

Rich pictures for stakeholder dialogue: A polyphonic picture book

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We describe the design and use of a 'polyphonic picture book' for engaging stakeholders and research participants with findings from an interdisciplinary project investigating how UK citizens create and manage online identities at three significant life transitions. The project delivered socio-cultural and technical findings to inform policy-making and service innovation for enhancing digital literacy in online self-representation. The picture book presented findings through multi-perspectival, fictional scenarios about experiences of life transition. We describe our use of the book with our stakeholders in five workshop settings and our evaluation of the visual format for fostering stakeholder dialogue around the findings and their transferability. This paper contributes methodological insights about using visual storytelling to scaffold interpretative, dialogical contexts of research engagement.

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Charting the Digital Lifespan (CDL) was a two-year UK research council-funded project investigating how UK citizens create and manage their digital identities at three significant life transitions across the human lifespan: becoming an adult, becoming a parent for the first time, and retiring from work. Combining expertise in design, anthropology, cultural studies, and computer science, the project aimed to understand how self-representation in a digital context, or 'digital personhood' (Baym, 2015; Lee, Goede, & Shryock, 2010), is currently experienced by different generations, and how it is envisioned in the near future as individual citizens make sense of their changing lives mediated by new technologies. The overarching project goal was to generate social, cultural and technical insights from this unique lifespan perspective, to inform UK policy-making and service innovation for enhancing digital literacy and enabling self-representation online. To pursue this goal, the investigators sought to explore novel methods of design to disseminate the project's interdisciplinary outputs amongst its stakeholders (in industry, Government and the public sector), thus increasing stakeholder

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engagement and the potential for real-world impact and a demonstrable contribution to society.

These pursuits within the project were brought together in the design of a picture book (Durrant, Trujillo Pisanty, Moncur, & Orzech, 2015) that was used as a key resource in five stakeholder workshops. The researchers' primary aim through this book was to capture and communicate a synthesis of the research findings that were of interest and relevance to the stakeholders, and to foster discussion between them and the researchers about the potential value and transferability of the research for making impact. An additional methodological aim was to explore design practice in supporting collaboration between investigators to consolidate their interdisciplinary outputs. The book presented qualitative, interdisciplinary insights to stakeholders as a 'rich local picture' about individual citizens' lives.

In this paper we describe the design of the picture book for use in five stakeholder events. We provide the conceptual grounding of our visual-based approach, and the new storytelling method we devised to produce a picture book for research that draws upon multiple perspectives in the depiction of fictional, character-driven scenarios, to present: stories of participant experience; analytic insights; and design implications. We describe how the work of developing the multi-perspectival scenarios constituted a dialogical, collaborative design process that we found valuable for consolidating analytic insights from our studies. We go on to report feedback from workshop participants and facilitators on the efficacy of the book as a resource for communication, dialogue and further ideation. In closing we reflect on the methodological insights gained from this case, and its contribution to discourses engaged by the Design Studies readership on visual, polyphonic storytelling methods for interdisciplinary research communication and stakeholder dialogue within and beyond the academic context of study.

1 Interdisciplinary collaboration for future-oriented research

The CDL project engaged five partner institutions, combining expertise in different disciplines. Our overall methodology was experience-centred and grounded in phenomenology (McCarthy & Wright, 2004, 2015), establishing broad compatibility across the differing approaches adopted by the partners. We focussed on three research populations: young adults (18–21 years old), first-time parents (with children under two years), and recent retirees (retiring within the last five years). The team collectively generated a multi-generational understanding about creating and managing digital personhood from a *life-span perspective*.

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