turn affected their collections and whose voices we amplify in our libraries and through storytelling. Who gets to be deemed literary? Who does not? And how does that impact students who are told that their stories do not count? Through the exploration of storytelling and narrative after disasters and trauma-related experiences, Dr. Patin examines how we might use digital humanities tools to help preserve, amplify, and foster engagement with the next generation, especially for minoritized communities whose stories largely have been untold.

Doctoral Candidate Curtis Tenney teaches digital storytelling, and their research on libraries, LGBTQ+ issues, and community resilience is grounded in a research agenda inspired by the contemporary importance of exploring contentious phenomena by interrogating documents and exploring what might be learned from the experiences of people involved. This goal is focused to inquire: What stories do public storytelling programming tell? Their dissertation work titled, LGBTQ+ Representation in Public Library Programming: Investigating Drag Storytime Events, investigates drag storytime event documentation and the experiences of public librarians and drag performers involved in drag storytime events. This research goal seeks to explore how LGBTQ+ representation is documented and how public librarians and drag performers plan drag storytime events and how information behavior is enacted. Further, they engage storytelling as pedagogy through early experiences teaching digital storytelling and storytelling for information professionals. In this panel, Curtis will draw from preliminary research findings and teaching experiences to share perspectives of LIS work intersections of storytelling and resilience.

Panel organizer Dr. Kate McDowell’s work on storytelling engages fundamental LIS concepts in order to argue that storytelling provides a critical lens for understanding collective
Her work asserts that story is a fundamental but overlooked form of information, and that rigorous analysis of storytelling processes and practices demonstrate that the common research focus on information as an individual experience excludes a wide range of collective information practices. Based on over a decade of teaching storytelling, running the student-focused Storytelling Festival at Illinois, and four years of co-teaching data storytelling, her research spans theoretical definitions and practical applications of storytelling. In this panel, she will argue that igniting LIS research on story as a fundamental information form has implications for understanding collective information experiences, how information and story contribute to belief and belonging, and story as misinformation that threatens societal resilience.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

critical librarianship; social justice; children’s services; community engagement; political economy of the information society

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

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References


