

CHAPTER SIX

Different Approaches

As you get closer to the end of a journey, you inevitably start feeling lonely. We all do. We all tend to consider our perspective *the* perspective, and the most reasonable, if not the only possible. We look back and all the memories we have collected seem to be so many, too many, and so vivid as to be able to tell the story themselves. This is the reason why I asked some friends of mine, researchers, editors and producers whose professionalism is acknowledged worldwide, to collaborate to the writing of this final chapter by giving me a short contribution on their own personal approach to transmedia storytelling. I have asked them four questions each, and you will find their answer in the following pages. I sincerely hope they will re-create, thanks to their different perspectives, integrative and complementary viewpoints to those I have expressed in this book. The question asked were:

- Your personal idea of transmedia storytelling asks audiences to...
- Your personal idea of transmedia storytelling drives authors to...

- When you look for the best idea for a transmedia project, you start thinking to...
- The power of Transmedia Storytelling to tell “inner stories” through different media consists in...

And to your own facility they have been duplicated before each answer in each contribution.

Drew Davidson

Drew Davidson is a professor, producer and player of interactive media. His background spans academic, industry and professional worlds and he is interested in stories across texts, comics, games and other media. He is the Director of the Entertainment Technology Center – Pittsburgh at Carnegie Mellon University.

- 1) Your personal idea of transmedia storytelling asks audiences to...

Transmedia storytelling invites audiences to become a part of a fictional world. It's more than just getting more interactively involved with a narrative, it's about getting immersed in a fictional world and feeling like you have agency within that world, that what you do matters and has an impact on the related story you experiences as you travel across and between media to participate more fully in the story.

- 2) Your personal idea of transmedia storytelling drives authors to...

Transmedia storytelling enables authors to share their fictional worlds with their audiences and to create emergent experiences that have the potential to evolve in conjunction

with their audiences input and participation. Authors help create the canon of the fictional world and can work with their audiences to develop various narratives within the world as characters, events and stories interweave throughout the world.

- 3) When you look for the best idea for a transmedia project, you start thinking to...

With a transmedia project, you start thinking of the fictional world and how you can create an experience that can have multiple points of entry to encourage a diversity of audience members to get engaged. One of the more successful design strategies is to consider a major tent pole media experience that can support these multiple transmedia rabbit holes into the fictional worlds.

- 4) The power of Transmedia Storytelling to tell “inner stories” through different media consists in...

The power of transmedia storytelling is to enable us, as audience members to experience our own stories within a fictional world. We can do this on our own, and we can do this together. In both cases, we have the opportunity to engage within a world and feel that our participation has an impact on the events within the overarching narrative.

Christy Dena

Christy Dena is Director of Universe Creation 101 where she develops her own projects, works as an experience designer and writer on transmedia projects, and consults on the expansion of films, TV shows, alternate reality games and performance projects around the world. Recent finished projects she has worked on include Cisco's The Hunt with No

Mimes Media; Tim Kring, The company P & Nokia's Emmy-nominated Conspiracy for Good; and ABC's Project Bluebird. Christy co-wrote the Australian Literature Board's Writer's Guide to Making a Digital Living, wrote the first PhD on Transmedia Practice, and curated Transmedia Victoria. She began her career as a performer and writer of comedy cabaret, and producer and director of multimedia theatre. She was a digital effects producer for Australian's first fully-digital production studio, working on TVCs, websites and CD-Roms. Christy is a speaker worldwide who has given presentations for TEDxTransmedia; Whistler Film Festival; Cartoons on the Bay; Power to the Pixel; and many more.

- 1) Your personal idea of transmedia storytelling asks audiences to...

Transmedia projects appear to ask audiences to be more active with the worlds they experience. For instance, “the audience” has to move from watching television to visiting a website, or from reading a graphic novel to watching a movie in a theatre, or from speaking to someone on a phone to running through the streets on a mission. But these are things people do everyday anyway. The difference with transmedia is that they now do these things to experience the same fictional (or factual) world. It requires perceiving a world in all its guises, engaging with many artforms, and seeing them all as being part of some greater whole. Transmedia can at times even ask audiences to speak to characters, suggest sub-plots, create new assets, and be the protagonist. Transmedia often asks of audiences what they've been doing anyway! You could say they just haven't been able to be themselves with entertainment before.

- 2) Your personal idea of transmedia storytelling drives authors to...

Transmedia drives authors to think episodically. There is no great conclusion at the end of a medium, it is more of a corner. It asks authors to view all artforms as equal. One isn't a primary medium and another tertiary to be used purely for distribution or promotion. Instead, each medium can be a part of the meaning-making process. It asks authors to be collaborative and multi-lingual. They need to communicate and work with people from a range of siloed artforms and industries each with their own jargon, values and production processes. Transmedia asks authors gather all that they love into their arms and figure out how to make them work together. They need to be skilled at many trades, and a master at combining them.

3) When you look for the best idea for a transmedia project, you start thinking to...

Putting aside what I personally find interesting in terms of subject matter, a transmedia project needs certain elements to work. Usually it needs to be episodic in nature. Not all writers are aware of this. I have been sent many film scripts that are obviously written for a single experience: the film. The writer is not trained in TV or web, or book serials at all and so thinks in terms of the single story. What this means is there is often nothing substantial enough to explore further elsewhere. The film is full of endings. It is complete in itself. Depending on the transmedia form, it may also need to facilitate interaction. Is it a world where players can have a role in it in some way? Is it something people want to spend time in, and is there a good enough reason to be active in it? And in some cases, does it permit the inclusion of the player's actual world too? Ultimately too, does it cry out for a multi-artform expression? Is it bursting at the seams and deserve to be in more places than one? Does it need a live event and broadcast element, for instance, or a musty book and knitting game?

- 4) The power of Transmedia Narrative to tell “inside stories” is...

The majority of good stories take the characters through a journey. To me, I find both external and internal obstacles interesting. The multi-form nature of transmedia lends itself to providing different perspectives. This means we can venture much further into a character, and their relationships with others. In one medium we find the characters going through a narrative arc, but then we can also delve further and discover a previous narrative arc that makes their recent one even more significant. This is one of the beautiful aspects of transmedia: the cumulative effect of depth across time and space. And of course, given that transmedia requires an audience to actively join the dots across media and also play a role in the storyworld, the whole experience can facilitate a player journey too. As players spend time with characters, they potentially grow with them.

Jeff Gomez

Jeff Gomez is CEO of Starlight Runner Entertainment and has worked on such blockbuster universes as Disney’s Pirates of the Caribbean, Prince of Persia and Tron, for brands like Coca Cola and Mattel, and for franchises as Avatar and Transformers. He is one of the most important transmedia producers in the world.

- 1) Your personal idea of transmedia storytelling asks audiences to...

The best transmedia storytelling experiences invite audience members to immerse themselves in the story world, exploring different aspects of character and incident,

journeying to “distant mountains” which are aspects of the story world that may not be obvious but are worth finding. The best of these experiences also invite audience members to somehow contribute to the dialog that is the best of what storytelling communication holds. A truly interactive transmedia experience is signified by the participant’s ability not simply to choose between two threats of narrative but to impact the narrative itself.

- 2) Your personal idea of transmedia storytelling drives authors to...

The best transmedia storytelling experiences drives authors to consider the audience members’ engagement with the narrative, particularly as it is mediated through various technologies. How is the story told differently through the mobile platform than it is as a graphic novel? How does the story play to the strengths of the video game platform? And because we live in an age where the very media that delivers the story can be used by the participant to invite more people to the experience (or tell them to stay away), authors must make an extra effort to enrich and refine the story itself. Quality is the winner of the Digital Age.

- 3) When you look for the best idea for a transmedia project, you start thinking to...

Rich, fully realized story worlds provide the best possible foundation for a transmedia project. Creators must start with a superb story, supported by compelling and identifiable characters, but then extra work must go into developing a highly detailed and sustainable world, a “world worthy of devotion”.

- 4) The power of Transmedia Storytelling to tell “inner stories” through different media consists in...

“Inner stories” signify the power of intimacy that some media are now capable of engendering. Web and mobile platforms, which are highly individualized and intimate, are especially adept at conveying the psychology and emotion of a story that would otherwise be epic in proportion as a movie or video game. Of course, we can't forget the novel as a medium perfectly suited to convey the “inner story” of characters we are growing to love.

Lance Weiler

Lance Weiler is a story architect of film, tv, games and storyworlds. Considered to be a thought leader in the space, Lance sits on a World Economic Forum steering committee for the future of content creation and teaches participatory storytelling at Columbia University. “Wired” magazine named him “One of twenty-five people helping to re-invent entertainment and change the face of Hollywood” due to the way he makes and distributes his work. In 2006 Lance created the WorkBook Project as an open creative network for storytellers and in 2008 he co-founded DIY DAYS a roving conference for those who create. Lance is currently developing a slate projects that are positioned well for storytelling in the 21st century.

- 1) Your personal idea of transmedia storytelling asks audiences to...

Audience is dead. The reality is that what was once an audience is now what I consider to be collaborators. The relationship has totally changed. Democratization of tools turns audiences into their own media companies free to push button publish for the world to see. Authorship is shifting and as a result more people can be part of the storytelling. So in

that sense participatory storytelling is an opportunity to take advantage of the connected world we currently live in. For me personally transmedia asks people to collaborate and to co-create stories that can be jumping off points to social connections and if I do that the stories will surely spread.

- 2) Your personal idea of transmedia storytelling drives authors to...

To experiment. I feel that we are in a period of story research and development. That by spending time expanding the ways in which we tell stories we are bound to discover new ways for people to connect. We will also come across new business models to sustain not only for the authors but also those who contribute within the storyworlds that we create. The challenge is for storytellers to stop and listen and realize that it is actually about a conversation.

- 3) Thinking to the best idea for a transmedia project in your opinion, you would start mentioning...

My process embraces elements of design thinking, game development, storytelling and business development. Over time I've built an organic process that helps me to develop the storyworlds I wish to share. Transmedia if not more than traditional forms of storytelling needs time to develop. Since there are so many possibilities it is important to take the time to live with elements of what you hope the storyworld will include. For instance we will experiment and do so often. We will look to fail quickly and learn from those mistakes. It is an ongoing process. Take it to where the people are. Let them touch it, let them break it. Learn from that and continue to revise and develop. So in the end it is about giving the work time to grow.

4) The powerful strength of Transmedia Storytelling to tell “inside stories” (of characters or of particular universes) on different media consists in...

I challenge a lot of what is defined as transmedia. To me it is about a narrative flow. It could be a single screen with real world elements or it could be three or more screens. Don't let the definitions or the desire to have a simple solution lock you down. This is an amazing time for storytellers as the art of story is evolving. Don't mistake it as a revolution because the way forward embraces the learnings of the past but must recognize that much of the technology and infrastructure to tell transmedia stories effectively doesn't exist. Too much of an effort is placed on the audience. The barrier to entry is often too great. It is important to challenge ourselves to find the core of the story and the themes we wish to mine. From there we can identify the path for the narrative flow. For the best ways for the characters to move across a particular universe.