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Watching Storytelling: Visual Information in Oral Narratives

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Graduate Program in Library & Information Science

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract & Keywords

Oral narratives are increasingly being given, received, and shared via some form of electronic mediation, and yet such narratives are so prolific that they are often glossed over if not entirely overlooked in regard to the study of narrative. This study was designed to address the unique nature of oral narratives focusing on the multifaceted and multidirectional information channels utilized by tellers and listeners in their co-creation of stories, and to explore the effects of electronic mediation on said narratives.

A comparative case study was undertaken of three storytelling groups who cumulatively employed a variety of means of synchronous and asynchronous electronic mediation in their sharing of oral narratives, including amplification, audio and video recordings, and via virtual world. Viewed through the lenses of Narratology and Social Presence Theory a combination of participant observation and qualitative semi-structured exploratory narrative interviews were undertaken with participants from 1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling, The Moth, and The Storyteller’s Guild of Second Life. Over the course of three years several hundred stories (via 112 tellers) were observed at 38 storytelling sessions (14 live and in-person; 14 live and virtual; and five each of fixed video and or audio) at numerous venues. During these sessions the telling and listening behaviours of 227 participants were noted (15 of which were subsequently interviewed) requiring over 52 hours of observation (fixed sessions were observed more than once).
Multiple sources of visual information were observed and identified during the course of this study, three of which were subsequently selected for in-depth consideration, namely kinesics, reciprocity, and space. Conclusions derived from this study include that:

- Visual information shared during oral narratives is prolific, and can be very informative although it is rarely explicit;
- Listening is far from a passive experience, with narratives requiring co-creation from all participants, and with reciprocities varying depending on which if any technological mediation is utilized between teller(s) and listener(s);
- The spaces and places we tell, listen, and share stories influence our experiences of said stories;
- Even when oral narratives are experienced in a shared space the stories we co-create are unique for each participant; and
- Technological mediation between storytellers and storylisteners does affect the stories being shared and co-created.

*Keywords:* Storytelling, Oral narratives, Kinesics, Reciprocity, Space, Technological mediation
Dedication

Once upon a time, two pirates, an owl, and a yellow duck set sail on a green corduroy couch, and did three impossible things before breakfast (with a nod to Mr. Jones and Mr. Smith). For seven years they sailed widdershins round the seven seas, amassing hordes of gold, diamonds, stories and socks... and not any old socks but the nice ones without any seams.

Couldn’t have done it without you. Signed,
Acknowledgements

There are numerous people without which this dissertation would not have been possible, and it is my intent to thank them here. First my supervisor Dr. Lynne McKechnie who called me back to this story’s path whenever I wandered, who knew both when and where to kick whenever so required, who shared unreservedly of her time, knowledge, and experience, and who forgave me when once upon a time I called Goldilocks a juvenile delinquent.

Also deserving of thanks are the other members of my dissertation committee:

Dr. Carole Farber whose Virtual Worlds class in part served as the spark for my research, and who graciously agreed to be part of this endeavour especially considering the first time we ever met Gnutt inadvertently teleported into her classroom and proceeded to share his latest dance moves; and Dr. Grant Campbell who first suggested the possibility of my undertaking a doctorate, who since the beginning has generously offered both cups of tea and an ear to listen, and who throughout has consistently required me to clarify my motives, decisions, and actions by asking me “Why?”

Together through their generosity and combined expertise in participant observation, storytelling, virtual environments, distance education, and narrative theory, these three have proven themselves invaluable.

There is also a select group of peers likely unaware of the significance that they played in this study, namely Selinda Berg, Sarah Camm, Mark Debicki, Alexandre Fortier, Angela Pollack, and Meighan Wark, who at a critical time
made me aware that I seemed much more interested in storytelling than in what I had originally set out to research, and moreover in response to whether a doctorate in storytelling was even possible simply responded “Why not?”

Last but not least this research would not have been possible without the storytellers and storylisteners of 1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling, The Seanchai Library, and The Moth, and I would like to thank them for their time, their insights, and most importantly for sharing their stories.
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Ethics Approval

Ethical Review of Research Involving Human Subjects

All non-medical research involving human subjects at the University of Western Ontario is carried out in compliance with the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Guidelines (2010). The Faculty of Information Media Studies (FIMS) Research Committee has the mandate to review minimal-risk FIMS research proposals for adherence to these guidelines.

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8. D. Robinson

Research Committee member(s) marked with * have examined the research project FIMS 2011-12-014R entitled:

The effects of electronic mediation on oral narrative story co-creation and information transfer

as submitted by: Lynne McKechnie (Principal Investigator)
James Ripley

and consider it to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects under the conditions of the University’s Policy on Research Involving Human Subjects. Approval is given for the period to 31 August 2014.

Approval Date: 15 July 2013

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Chapter 1: Once Upon a Time in Storytelling

Introduction

Library and information science (LIS) research has shown that the telling of oral narratives has a tangible effect on both information transfer and knowledge creation (Hannabus, 2000; Kuyvenhoven, 2009; McKenzie & Stooke, 2007). Increasingly oral narratives are being given, received, and shared via some form of electronic mediation, such as a teleconference (e.g., VoIP), videoconference (e.g., Skype), or even a virtual world (e.g., Second Life (SL)). What differences, if any, occur for the participants when oral information is so mediated, not only in their experience, but in their comprehension and retention? The increased use of platforms such as SL have attracted the attention of researchers, and their use as a tool for communication has made them an area of research for both distance education and library and information science (Holmberg & Huvila, 2008; Molka-Danielsen & Deutschmann, 2009; Second Life, 2009). Narrative theory (Barthes, 1966; O’Neill, 1996; Prince, 1982) has shown us that oral narratives are so prolific that they can be difficult to recognize and isolate, and are often glossed over if not entirely overlooked. Consider if you will the word Kristallnacht. It can be read or spoken aloud without any awareness of its

Kristallnacht, (German: “Crystal Night”), also called Night of Broken Glass (referring to all of the broken glass littering the streets) or November Pogroms (November 9-10, 1938). The state sanctioned attacks by German Nazis on Jewish people and property, which included burning or damaging over 1,000 synagogues, looting over 7,500 Jewish businesses, killing at least 91 Jews,
origins, that it translates as Night of Broken Glass, or of the tragic events to which it refers (Ripley, 2011, p. 1). As such, individual words “without their stories, are nothing more than meaningless sounds in space or squiggles on a page” (Ripley, 2011, p. 1). An enhanced awareness of the narrative potential around us, together with an expanded exploration of oral narratives to include various visual information channels, presents exciting questions for LIS.

Spanning, as it does, from single words through epic narratives, it is inevitable that definitions of storytelling should vary. Within LIS, storytelling has historically been defined as “a face-to-face, oral performance during which storyteller(s) and listener(s) synchronously cocreate [sic] a narrative based on dynamic interaction and shared experience” (Sturm, 2010, p. 5042). The National Storytelling Association (an American body; now the National Storytelling Network (NSN)) via their Storytell Listserv attempted to produce a single definition of storytelling (2011). The final definition, with numerous qualifications, is two pages long, but states that:

At its core, storytelling is the art of using language, vocalization, and/or physical movement and gesture to reveal elements and images of a story to

and vandalizing Jewish hospitals, homes, schools, and cemeteries. In addition, over 30,000 Jewish men aged 16 to 60 were arrested, leading to the expansion of the Dachau, Buchenwald, and Sachsenhausen concentration camps. (Berenbaum, 2014, June 24)
a specific, live audience [sic]. A central, unique aspect of storytelling is its reliance on the audience to develop specific visual imagery and detail to complete and co-create the story. (McWilliams, 1997, para. 1)

Adding to this, and utilizing a traditionalistic definition, in storytelling stories may be spoken, sung, recited, or recounted, but never read (1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling (1001), 2009, para. 1). This distinction is not a new construct. Consider here said distinction as penned by Sara Cone Bryant, in her seminal book How to tell stories to children, published in 1905:

The great difference… between telling and reading is that the teller is free; the reader is bound. The book in hand, or the wording of it in mind, binds the reader. The story-teller is bound by nothing; he stands or sits, free to watch his audience, free to follow or lead every changing mood, free to use his body, eyes, voice, as aids in expression. Even his mind is unbound, because he lets the story come in the words of the moment, being so full of what he has to say. For this reason, a story told is more spontaneous than one read, however well read. And, consequently, the connection with the audience is closer, more electric, than is possible when the book or its wording intervenes. (p. xvi)

Defined as such, oral narratives are ephemeral, existing only momentarily in time and space, and while the words themselves can be recorded, transcribed, bound, catalogued, and placed on a shelf, the story itself will only exist if and when it is
retold. If we are to understand the effects of tools like VoIP, Skype, and SL, we must understand how oral narratives work, with and without mediation. As a LIS Doctoral candidate with a background in narrative theory and the oral tradition, automatic speech recognition, pedagogy in virtual worlds, audiobooks, and storytelling, I was ideally suited to research these questions.

**Story interlude: Origins of the idea.**

I cannot recall when I first developed skeptical and dismissive opinions regarding distance education. Magazines with promotional bind-in order cards touting correspondence certificates for everything from accounting to wedding design (and seemingly all things in between), and television commercials for chains of trade schools with grandiose sounding but ever-changing names, did little to dissuade me from these opinions. If anyone with the deposit would be accepted then how did these institutions differ from those of the childhood comic book ads which hawked acceptance to ‘professional’ art school classes when you mailed in your drawing of Tippy the Turtle™, The Pirate™, or Cubby the Bear™. With the self-realization that there was a level of snobbery on my part, that these were unsubstantiated comparison with contemporary distance education, and that increasingly post-secondary (including graduate LIS)
education is being promoted and provided via distance,² I set out to explore distance education via distance education in a graduate course on virtual worlds, and wherein I was very surprised to discover storytellers.

The problem.

The chasm I perceived between distance education and storytelling was based on the juxtaposition of two LIS courses undertaken, namely the just mentioned Second Life and Other Virtual Worlds: Critical Perspectives and Applications with Dr. Carole Farber (an Associate Professor with The University of Western Ontario’s Library and Information Science program) and The Art of Storytelling with Diane Halpin (a professional storyteller and sessional instructor). From these two courses a disconnect was identified. Storytellers will swear that technology both alters and impedes the co-creation of stories and therefore knowledge (Bodger, 2000; Kuyvenhoven, 2009; Martin, 1996; Sawyer, 1990; Yashinsky, 2005), yet distance educators will in turn produce papers that purport to show that technology does not alter or prove an impediment to a student’s education (Kidd, 2010; Moore & Kearsley, 1996; Perraton, 2000). So what is really going on? While the labels attached to the participants are different

² In 2011, of the 58 American Library Association (ALA) accredited institutions, 37 offered some online courses (in 13 of those the online courses constitute the majority of the offerings), 11 institutions utilize satellite or other broadcast methods for instruction, and 19 ALA accredited Master’s Degree programs are offered fully online.
(storytellers and listeners, educators and students) the sharing of information, the hope of understanding, and the intention of knowledge creation clearly encompass both sets. My research position was that technological mediation does in fact alter oral narratives, but how, to what degree, and due to what factors (e.g., proxemics, kinesics and or paralinguistic cues, information types, temporal lag, community, and or technology type) was unknown.

**Speculation and evidence of early storytelling.**

Current research in cognitive psychology, narrative neurology, and even artificial intelligence, may help us eventually to understand whether we tell narratives because they are inherent to us or because we have been gradually rewired by their use, but at present narrative’s own origin story, be it discovered or created, is still shrouded in both mist and myth.

Searching backwards in time, although fragments of stories from numerous ancient cultures still exist, including Babylonian, Canaanite, Chinese, Egyptian, Sanskrit, and Sumerian, the earliest surviving textual documentation of the practice of storytelling are two Egyptian papyri, now known as the *Westcar papyrus* (*Tales of the magicians*) and the *Golenischeff papyrus* (*The shipwrecked sailor*) (2000-1300 B.C.E.) (Pellowski, 1990, pp. 3-4; Sturm, 2010, pp. 5042). The *Westcar papyrus* tells of a storytelling event between the Pharaoh Khufu (who reigned from 2589 to 2566 B.C.E.) and his three sons, Khafra, Bua-f-ra, and Hordedef: “Know ye a man who can tell me tales of the deeds of the magicians?”
(Tales, 1901, p. 159). The *Golenischeff papyrus* is also notable in the context of storytelling in that above and beyond describing the act of storytelling within the document, in the act of documenting, transfixing the story itself, the name of the self-described "scribe of cunning fingers Ameni-amen-aa" has endured but the actual storyteller is forever lost to us (Tales, 1901, pp. 173-176), foreshadowing a trend in the documentation of oral storytelling for centuries to come.

**A brief history of storytelling in North America since 1800.**

The introduction of organized institutionally based storytelling in North America can be traced to the German kindergarten movement (founded in 1837) which, according to its founder Friedrich Froebel included storytelling as an integral element (Sturm, 2010, p. 5043). This ethos, brought to America by German immigrants, was then included as part of the U.S. kindergarten curriculum when it was founded in 1873 (Sturm, 2010, p. 5043).

Opinions vary regarding the first association between public libraries (specifically North American) and storytelling. Some credit The Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh and others the Pratt Institute Free Library in Brooklyn (circa 1899) (Pellowski, 1990, pp. 96-97), although there is evidence to suggest that storytelling was occurring in Buffalo as early as 1897 when the Buffalo Library changed its name and status from an annual membership system to the free Buffalo Public Library (Andrle, 2002, para. 3; Pellowski, 1990, p.96):

**BOYS AND GIRLS—Books for You to Read**
Pictures for You to Look At
Maps for You to Put Together
Magazines for Everybody
Someone to Tell You Stories. (Dousman, 1896, p. 407)

It is important to note that although evidence exists that stories were being told to children in the Hartford Public Library in the early 1880s, these events were most definitely books being read aloud and not storytelling, a distinction clearly noted (Clarke, 1902, p. 189; Pellowski, 1990, p. 96). Whomever was first aside, storytelling in public libraries was increasingly being undertaken as part of the general programming for children.

In addition to such programs, and adding to the efforts of the Carnegie and Pratt libraries, which at this point were the primary centers for training children’s librarians in the United States (Pellowski, 1990, p. 97), special mention must be given to the pioneering storytelling work of Marie Shedlock and Gudrun Thorne-Thomsen.

Shedlock was a well-travelled English schoolteacher whose lecture tour of the U.S. from 1900-1901 entitled “The fun and philosophy of Hans Christian Andersen” included the telling of seven tales. A notable attendee was Mary Wright Plummer, the head of the Pratt Institute Library School (Pellowski, 1990, p. 98). During Shedlock’s subsequent tour (1902-1907) she told at numerous public libraries (Alvey, 1974, p. 244), and after an invitation by Wright Plummer to tell at the Pratt Institute Library School (Pellowski, 1990, p. 98), another invitation
was proffered by the head of the Pratt Children’s Room (Anne Carroll Moore), to
tell at the children’s program (Cullinan & Person, 2001, p. 483). Moore later wrote
“there was never any doubt in my mind after that morning that a children’s library
should have a regular story hour” (Cullinan & Person, 2001, p. 483). Continuing
Shedlock’s sphere of influence, Moore’s assistant, Anna Cogswell Tyler, also
present for the children’s storytelling, followed Moore to the New York Public
Library, where she eventually became the head of storytelling (Cullinan &

In 1888 at the age of fifteen, Gudrun Thorne, a Norwegian immigrant, came to
the United States to train as a teacher at the Cook County Normal School in
Chicago (Cullinan & Person, 2001, p. 483). When the school was incorporated
into the University of Chicago, Thorne-Thomsen (now married) was hired to
teach children’s literature, storytelling, and reading (Bodger, 2000, pp. 40-41;
Cullinan & Person, 2001, p. 483). From there, she proceeded to lecture at
various library training schools, eventually joining the faculty at the Carnegie
Library School in Pittsburgh (Bodger, 2000, p. 41) where she continued to
instruct librarians in storytelling.3 Further expanding her sphere of influence,

3 One such librarian was Lillian H. Smith (born March 17, 1887 in London Ontario). A
graduate of the University of Toronto’s Victoria College (1910) and Carnegie Library School in
Pittsburgh (1911), Smith was recruited by Anne Carroll Moore of the New York Public Library,
where her knowledge of children’s literature and skill in storytelling was soon noticed and
appreciated by young and old. Such was her reputation that she was soon also noted by the
Thorne-Thomsen made several disc recordings of her lectures that were then distributed by the newly formed (1876) American Library Association (Bodger, 2000, pp. 40-41; Pellowski, 1990, pp. 98-99; Sturm, 2010, p. 5043), and as such provided storytelling instruction via distance education.

From this cursory overview, threads of association can be seen spreading across the United States and the beginnings of a movement linking storytelling with librarianship that exists to this day. Aiding this diaspora of storytelling librarians, and among a plethora of published books of stories were a few influential storytelling books, penned by storytelling teachers and librarians, such as:

- *How to tell stories to children* (1905) by Sara Cone Bryant,
- *For the storyteller: Story telling and stories to tell* (1913) by Carolyn Sherwin Bailey, and

Toronto Library Board’s new Chief Librarian Dr. George Locke who enticed her back to Canada where she became the first Children’s Librarian in the British Empire (1912). With great perseverance and skill ‘Miss Smith’ built a children’s collection of international acclaim, where all of her librarians were trained as storytellers, and culminated in the founding of Boys and Girls House (1922). The first library in the British Empire solely for children’s literature, the original house was demolished in 1963, to be replaced by a purpose built library where it remained until 1995, at which point the collection was moved to a repurposed branch of Toronto Public Library which was subsequently renamed in her honour (Carnegie Library School, 1911; Clare, 2011; Manchester, 2010; Waxman, 2002).
• *The art of the story-teller* (1915) by Marie Shedlock.

It should be noted that not all librarians or library administrators were supportive of storytelling in libraries. One such notable critic was the librarian and library school lecturer John Cotton Dana who believed that storytelling was a tool to be used in school instruction and not public libraries as “schoolmen [emphasis added] know better how and when to use storytelling” (1908, 349-50). Whereas:

If, now, the library by chance has on its staff a few altruistic, emotional, dramatic, and irrepressible child-lovers who do not find library work gives sufficient opportunities for altruistic indulgence, and if the library can spare them from other work, let it set them at teaching the teachers the art of storytelling. (Dana, 1908, pp. 349-50)

Looking beyond the incredibly patronizing overtones, even the most ardent critics would eventually concede the popularity of the events, the increased book circulation numbers on days with storytelling programs, and the inclusiveness of such programs in public libraries considering the large number of children who could not attend school (Pellowski, 1990, pp. 100-01). In 1924 the Carnegie Library at Pittsburgh’s storytelling programs hosted almost 150,000 children, while renowned storytellers Mary and John Cronan were estimated to be telling to 1,800 library listeners and 4,000 school children per week (Cullinan & Person, 2001, p. 484). Furthermore, the 1927 ALA survey of public libraries in the United States noted that 79% included regular storytelling programs (American Library
Association, 1927). This Golden age was, however, not to last. Library staff cuts during the Great Depression, the introduction of FM radio in the 1930s, preschool and childhood literacy initiatives in the 1940s, library staff shortages during WWII, and the exponential growth in popularity of both children's picture books and television all contributed to a decline in both traditional storytelling and public library storytelling programs (Cullinan & Person, 2001, p. 484; Sturm, 2010, p. 5043).

However, while attendance numbers were decreasing, there was an increased recognition of the importance of storytelling for cognitive function, language development, personality, and the social development of young children (Cullinan & Person, 2001, p. 484). Attempts to revitalize storytelling within the library profession produced numerous festivals, seminars, and symposia (Pellowski, 1990, p. 103). Out of these attempts rose a resurgence of professional storytellers and of storytelling associations, most notably in the United States the formation in 1975 of The National Association for the Preservation and Perpetuation of Storytelling (now the NSN) (Cullinan & Person, 2001, p. 484; Pellowski, 1990, p. 103; Sturm, 2010, p. 5043).

By 2006, only 32 of the 56 ALA accredited LIS schools were offering storytelling as part of their professional curriculum, and many of those courses were offered infrequently (Sturm, 2010, p. 5045). Moreover, said courses were often not being taught by tenured LIS faculty but by professional storytellers hired as sessional instructors. Since then there is no evidence to suggest this trend
has changed. Furthermore, this trend is paralleled in public libraries, where professional storytellers are often invited to tell at public library hosted events (Cullinan & Person, 2001; Pellowski, 1990; Sturm, 2010). The reasons behind the decreasing numbers of storytelling librarians are outwith the scope of this dissertation, as is whether public library storytelling events are being subcontracted to non LIS trained professional storytellers (who can seek more comprehensive storytelling training elsewhere) due to changing skill sets, financial, or temporal constraints. What is important to note is that above and beyond the long standing and ongoing (though changing) relationship between public libraries and storytelling, there has been an exponential increase in the utilization of storytelling in other information venues and in other contexts. Moreover the most exciting oral narrative research being done is taking place outside of LIS. Neither beholden to nor grounded by traditional definitions of storytelling (LIS, NSN, or 1001), these new acolytes of the power of storytelling, such as those working in artificial intelligence, video games, computer-mediated communication, business, and distance education, not only employ but have embraced electronic mediation (Andrews, Hull & DeMeester, 2010; Hernandez-Serrano & Stefanou, 2009; Jacobsen, 2002; Murray, 1997; Schank, 1990).

In the upcoming section I will provide an overview of the varied relevant literatures, with subsequent chapters addressing theory and methodology, focused observations from the various storytelling sessions, selected findings
from the interviews with both storytellers and storylisteners, and finally a chapter
dedicated to the conclusions drawn from this study and ideas for future research.

**Literature Review**

The literature review undertaken in preparation for this research spans a
variety of fields and disciplines. It will therefore be presented so as to emphasize
the diverse elements that will be brought together for this project, namely:

1. storytelling;
2. virtual worlds (with emphasis on SL);
3. distance education; and
4. narratology and social presence theory.

**Storytelling.**

Within storytelling there are multiple dimensions that need to be identified and
considered, namely, (a) ethnographic research of oral narratives, (b) researching
the process of storytelling, (c) the practice of storytelling, and (d) other emerging
research from disciplines such as LIS, cognitive science, and narrative
neurology. At the outset, it is important to note that these approaches often
overlap.
Ethnographic research.

Ethnographic research of oral narratives has focused to differing degrees on specific groups of storytellers and listeners (often identified by a region), their corpora of stories (although the term corpora itself is problematic), or the social and cultural importance of said stories, practices, and people. Such research focuses on the communities of practice (wherein knowledge is created through common practice (Davies, 2006, p. 104)) and emphasizes those who recognize their actions and participation, as tellers and or listeners, within this social construct. This is very much the case for Anna Birgitta Rooth (1976) in her research on the “Indians of Alaska” (p. 11) in which she wanted “to stress here the importance of storytelling as the medium for analphabets (persons textually illiterate) to transmit the accumulated knowledge (e.g., fishing and hunting lore) embedded in the legends and myths” (pp. 11-12). She believed that “with the disappearance or reduction of analphabetism, storytelling has diminished in importance” (Rooth, 1976, p. 12). Rooth speaks of storytelling “waning,” consistently describing it in the past tense and as static narratives that should be documented, thus “sav[ing] the lore of the North American Indians of Alaska” (1976, p. 11) before it fades into oblivion. Furthermore, “in order to preserve the tradition it should be engraved in clay that resists fire and in copper that resists water” (Rooth, 1976, p. 11).
Julie Cruickshank (1998), while also researching First Nations storytelling, was attempting to understand a living tradition where “storytellers of Yukon First Nations ancestry continue to tell stories that make meaningful connections and provide order and continuity in a rapidly changing world” (p. xiii), and “how their [the stories’] meanings shift as tellers address different audiences, situation [sic], and historical contexts” (p. xi). In contrast to Rooth, Cruickshank quotes Tlingit elder Nora Marks Dauenhauer and her husband Richard Dauenhauer from their book *Haa shuká, our ancestors: Tlingit oral narratives* (1987):

The writing down of oral literature, no matter how well-intentioned or how well carried out, petrifies it. It is like a molecule by molecule replacement of an organic plant by stone. A petrified log may look like wood, but it is actually stone. (Cruickshank, 1998, p. xiii)

Moreover, Cruickshank saw herself as a student of those she listened to, those “who patiently taught me to hear the many stories a single narrative can convey” (1998, p. xix). As such, she postulates that stories “can be understood as having the power to inform and enlarge other forms of explanation rather than as data for analysis using conventional scholarly paradigms” (Cruickshank, 1998, p. xiii).

Seminal in ethnographic research of oral narratives is Albert B. Lord’s *The singer of tales* (1964). While specifically listening and looking at the Serbo-Croatian epic singer/storytellers of the then Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1934-1935) and how their process was morphing due to the introduction of textual literacies, the enduring reach of this study is due to Lord’s theories regarding the process
that historically the tellers were employing, not rote memorization but rather formulaic adaptations. Prior to the introduction of text, “the moment of composition [was] the performance” (Lord, 1964, p. 13). Lord expands this understanding in asserting that “when we speak a language, our native language, we do not repeat words and phrases that we have memorized consciously, but the words and sentences emerge from habitual usage” (1964, p. 36). This shift in mode of retention, with the invention and introduction of text, altered the narrative paradigm, from “the stability of essential story, which is the goal of oral tradition, to stability of text, of the exact words of the story” (Lord, 1964, p. 138). Ethnographers, now cognisant of these ideas, can place storytellers (in the Western tradition) within a continuum stretching from Homer to the present. Moreover, these concepts have been extrapolated and adopted to address the development of oral narratives worldwide. As such, we are now more than “dwarfs perching on the shoulders of giants… see[ing] more and farther than our predecessors, not because we have keener vision or greater height, because we are lifted up and borne aloft on their gigantic stature” (John of Salisbury, 1962, p. 167). We are more than dwarves reading the stories of giants. Thanks to the work of Lord on oral narratives we can be dwarves telling stories like giants.

Richard Bauman’s *Story, performance, and event: Contextual studies of oral narrative* (1996), is comparable to Rooth, Cruickshank, and Lord in that his research deals with a specific group of storytellers and listeners (in this case the
dog trading sub-culture of the southern United States), their stories, and the social and cultural importance of said stories, practices, and people. However, his “emphasis [was] on the act of storytelling, not just the text [discourse]” (p. abstract). Framed as such, Bauman focused his “ethnography of oral performance” (1996, p. 3) on “the relationship between oral literature [discourse] and social life” (1996, p. 2). In his opinion this “performance-centred conception of oral literature” was in need of an “analytical framework [and] empirical investigations of the relationships among elements” (Bauman, 1996, p. 3).

Each of these ethnographic understandings of storytelling, be they dying, living, morphing, or performance-based, can provide more than insight into the respective authors’ paradigms of storytelling. Used as lenses, these studies will not only serve as a context for the contemporary acts of storytelling observed throughout this study, but also on a macro level as foils against which to consider storytelling itself as a medium for sharing information.

**The process of storytelling.**

Storytelling as process research, with its focus on stories as a means of information transfer, is well illustrated by the work of Frances A. Smardo in “A comparison of the impact of three methods of storyhour presentation upon children’s learning skills,” where:

The main purpose was to determine the effectiveness of three types of public storyhour programs in the acquisition of receptive language (learning
skills) of children three, four, and five years of age. Subjects were randomly assigned to a ‘live’ storyhour; a 16mm commercially-produced film storyhour; a video-taped storyhour produced during the ‘live’; or a control group. (1983, p. 33)

What is most informative in relation to our purposes here is that live storyhours proved statistically more effective than the electronically mediated video storyhours (as measured by a TOBE-2) in regard to the acquisition of receptive language skills by preschool children. (Smardo, 1983, pp. 36-39). It is important to note that Smardo’s storyhours do not conform to a traditionalist definition of storytelling (as defined by Sara Cone Bryant or 1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling), as the storyhours in question employed read and not told stories. The study has been included here because of its findings on technological mediation of narratives, and thus is a jumping off point to see if its conclusions hold true with storytelling.

The research of Johanna Kuyvenhoven, as presented in her book In the presence of each other: A pedagogy of storytelling (2009), is an ethnographic study of storytelling (both planned and spontaneous), and not an ethnographic study of a given group and/or their stories. As such it would be situated between the research of Bauman and that of Smardo. Although Kuyvenhoven embedded herself within a particular storytelling group (specifically a grade 4/5 classroom with a teacher who is also a professional storyteller), her research situates itself...
in the grey area between ethnographic and process work. Ultimately, Kuyvenhoven concludes that:

Storytelling is a listening act. A teller listens to her listeners... Listeners let their teller know where the story lags or where it needs more explanation. A storyteller learns about the story in the midst of storytelling. Listeners reveal funny spots in a story that the storyteller did not even realize were there, or will suggest a pause needs to be longer to increase tension and drama. In the midst of telling, it will become apparent that a gesture is more eloquent than a word. Storytellers often find they need to ‘repaint’ a picture, explain a word, warn a straying child, increase their volume, or use less or more eye contact. Over time, they learn to understand the myriad of listeners’ expressions, postures, attention and inattentiveness, as these guide them.

(2009, 196-97)

Extrapolating from Kuyvenhoven to this new study, one of the questions that must be asked of virtual world storytellers, who are physically elsewhere from their listener(s) and lack access to these cues, is how does one react and adjust accordingly?

Juxtaposed, the research of Smardo and of Kuyvenhoven illustrates why this new body of research is necessary: technology can alter the effect of information (Smardo, 1983); and, oral narratives are prolific, and when informal are often unrecognized as narratives (Kuyvenhoven, 2009). It is in this grey area,
observing raw oral narratives, with and without electronic technology that this study will reside.

**The practice of storytelling.**

While there is a plethora of work written on storytelling, the vast majority can be described as either collections of stories to tell or of the ‘How-to’ be a storyteller genre (Sturm, 2010, p. 5044). This is not to dismiss them all as unworthy of note for this study, as a select group of authors have spanned the divide between research and practice.

Dan Yashinsky’s *Suddenly they heard footsteps: Storytelling for the twenty-first century* (2005), Alice Kane’s *The dreamer awakes* (1995), and Joan Bodger’s autobiography *The crack in the teacup: The life of an old woman steeped in stories* (2000), are each arguably an ethnography of storytellers in general, as illustrated by the lives and work of the individual authors. They are also incredibly informative in regard to the practice of storytelling. Moreover, in sharing their knowledge of storytelling by sharing their own stories these three works also serve as examples of the effectiveness of teaching via narrative. It is also worthy of note, that Yashinsky, Kane, and Bodger were each founding members of what became 1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling, one of the storytelling groups which agreed to participate in this study, and as such we gain more than insight into one of the participating groups. Through their own stories, well told, one can witness the potential impact of storytelling for both listeners
and tellers, and gain insight from three highly knowledgeable and skilled professional storytellers into the practice of storytelling. The value of these works is further increased in that two of these authors (Alice Kane and Joan Bodger) sadly are no longer with us to share their stories in person. While as a profession we are diminished by their absence some of those who heard them tell in turn, as is the way of storytellers, tell their stories.

Norma J. Livo and Sandra A. Rietz’s substantial tome *Storytelling: Process and practice* (1986), while very much a practical resource for storytellers and instructors of storytellers, should not be dismissed with the surfeit of pulp ‘How-to’ books that are “packed with easy-to-follow step-by-step instructions, plus helpful checklists and calendars” (eHow™, 2011, para. 2). The scope and depth of consideration provided within, regarding the very function of story and storytelling, the comprehension of both discourse and story structures, the discussion surrounding paralinguistic effects, as well as considerations regarding cultural appropriation, and contemporary significance, all lend credence to the value and importance of this work. Moreover, their book is prefaced with the litmus test that all authors of serious storytelling books struggle with and must address: the inherent contradiction of attempting to put into text that which is oral, as “written language can neither encode the telling of a story nor save the conventions governing the practice of an oral literature” (Livo & Rietz, 1986, p. xiii). While Livo & Rietz’s book was in all likelihood envisaged and written for traditional applications of storytelling (“This book is lovingly dedicated to the next
storytellers” (1986, p. v)), it may be argued that the issues addressed within hold true for all venues and contexts. Additionally, as a frequently cited work within storytelling literature, this book was chosen to inform this study regarding potential participants’ likely attitudes, beliefs, and conceptual understandings regarding storytelling.

Carol L. Birch and Melissa A. Heckler’s book, *Who says? Essays on pivotal issues in contemporary storytelling* (1996), is a thought provoking collection of essays “by storytellers, folklorists, anthropologists, and theorists in the fields of literature, communication, education, and the performing arts” (p. 9). It addresses critical issues within the profession of storytelling, including but not limited to cultural appropriation, cultural relativity, reciprocity, and most importantly, “how to respect different models in developing a critical language for approaching and assessing contemporary story occasions with widely diverse audiences, tellers, and types of material” (Birch & Heckler, 1996, p. 9). Moreover, “this book seeks to broaden a dialogue across philosophical, professional, academic, regional, and cultural divides” (Birch & Heckler, 1996, p. 9). As such, numerous chapters within are directly relevant and applicable to my research: Birch and Heckler’s questioning of definitions of storytelling; Barre Toelken’s consideration of the book as altering mediation for storytelling; Bill Harley’s reflections on the 4th wall, space, and the dynamics between tellers and listeners; and, Rafe Martin’s chapter on co-creation and reciprocity of and between tellers and listeners. All of
the aforementioned have not only been formative in the development of this research but will continue to inform throughout this study.

*The way of the storyteller* (1990) by Ruth Sawyer is as near to canon as exists within the profession of storytelling. Although first published in 1942, it continues to be reissued and is so commonly referred to and cited by storytellers that the book is simply referred to as Sawyer. Any study of contemporary North American storytelling that doesn’t include it will be judged wanting if not negligent as her views on contemporary storytelling have informed and influenced generations of storytellers. As such researchers tread lightly. With her words ever in our thoughts:

Storytelling is a folk-art. To approach it with the feelings and the ideas of an intellectual or a sophisticate is at once to drive it under the domination of mind and critical sense. All folk-arts have grown out of the primal urge to give tongue to what has been seen, heard, experienced… To bring a sophisticated attitude to a folk-art is to jeopardize it. Or rather, it is to make it into something that it is not. (Sawyer, 1990, p. 27)

Sawyer would no doubt have taken issue with the work of Rooth and her attempt to “preserve” (1990, p. 11) the stories of her research group. In marked contrast Sawyer stated that “[t]here is a kind of death to every story when it leaves the speaker and becomes impaled for all time on clay tablets or the written and printed page” (1990, p. 59). Adding to the ever connected web of storytellers and librarians Sawyer, while still a student at Columbia University and after attending
a lecture by Marie Shedlock, “vowed that day to become a storyteller” (Miller, 2003, p. 222). Moreover, Sawyer would further credit Shedlock, as well as Anne Carroll Moore and Anna Cogswell Tyler (see The history of storytelling in LIS), in *The way of the storyteller*.

For those storytellers unable to apprentice in their chosen art (now sadly the norm), the above selection of titles relating to the practice of storytelling would aid any amateur or professional in either learning or honing their craft. Each author is or was a renowned storyteller in her own right. While equally diverse and critical regarding the art of storytelling, to a one they espouse telling (as opposed to either memorizing or reading) stories. Moreover, in regard to their impact on this research, said titles or their authors undoubtedly have been read by or, if one was so fortunate, heard by, and therefore influenced the majority of North American and even Western European storytellers (both in First Life (FL) and in SL) who comprised the participants in this study.

*Other narrative research.*

With a history reaching back to at least Aristotle (384-47 B.C.E.) the consideration of narrative is not a new field (Hogan, 2006, p. 66). While contemporary research on oral narratives, expectedly, is still being produced in philosophy, the humanities, and occasionally LIS, it has recently found significant footholds in some unexpected fields such as business, psychology, computer
science, cognitive science, artificial intelligence, and neuropsychology, even forcing the creation of the new field of narrative neurology.

Those observant of storytelling will give no argument to Roger Schank’s assertion, in *Tell me a story: A new look at real and artificial memory* (1990), that “our interest in telling and hearing stories is strongly related to the nature of intelligence” (p. xii). Moreover Schank asserts that “thinking [itself] depends very much on storytelling and story understanding” (1990, p. xii). From Schank’s work, his quest “to understand how human memory works, why it works the way it does, and what the implications are for those of us who are attempting to understand what thinking is about” (1990, p. xii), this study takes on added strength of conviction. Ultimately via Schank, we can continue our move beyond the outdated notions of storytelling and storylistening as mere childhood diversions, soporifics and or an archaic pastime, as his work suggests that storytelling, far from being a childlike substitute for thinking, is in fact a profoundly deep form of thinking.

The following year in “The narrative construct of reality” Jerome Bruner argued that we as human beings “organize our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative – stories, excuses, myths, reasons for doing and not doing, and so on” (1991, p. 4). Moreover, he asserted that the field of psychology had in the past decade come “alive to the possibility of narrative as a form not only representing but constituting reality” (Bruner, 1991, p. 5). The
idea that we comprehend our existence in narrative form would be stretched and expanded significantly by those who followed.

According to Kay Young and Jeffrey L. Saver in their paper “The neurology of narrative” (2001) “narrative is the fundamental mode of organizing human experience” (p. 78). But, “[w]hat is it about the nature of the human brain that necessitates that the memories we draw on as evidence for who we are work as narratives” (Young & Saver, 2001, p. 75)? The specifics of this research deal with varying types of brain injuries and subsequent dysnarrativia. The most extreme cases address individuals with bilateral injuries to dorsolateral frontal cortices. These areas “are critical for the planning and temporal organization of conduct and for guiding behaviour by internal representation” (Young & Saver, 2001, p. 78). As such, individuals with these injuries:

Are unable to provide (and likely fail to generate internally) a narrative account of their experiences, wishes, and actions, although they are fully cognizant of their visual, auditory, and tactile surroundings. These individuals lead ‘denarrated’ lives, aware but failing to organize experience in action-generating temporal frames. In the extreme they do not speak unless spoken to and do not move unless very hungry. These patients illustrate the inseparable connection between narrativity and personhood. (Young & Saver, 2001, p. 78)

Adding to the horrific possible consequences of such injuries, while “[b]rain injured individuals may lose their linguistic, mathematical, syllogistic, visuospatial,
mnestic, or kinesthetic competencies... [they can] still be recognizably the same person" (Young & Saver, 2001, p. 78). In contrast “individuals who have lost the ability to construct narrative, however, have lost their selves” (Young & Saver, 2001, p. 78). With this new understanding of the significance of narrative, a comprehensive exploration of all aspects of narrative, structure, reason, and processes, including the various oral modes possible, is ever more justified.

Complementary work being done at the University of Toronto by Raymond A. Mar, and presented as “The neuropsychology of narrative: Story comprehension, story production and their interrelation” (2004), attempts to integrate the literatures of cognitive psychology and neuroscience in relation to narrative. By showing which brain regions activate during both narrative comprehension and construction, he suggests that some “appear to be unique to narrative-processing (Mar, 2004, p. 1429). Mar alludes to the theory-of-mind paradigm, which postulates that understanding narrative “requires the understanding of intentions, goals, emotions and other mental states held by characters” (2004, p. 1416), an ability lacking in those suffering with undernarration (as addressed by Young and Saver above). This paradigm adds credence to the position of paleoneurologist Harry J. Jerison that the vocalization of pictures created and saved in our minds could have been the unprecedented evolutionary leap that set us apart from other animals, as “in the telling we create mental images in our listeners that might normally be produced only by the memory of events” (Birch & Heckler, 1996, pp. 11-12). Furthermore, theory-of-mind is pivotal to the arguments of Nick
Yee, Jeremy N. Bailenson, and Nicholas Ducheneaut in relation to the Proteus effect (see Virtual Worlds), and has clearly informed contemporary understandings of textual and oral narrative theory (Bal, 2007; Farrell & Soukup, 2002; Hogan, 2006; O'Neill, 1996; Ong, 1971, 1982) (see Theory). Mar’s paper, and others like it, reject, push, and expand the perceived boundaries of narrative, orality, and storytelling, bridging disciplines, proving themselves time and again as essential abutments for this study.

The work of Deborah A. Turner, specifically her dissertation “Conceptualizing oral documents” (2009) and article “Orally-based information” (2010), have provided crucial groundwork for this study. By “establishing a [working] definition for the concept of oral document,” and “a method to operationalize and study it” (2009, p. 9), Turner has created a bridgehead for oral narrative research in LIS, that reaches out of the children’s room. Moreover, in advocating for “how orally, or word-of-mouth transactions, conveys information, describ[ing] approaches for investigating orally-based information, and articulat[ing] the need for future information behavior investigations that focus on orality” (2010, p. 370), Turner has provided a strong voice within the field, a like mind, that recognizes that “orality is important for information science” (2010, p. 371).

often behave as if they are embedded in the narrative situation, tracking and adopting a character’s spatial, temporal, and psychological perspectives” (p. 368). Furthermore, Fecica and O’Neill present a clever series of studies which ultimately shows that there exists “an ability among preliterate children to create impressively rich and dynamic mental representations of narrative events” (2010, p. 368). Looking beyond the specifics, this study reaffirms the assertions of earlier studies (Birch & Heckler, 1996; Edwards & Sienkewicz, 1991; Furniss, 2004; Havelock, 1986; Jason & Segal, 1977; Lord, 1964; Ong, 1971, 1982, 2002a-e; Sherzer, 1992, 2002) that oral narratives are not a poor alternative to text for the pre- and illiterate, but complex entities in their own right, which gave rise to text (Fecica & O’Neill, 2010). Moreover, these studies indicate that narrative was not invented by the educated but discovered by the observant. What is essential to take away is that while oral narratives are transferred from teller to listener(s), narrative itself is indigenous to our brains, not instilled by our elders, but inherited from our ancestors.

Suzanne Keen’s chapter “Narrative empathy,” in Fredrick Luis Aldama’s Toward a cognitive theory of narrative acts (2010), brings together seemingly diverse bodies of knowledge. Her discussion regarding empathetic narrative techniques used by writers “such as the use of first-person narration and the interior representation of characters’ consciousness and emotional states – as devices supporting character identification, contributing to empathetic experiences, opening readers’ minds to others, changing attitudes, and even
predisposing readers to altruism” (Keen, 2010, p. 69), resituates the phenomenon of “empathy at a cellular level” (Keen, 2010, p. 61). Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) shows that narrative empathy is not mere sentimentalism on the part of a reader [or listener] but the firing of mirror neurons, and as such “a person perceives that they feel another’s pain” (Keen, 2010, p. 65). But it is the fundamental question posed and still to be answered by her theory of narrative empathy that necessitates its inclusion in this study: Why do we feel empathy for characters from narratives? Equally valuable is the realization that all empathy, whether for a fictional character or real individual, is narrative empathy. Once again though, as with Kristallnacht, to feel any empathy for Despereaux Tilling, Ivan Denisovich, Greyfriars Bobby, or Bob-Cat and Bobbi, you must know their stories.

Also found within Aldama’s Toward a cognitive theory of narrative acts is Ellen Spolsky’s thought-provoking chapter “Narrative as nourishment” (2010). Incorporating theory of mind, paleonarrative, and narrative neurology, Spolsky proceeds to make credible arguments for narrative to be considered as a “biological function” (2010, p. 38). Moving beyond the wordplay of literature as food for the soul and hungry for knowledge, Spolsky asserts that “[r]ecent research in cognitive linguistics suggests that eventually neurobiologists will be able to describe narrative activity—both the production and the comprehension of stories—as an evolved, embodied process, like language and like metabolism” (2010, p. 39). Research is now showing links between energy metabolism,
learning, and memory. As such, Spolsky postulates that “if bodies signal the hunger for knowledge in the same way they signal hunger for food, if they need to know things in the same way they need food, then the things that satisfy those needs are reasonably considered food” (2010, pp. 41-42). Such a paradigm shift will have ramifications well beyond narrative neurologists and theorists, stretching arguably to implications for basic human needs and rights (United Nations, 2011, Article 25). Ultimately, and taking a broad definition of learning, the claim is made “that narratives indeed teach us by managing our neuronal/brain/body responses in all kinds of situations” (Spolsky, 2010, p. 40). This happens “not only in our brains (although the majority of neurons are indeed concentrated there) but [is] also embodied in our skin, our limbs, and our muscles as well” (Spolsky, 2010, p. 40).

Embodied narrative cognition is the crux of Melba Cuddy-Keane’s 2010 article “Narration, navigation, and non-conscious thought: Neuroscientific and literary approaches to the thinking body." Juxtaposed with Spolsky’s assertion that our bodies learn via narrative (Spolsky, 2010), Cuddy-Keane contends that a body may also facilitate problem solving via narrative (2010). Admittedly Cuddy-Keane’s ideas are “still speculative” (2010, p. 683). Placed in context with Laura E. Thomas and Aljehandro Lleras’ 2009 study “Swinging into thought: Directed movement guides insight in problem solving” which “showed that body movements can actually lead participants to complex higher order thoughts... [and that] this effect occurs irrespective of whether participants ever become
aware of a relationship between the body movements and the problem at hand” (p. 722), then the speculative seems increasingly possible. In addition, Cuddy-Keane’s contention “that the body’s non-conscious strategies for spatial navigation activate similar schema for the navigation of mental space” (2010, p. 680), subsequently spawns interesting ramifications for how we experience the spaces within the narratives we co-create. While the borders, scale, and intricacies of embodied cognition may still be speculative, that our bodies can influence our minds is not (Stepper & Strack, 1993; Strack, Martin & Stepper, 1988; Wells & Petty, 1980).

Via multiple and varied disciplines, what is beginning to emerge is that narrative is not an invention but rather may be an evolutionary adaptation in both our minds and our bodies. We have not the speed of a tiger, nor the strength of a bear, the eyesight of a panther, nor the hearing of the elephants, and our olfactory senses pale to that of the wolf (Birch & Heckler, 1996, p.11). What delightful irony then, in reimagining Kipling’s stories of Mowgli, Bagheera, and Shere Khan, that it is not only man’s knowledge and cultivation of “the Red Flower” that separated us from the other animals as the anthropomorphised characters in The Jungle Book believed, but rather narrative itself; “By Red Flower Bagheera meant fire, only no creature in the jungle will call fire by its proper name” (1894, p. 23). We comprehend narrative and we thrive. Through the research presented here, and via that which will follow, what we have now begun to understand is that narrative is biological, neurological, sociological, and
phenomenological. Moreover, through the diverse exploration of narrative, we have begun to acquire fresh tools and methods for exploring our enduring intuition that narrative matters.

**Digital storytelling.**

Special mention must be made here with regard to digital storytelling. While scholarly research, popular articles, and LIS promotion (both academic and public) on and of digital storytelling are appearing with ever greater frequency, digital storytelling is an alternative and unrelated use of the word storytelling, as are its cousins virtual storytelling and interactive storytelling (Figa, 2007, p. 50). Digital storytelling is more accurately labelled as “multimedia narratives or short films combining text, images and audio files” (Coventry, 2008, p. 166). Digital storytelling is neither live nor oral in nature (voice is an optional element in digital storytelling). Its creation often includes scripts, storyboards, soundtracks, voiceovers, and editing software (Lambert, 2007). It is a new medium made possible by “relatively sophisticated video production and editing capabilities [that] have filtered down onto the average student’s computer” (Coventry, 2008, p. 165). As such digital storytelling was not relevant to this research. Many things include or can be seen to include stories (news items, paintings, picture books, and documentaries), but a commercial of a young blonde girl eating porridge, while suggestive of a well-loved story, would be advertising for instant oatmeal, not storytelling. Ultimately, “novels and television, [and digital storytelling], while
they may contain stories, are not seen in the same light as ‘storytelling’ which permits real-time/live storytellers the opportunity to morph and change their stories based on the reactions of the story listeners” (The call of story, 2007).

Virtual worlds.

Research on virtual worlds and on SL specifically is prolific. The following works, while each significant in their respective fields, were selected for their value and applicability to this study.

Arguably the vanguard for SL ethnographic research, presented in his work *Coming of age in Second Life: An anthropologist explores the virtually human* (2008), is Tom Boellstorff. His comprehensive study of the platform SL, the avatars that inhabit said world, and their respective residents in FL, was instrumental reading in preparation for this study. Even his *Consent form and information sheet* was of value serving as the foundation for my own *Second Life information sheet*. In examining what ethnography tells us about virtual worlds, Boellstorff makes a crucial observation that the ‘online bleeds through to the offline, and vice versa’ (2008, p. 61); This observation is confirmed in other research (Blascovich & Bailenson, 2011; Dean, Cook, Keating, & Murphy, 2009; Yee & Bailenson, 2006, 2007). Also significant in *Coming of age in Second Life*
was Boellstorff’s observation that “the aspects of Second Life that were most important to residents were social places.... [as] the people that inhabit this space are what makes it real,” and that events need “place, time, and sociality” (2008, p. 182). Ultimately, Boellstorff shows that SL is neither distinct nor separate from FL, but rather an extension of us, of who we already are. We may re-represent ourselves as healthier, taller, more buxom, more confident, or even as a fantastic extension of who we are or who we would like to be, but it is all still a re-representation of ourselves.

Another paradigm-shifting work is *Learning and teaching in the virtual world of Second Life* (2009), edited by Judith Molka-Danielsen and Mats Deutschmann. Included within its covers, and most informative for my research, is Toni Sant’s chapter “Performance in Second Life: Some possibilities for learning and teaching”. Sant’s exploration of SL “potential for performing drama, music, and live art events,” and “the various possibilities for learning and teaching with performance in SL” (2009, p. 145) speaks directly to the media being utilized here, namely SL and live storytelling. In addition to a valuable discussion surrounding the issues of audiovisual capture, streaming media, and lag in synchronous online environments, Sant also addresses issues surrounding etiquette in SL, *mirrored flourishing, impression society,* and *bebop reality* (2009). Although these terms were coined by Wagner James Au in his book *The making of Second Life: Notes from the new world* in relation to virtual worlds, these terms are equally applicable to FL storytelling. Sant also begins a necessary
conversation regarding game versus play, further delineating between role-play and real-play in SL, that being the degrees of persona adopted by avatars in relation to their residents both visually and in character (2009). Like Boellstorff, Sant problematizes the binary distinction between real life and SL, suggesting that the connections are as important as the distinctions (2009).

Adding to this corpus of knowledge, and informing this study, is a prolific and growing body of research articles related to conducting research within virtual worlds. T. L. Taylor’s paper “Life in virtual worlds: Plural existence, multimodalities, and other online research challenges” (1999), raises the methodological, conceptual, and practical quandaries still faced by and in some cases unique to virtual world researchers, such as anonymity, reliability, validity, verifiability, visual representation, and plural existence (alts).

Equally valuable is Marie-Noelle Lamy’s paper “Oral conversations online: Redefining oral competence in synchronous environments” (2004). In this instance, the information presented and knowledge gained from her research on synchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC) for the purposes of second language acquisition is directly transferable to electronically mediated oral narratives. Furthermore, her discussion regarding modified practices and behaviours, instant messaging (IM) chat interjections, and practical textual representations of oral dialogue are very relevant and comparable to SL storytelling practices and behaviours. This said, while Lamy does question the equating of CMC with f2f (face-to-face) conversations, the labeling of IM chat as
“synchronous CMC” (2004), as with Taylor’s claim of “real-time communication” (1999) (in the previous article), I would and will, argue is debatable.

Marcus D. Childress and Ray Braswell’s paper entitled “Using massively multiplayer online role-playing games [MMORPG] for online learning” (2006) returns us to SL specific research, and proves a useful, and arguably necessary, introduction to the varied realms of MMORPGs, MMOGs, MMORTs, MMOWs, MUCKs, MUDs, and MUSHs. While somewhat utopian in their evaluation of the potential of SL for educational purposes, it does afford opportunity to contemplate considerations of game versus play. Having said this, there is an argument to be made that SL would be more accurately described as a habitat (MUSH), an environment (MMORPE), or a world (MMOW), whereas the label MMORPG more aptly fits games such as World of Warcraft (WoW).

Virtual education opportunities within the platform of Campus: Second Life at the time Childress and Braswell published their article consisted of ten university courses (e.g., Human computer interface, Foundations of instructional technology, Digital collaboration in architecture, and Designing digital communities) and was limited to higher education only. Since then Campus: Second Life has blossomed to includes 153 institutions listed in their Educational directory (although SL claims “hundreds” use it), in 24 countries, and includes universities, colleges, public schools, private companies, and institutions, including the ALA, NASA, and the USAF (Second Life Education, 2011).
It is still common for those researching on or in virtual worlds to be scoffed at by those with a ‘but it’s just a game’ mentality. Quoting research on the links between driving games and subsequent real-world speeding can prove helpful (Games, 2007). But against sanctimonious critics nothing is more satisfying than enlightening them in regard to the Proteus effect. Coined by Nick Yee and Jeremy Bailenson in their article “The Proteus effect: The effect of transformed self-representation on behavior” (2007), their research established links between the physical appearance (specifically height and attractiveness) of assigned avatars and the confidence levels and openness (respectively) of the participants. That participants exhibited investment and identification with assigned avatars is noteworthy for virtual world residents, but it has profound implications for those working or researching in these platforms (see Representational issues).

How people perceive their virtual representations and the subsequent effect on our behaviour is the focus of Elizabeth Dean, Sarah Cook, Michael Keating, and Joe Murphy’s research, specifically on the “potential link between obesity research and virtual worlds” (2009, p. 4). Preliminary findings presented in their article “Does this avatar make me look fat? Obesity and interviewing in Second Life” (2009) suggests that while active people do create physically fit avatars, there is evidence that healthier body images and active lifestyles in virtual worlds can motivate mirrored flourishing (positive FL changes) in residents’ lifestyles. While interesting in its own right, this study has been included here primarily
because of the methodology proposed, namely *In-avatar interviewing* (avatar-to-avatar). Furthermore, it provides clear evidence, as with f2f interviewing, that seemingly insignificant choices, such as the colour of an interviewer’s pen (Bischoping & Schuman, 1992), or in this case the apparent weight of the interviewing avatar, can affect results (Dean et al., 2009). Moreover, as everything in a virtual world such as SL, barring an avatar’s name, can be altered, the implications are equally exciting (with considered and intentional manipulation of interviewer traits and environments), and potentially fraught with pitfalls (caused by intentional, ill-considered, or unconsidered manipulation of interviewer traits and environments).

Building on their previous study, Yee, Bailenson, and now Nicholas Ducheneaut in “The Proteus effect: Implications of transformed digital self-representation on online and offline behavior” (2009) have taken their readers through the looking glass, and again expanded our understanding of the potential influence of virtual worlds. Stepping out of their controlled immersive virtual environment and into the online community WoW, they have extended the sphere of previous FL (Clore & Jeffrey, 1972; Levy & Atkins, 1969) and SL research (Yee & Bailenson, 2006) and confirmed that adopting roles within virtual environments can also lead to predictable outcomes, in that we behave how we think we should based on our appearance (Yee et al., 2009). In the case of the WoW study the authors found that height and attractiveness equated with confidence. Bridging the virtual and the real they then questioned whether the
Proteus effect would continue after leaving the virtual world. Findings from this immersive virtual world negotiation task study not only re-enforced earlier findings regarding the perceived link between height and confidence, but more significantly found that “behavioral changes stemming from the virtual environment transferred to subsequent face-to-face interactions” (Yee et al., 2009, p. 285). Whether in real-play or role-play an avatar is a skin we cleanly slip on but apparently not so cleanly remove, and “even small changes to our avatar can lead to immediate and significant changes in how we behave and interact with other people in a virtual environment” (Yee et al., 2009, p. 294). As such, both of the Proteus effect articles discussed here have produced a heightened awareness of the potential ramifications of researching in virtual worlds, and have informed perceptions of avatar presentation in this study (see Representational issues).

Approaching from a different angle, Jim Blascovich and Jeremy Bailenson in their book *Infinite reality: Avatars, eternal life, new worlds, and the dawn of the virtual revolution* (2011), instead of seeing virtual and real as a dichotomy, instead question the concept of reality as a constant (p. 15). Considering the differing ranges of visual, auditory, and olfactory awareness between given individuals, and with other species, “one might concede that reality is subjective,” even though it may seem constant to us as individuals (Blascovich & Bailenson, 2011, p. 10). Such a continuum of realities is made manifest when considering the nature

![Figure 1. A virtual box that can comfortably fit a small white rabbit and a pocket watch.](image-url)
of virtual worlds that exist simultaneously in both two and three dimensions. In a FL reality SL technically exists only in two dimensions, flat on a resident’s computer screen, within SL the objects and avatars appear to and behave as if in three dimensions and their controlling residents interact as such. The paradox of simultaneous 2D and 3D realities is easily visualized when considering the interior space of a virtual box (see Figure 1). In that such a box is spacious enough to comfortably fit a large white rabbit we have unknowingly started down the rabbit hole, as the only interior space is the one we have imagined (see Figure 2). The distance between virtual and *real* (whether diametric or sliding) is changing with new research and technologies. Blascovich and Bailenson successfully argue that daydreaming, storytelling, and even telephone conversations are manifestations of virtual realities (cellphones additionally as augmented reality) (2011). Additionally, the human “brain often fails to differentiate between virtual experiences and real ones” (Blascovich & Bailenson, 2011, p. 1), and cats and dogs cannot differentiate between FL and HDTV (high-definition television) (Blascovich & Bailenson, 2011). Further blurring any difference between virtual and real are the following:
• research on proxemics (the varying comfort distances maintained between individuals based on their relationships) shows that FL cultural norms are observed in VR;

• virtual pit research (wherein individuals are asked to cross said pits on virtual planks) can in fact cause extreme anxiety, “toes curl, palms sweat” (Blascovich & Bailenson, 2011, p. 38), and one in three participants refused to cross; and

• false memories can be induced by watching a virtual doppelgänger’s behaviour; over half of the elementary school children who saw their real-play avatar swimming with whales were adamant they had done so (Blascovich & Bailenson, 2011).

With each addition Blascovich and Bailenson’s sliding scale between the virtual and the real seems to be increasingly likely.

It should be noted that although storytelling and virtual environments have been presented here, for the purpose of clarity, as separate elements, one begins to see the crossovers that can be made between the various fields and disciplines. Moreover, it has been argued that our own imagination, our ability to conceive, construct, and tell stories was “the first virtual reality” (Birch & Heckler, 1996, p. 12), created between a teller and listener(s). Above and beyond the diversity of fields that are working in and on virtual worlds (only a fraction of which have been mentioned here) is the multiverse of virtual worlds (e.g.,
Second Life, Club Penguin, ReactionGrid, SmallWorlds, and Whyville, to name but a few), with equally diverse purposes, styles, and uses.

**Distance education.**

Numerous educators and institutions (as well as SL itself via Campus: Second Life) are advocating for the utilization of virtual worlds for distance education (Blascovich & Bailenson, 2011; Childress & Braswell, 2006; Faculty of Information & Media Studies [FIMS], 2009; Gee, 2010; Holmberg & Huvila, 2008; Molka-Danielsen & Deutschmann, 2009; Second Life, 2009). As such, distance education’s inclusion within this literature search has two purposes: first, to identify relevant research regarding any effects of technology on learning and knowledge transfer; second, to illustrate the crossovers already taking place between virtual worlds and distance education.

It is important at the outset to recognize the ample breadth of distance education and not to equate it with virtual worlds alone. As such, the historically-aware yet forward-looking book *Distance education: A systems view* (1996), by Michael G. Moore and Greg Kearsley, has proved both a comprehensive and enlightening resource for contemporary distance education, including fundamentals, history, scope, effectiveness, media, course design, teaching, students, and theory. Evidence from their survey of distance education research showed:
that between f2f and distance education there was “no significant difference in mastery of content,”

there was no difference in academic achievement,

f2f, teleconference, and correspondence study proved equally effective,

“distance learners should not be viewed as disadvantaged in their learning experiences,” and

“test scores, completion rates, and results of instruction by CMC were found to be no different from that of resident instruction” (Moore & Kearsley, 1996, pp. 62-63).

Moore and Kearsley conclude that “there is no evidence to suggest that classroom instruction is the optimum delivery method” (1996, p. 63). From this, and in relation to this study, some of the terminology used by Moore and Kearsley in their study must be clarified, namely “classroom... [as] delivery method” (1996, p. 63). In this study I would argue that the delivery method is narrative and the locations in which these narratives are shared are settings. As it is unknown what degree narrative played in the aforementioned instruction or for that matter if the material being covered was suited to narrative, the conclusions of Moore and Kearsley (1996) necessitate a closer study of the information transfer method when comparing f2f and CMC methods. The history and spectrum of distance education should be noted here so as to not mistakenly perceive f2f and CMC education as the sole options in a false dichotomy. Dating back to at least the mid-nineteenth century distance education has subsequently
been conducted by a variety of media including correspondence, slides, broadcast, shortwave, citizen band radio, and television (deClair, 2001; Perraton, 2000). Moreover, even with the plethora of CMC distance education options currently being offered to varying degrees, some of the earlier distance education vehicles are still being used (deClair, 2001; Perraton, 2000).

The impact of the technologies used for delivering distance education is explored as part of Mary Thorpe’s “Assessment and ‘third generation’ distance education” (1998) in which she critically explores the potential of distance education as observed at the Open University (OUUK). Thorpe contends that “the three generations have been characterised as ‘a progressive increase (from first to third generation) in learner control, opportunities for dialogue, and emphasis on thinking skills rather than mere comprehension” (1998, p. 271).

Having said this, she proceeds to tackle the assumption that “more advanced technology automatically means better learning – better because more interactive, more dialogue, more feedback” (Thorpe, 1998, p. 271), wisely noting that “old technologies are not necessarily passive” (Thorpe, 1998, p. 271). The potential benefits of third generation distance education such as increased “dialogue, and the opportunities for learning and demonstrating skills of collaboration and communication not possible in second generation distance education.... are not automatically triggered by the technology” (Thorpe, 1998, p. 284). What is apparent throughout the article are the changing norms,
expectations, and the increased importance of feedback, in both directions and to all participants, in contemporary distance education.

Within the complex field of distance education, virtual worlds hold a particular interest because of their supposed ability to emulate and therefore reproduce some of the benefits of f2f education. This supposition was scrutinized in Kim Holmberg and Isto Huvila's book *Learning together apart: Distance education in a virtual world* (2008), in which they presented a case study of a continuing education course for Finnish library personnel that utilized f2f, SL, and Moodle platforms. The course was designed “to study whether lectures in virtual worlds could bring the experience closer to f2f education [than traditional distance education methods] and hence enhance distance education” (Holmberg & Huvila, 2008, Introduction section, para. 2). The participants believed that: while f2f lectures were “better,” they could be replaced by those in SL; perceived barriers to participation in SL lectures felt lower; and compared to other forms of distance education, SL was “better” than webcasting, discussion boards, or videoconferencing (Holmberg & Huvila, 2008, Results section, para. 3). Subsequently, Holmberg and Huvila concluded that “education in Second Life is closer to face-to-face education than traditional methods of distance education that are based on asynchronous communication and two-dimensional media” (2008, Conclusion section, para. 1), and therefore the “sense of presence is very high” (2008, The virtual world of Second Life section, para. 5). While each of these factors was informative to my study, it was the multimodal capabilities of
SL, specifically that it is “possible to communicate through different channels at the same time” (Holmberg & Huvila, 2008, Discussion section, para. 2) namely voice, chat, and IM, that was expected to be most significant to SL storytelling sessions.

Looking beyond the possibility of emulating f2f learning in a virtual context, Michele D. Dickey’s “Three-dimensional virtual worlds and distance learning: Two case studies of Active Worlds as mediums for distance education” (2005) delves into the subtle differences that virtual worlds can have on the learning experience. In her study Dickey not only considers “how Active Worlds is being used for distance learning” (2005, p. 395), but also asks “what are the unique learning experiences afforded by this medium for spatially distant learners” (2005, p. 440)? While students “predictably answered that the main advantage was ‘not having to go to class’,“ during further questioning, many “expressed that the environment made them feel like they were ‘at school’ or ‘in school’ or ‘actually there’ embodied in the environment” (Dickey, 2005, p. 445). Of particular interest for my study was Dickey’s consideration of first-person versus third-person perspective (over-the-shoulder) (see Figure 3); both options are possible in Active Worlds and SL. Dickey’s consideration focused on the fact that “information taught in schools is often presented as ‘third-person symbolic experiences,’... [but] innately, much of how we learn is through first-person nonsymbolic experiences” (2005, p. 440). Furthermore, Dickey notes that the
third-person perspective “distances users from the impact of first-person discovery” (2005, p. 442). As such, her observations gave rise to a methodological issue for this study, as well as a series of questions to be posed to SL participants. In the case of the former, which perspective should a researcher’s avatar adopt when researching in SL? Second, which perspective(s) do participants choose when in-world? Do they utilize both, and if so, when and why do they switch?

Considerations of learning dynamics in virtual settings are also significant in Jean Foster Herron and Vivian H. Wright’s “Assessment in online learning: Are students really learning?” (2006) and Linda Lohr, Kathy Miller and Donald Winiecki’s "Using narrative strategies to enhance interactivity online" (2006). Both studies emphasize the significance of feedback for the participants. As feedback in online courses cannot, as in f2f instruction, be received “through physical distance, [and generally not by either] eye contact, [or] facial expressions” (Herron & Wright, 2006, p. 46), alternative methods need to be employed. At present these methods are primarily textual, and as such “the effectiveness of many distance-learning environments today relies on facilitator and learner ability to

Figure 3. Third-person (over-the-shoulder) and first-person views of the same location.
communicate effectively with written text” (Lohr et al., 2006, p. 101). It is important to note that while “interaction between faculty and students and students among other students remains key to learning, whether online or face-to-face” (Herron & Wright, 2006, p. 45), “[i]nteraction with the teacher is the most significant contributor to perceived learning” (Herron & Wright, 2006, p. 47). Additionally, the research of Lohr et al. suggests that the act of creating narratives, both as individuals and in collaborative environments, helps to fix newly learned information (2006). They also postulate that “students telling a story that relates to a new concept are essentially integrating that concept into their memory” (Lohr et al., 2006, p. 102). The association of new information in relation to “personal life experiences” [narratives] is argued as successful as “deeper learning is fostered when new knowledge is integrated into prior knowledge” (Lohr et al., 2006, p. 102). In relation to my study, it should be noted that while oral narratives are being listened to and observed, the majority of feedback in SL storytelling sessions is transmitted via text (Local Chat).

Building further onto a collaborative understanding of the potential of storytelling via the “sharing and construction of knowledge” (p.45) is Patrick J. Fahy’s article “The occurrence and character of stories and storytelling in a computer conference” (2007). Fahy positions his work as filling a gap regarding “unsubstantiated” claims:

- that storytelling is “an expressive social form and an interpersonal vehicle, a means for projecting teaching presence in online groups,”
that “the act of collectively listening to a story promotes social coherence (community), based on the emotions, themes, and vicarious experiences shared by the listeners,” and

that “[t]here is the added benefit that knowledge gained through narrative appears to exhibit greater coherence, probability, and fidelity, resulting in better retention and increased higher-order understanding” (2007, p. 46).

Fahy identified and utilized stories located within textual CMC transcripts in regard to their frequency, characteristics, and functions within the producing community (2007, p. 55). The results showed that stories [as internally identified] were utilized less frequently than had been expected, that they declined in usage over the duration of the course, and that the majority (58%) of stories were “primarily…descriptions of occurrences or experiences” (Fahy, 2007, p. 53). “Advice-giving” narratives constituted 27% of the stories shared, while only 16% featured “analysis (discussing why something had happened)” (Fahy, 2007, p. 53). Fahy also noted that although “[g]ender has elsewhere been identified as affecting online behaviour… [it] was not found to be a significant factor here” (Fahy, 2007, p. 53). This is thought provoking for this study, as gender while occasionally ambiguous for SL avatars is generally unknown (although assumed) for their respective residents.

Dee H. Andrews, Thomas D. Hull and Jennifer A. Donahue’s article “Storytelling as an instructional method: Descriptions and research questions”
(2009) and the subsequent book by Andrews, Hull and DeMeester, *Storytelling as an instructional method: Research perspectives* (2010), are in every way the antithesis to Sawyer’s *The way of the storyteller* (1990). Funded by the U.S. Air Force Office of Scientific Research to study the “theoretical and empirical foundations of storytelling as an instructional method” (Andrews et al., 2010, p. ix), including via distance, their conception of storytelling utilized very broad brushstrokes, included digital storytelling and narrative in video games, and made use of system dynamic modelling. In the pursuit of “more instructionally effective stories” (Andrews et al., 2010, p. 6), the 2010 manual is an ongoing series of skirmishes attempting to identify storytelling as either “cultural practices or... biological processes” (Andrews et al., 2010, p. 153). By this endeavour what they in fact discovered were yet more unanswered questions, such as:

- How much of the narrative should be written for emotional effect... [and] how much should just address the objectives?
- Is interrupting the narrative for teaching moments more or less effective than playing it through?

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4 A modeling method used for building “computer simulations of complex systems” which can then be utilized to design “more effective policies and organizations... or “flight simulators-microworlds where space and time can be compressed and slowed,” to afford access to the “long-term side effects of decisions” or to aid in the “understanding of complex systems, and design structures” (Sterman, 2000).
• How much impact does the individual storyteller have on the instructional effectiveness of the story, and more importantly, what about the storyteller makes him or her effective?
• How long are lessons learned from stories retained by the learner versus learning via other methods?
• Why do stories work from a cognitive standpoint?
• Is there a theory of storytelling as instruction? If not, should there be, and can there be? (Andrews et al., 2010)

While seemingly in line with other narrative and distance education research, this is an opportune moment to remember the ever-present warning of Sawyer, that “to bring a sophisticated attitude to a folk-art is to jeopardize it. Or rather, it is to make it into something that it is not” (1990, p. 27). Moreover, in these writings, Andrews, Hull, Donahue, and DeMeester introduce us to the darker potential of storytelling whose goals in this instance include to “desensitize” (2010, p. 123) and make “resilient soldiers” (2010, p. 119). In essence using storytelling both as an inoculation against and therapy for post-traumatic stress disorder (Andrews et al., 2009; Andrews et al., 2010).

Considered independently each of the works presented in this literature review contributed something in preparation for the study I conducted. However, when taken as a whole, what was very apparent was the ongoing problem and issue of vocabulary, made conspicuous within Concetta M. Stewart, Catherine C. Schifter, and Melissa E. Markaridian Selverian’s book *Teaching and learning with*
technology (2010). Included within are several chapters that are relevant for this study on both distance education and virtual realities, namely:

- “From Homer to high-tech: The impact of social presence and media richness on online mentoring in higher education,”
- “Virtual reality in education,” and
- “‘Real’ learning in virtual worlds: An integration of media, curricula and pedagogy through telepresence” (Stewart et al., 2010).

Also included is a very precise foreword, in which are spelled out for this book’s readers the differences between virtual realities (VR), multi-user virtual environments (MUVE), and augmented reality (Stewart et al., 2010).

Unfortunately, these definitions were completely ignored by all of the book’s contributors as they defined for themselves what these terms were to constitute in the context of their own chapters (Stewart et al., 2010, p. 151).

Discrepancies in terminology seem inevitable when crossing disciplines, and exponentially so when combining such diverse fields as storytelling, paleoneurology, neurophysiology, distance education, and computer-mediated communication. However, each of these works contributes, to differing degrees, to this study. Moreover, it is due to the very same diversity of fields, methodologies, theories, and even discrepancies, that added levels of depth and breadth, previously unimagined, will be lent to this and future narrative research. Finally, in such a diverse literature review it could be very easy to lose sight of the forest for the trees. The sheer variety of methods, purposes, and goals
presented herein can easily obscure the markers, breadcrumbs, and occasional rabbits this research is following, and ultimately the trail it is breaking. The scale and scope of narrative necessitates that the literature reviewed includes the practice and co-creation of narratives, as well as the people who choose to practice it. Moreover, it includes the research of those who seek to understand narrative’s origins, influence, and even purpose. Ultimately each path authors followed, broke, and mapped contributed and were necessary in my attempt to understand the nature of oral narratives when technologically mediated.
Chapter 2: Lessons in Spinning Straw for a King

Theory

Over the history of oral narrative research, researchers have utilized a wide variety of theories including development and deterioration theories, monogenesis and polygenesis, ‘reflection’ theories, morphology and ‘oral-theory,’ functionalism and ethnopoetics, feminist and Marxist theories, structuralist, post-structuralist, narratology and performance theory (Finnegan, 1992). Recently, and within LIS, research on storytelling has utilized psycholinguistic theory (Smardo, 1983), complexity theory (Figa, 2007), collectivist theory (McKenzie & Stooke, 2007), and social constructivism (Turner, 2009). While this may at first appear to be an unfocused hodgepodge, Brian Sturm, speaking about his own LIS research which utilized reader response theory to investigate the altered states of consciousness in storytelling (1999), shared the following description which can be superimposed onto oral narrative research in general:

The conceptual framework for this study is influenced by the theoretical principles of multiple disciplines, including psychology, cognitive science,
With this understanding an encompassing image of oral narrative research begins to come into focus and, in actuality, it is not a hodgepodge but a smörgåsbord that must utilize a variety of theories based on the requirements and focus of the specific research being undertaken.

This study draws on narratology and social presence theory, but applies said theories not to the printed word but to live, performative discourse. Narratology, a “theory of narrative texts, images, spectacles, events [and] cultural artifacts that ‘tell a story’” (Bal, 2007, p. 3; see also O’Neill, 1996; Prince, 1982), was chosen as one of the lenses for this study for several reasons. First, it provides the language with which to investigate the chosen discernable unit of study, namely a narrative (Aldama, 2010; McQuillan, 2000; Phelan & Rabinowitz, 2005). Second, beyond “[t]he founding principle upon which contemporary narratology is constructed [that being] that narrative is an essentially divided endeavour, involving… the story (or narrative content) and the discourse (or narrative presentation)” (O’Neill, 1996, p. 3), it can also accommodate the variety of media capable of perpetuating narrative information (Bal, 2007; Barthes, 1966; Prince, 1982; Scholes, Phelan & Kellogg, 2006). Third, narratology can accommodate the consideration of narratives as “cultural artifacts” (Bal, 2007; see also Bal & Jobling, 1991; Bauman, 1992, 1996; Boyd, 2009; Lord, 1964). Due to the unique
nature of au’oral narratives (Ripley, 2011), this lens of narratology was polished with the work of Walter J. Ong regarding primary orality (1971; 1982; 2002a-e), F. C. Bartlett’s research on the mind’s transformation of narrative to fabula (1954), and Ruth Finnegan’s work on oral traditions and the verbal arts (1988; 1992). The utilization of narratology to study oral narratives in this way will in turn expand our understanding of narratology.

While narrative is what the participants in the groups being observed have in common, presence is how they differ. Social presence and social presence theory have transformed with the creation and consideration of new technologies, morphing from “the degree of salience of the other person in the interaction” (Short, William, & Christie, 1976, p. 65), through “the extent to which other beings (living or synthetic) also exist in the world and appear to react to you” (Heeter, 1992, Three dimensions section, para. 3), “a subjective measure of the presence of others” (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997, p. 10), and a “sensory awareness of the embodied other” (Biocca, Harms, and Burgoon, 2003, p. 462). No doubt these definitions will continue to be redefined. Relevant factors identified regarding “a communicator’s sense of awareness of the presence of an interaction partner”

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5 A unified theory of the attributes of spoken communication that incorporates both that which is spoken (oral) and that which is heard (aural). When discussing their symbiotic nature the use of oral and oral or even oral/aural can suggest an unintended delineation of the concepts. The amalgam au’oral “(pronounced as in O’Neill) was created based on the Celtic concept of Mac and O’ (being, The son of), and therefore what is heard is born of what is spoken” (Ripley, 2011).
or social presence, include “clear benefits of seeing the face compared with audio-only” (O’Malley, Langton, Anderson, Doherty-Sneddon, & Bruce, 1996, p. 177), and also that “video communication is different to face-to-face interaction” (O’Malley et al., 1996, p. 190). This is significant for those using avatars as, while speakers who can see each other are “more confident that mutual knowledge is successfully established” (O’Malley et al., 1996, p. 189), for listeners it is the “movements of the lips, tongues and jaw [which] help to disambiguate speech; facial expressions [that] can help in interpreting the speaker’s intentions; [and] direction and duration of gaze helps in regulating turn taking” (O’Malley et al., 1996, p. 178). While some of these kinesic and paralinguistic cues can be approximated, in the vast majority of virtual worlds, when even available, they are not accurate one-to-one mappings of a resident’s face, gaze, posture, and movements. Social presence theory, as envisaged by Short et al., in their book *The social psychology of telecommunications* (1976), could be seen as dated in that “social presence theory was not originally designed to explain CMC” (Tu, 2002, p. 34). However, social presence theory continues to prove its vitality, not only providing “the groundwork for many theories on new medium effects” (University of Twente, 2011), but also providing the foundation for numerous contemporary understandings of social presence theory itself (Biocca & Harms, 2002; Biocca & Levy, 1995; International Society for Presence Research [ISPR], 2011;
Lowenthal, 2010; Newberry, 2009; Stein & Wanstreet, 2003; Tu & McIssac, 2002; Wheeler, 2005).

Ultimately it is the juxtaposition of narratology and social presence theory that made them the apt lenses for this study. As social presence “is important for the process by which man [sic] comes to know and think about other persons, their characteristics, qualities and inner states” (University of Twente, 2011), extrapolating that understanding to the various narrative participants (real, implied, or character), social presence is then not only relevant but elemental to storytelling. Approaching from the other direction, the discourse of narratives requires social presence, although it utilizes a different vocabulary, namely focalization on and narrative empathy with real and implied authors, real and implied narrators, and real and implied listeners, and to a lesser extent character-focalization and empathy. Finally, it is generally held that “narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has [sic] been a people without narrative…. narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself” (Barthes, 1979, p. 79). As such, even with Short et al., and increasingly a societal and a research shift, “from face-to-face towards mediated communication” (1976, p. 61), the original, and omnipresent, baseline of communication, f2f narrative, still exists, at cognitive and neuropsychological levels.
Research Questions

Taking into consideration the various stakeholders, research threads, and theories presented above, the questions of interest for this study were:

1. Does electronic mediation affect oral narrative story co-creation and information transfer? If yes,
2. How are oral narrative story co-creation and information transfer affected when so mediated?

Methodology

I conducted a comparative case study of oral narratives, co-created by FL (first life) and SL (Second Life) storytellers and listeners to determine if, and if so then how, electronic mediation affected oral narrative story co-creation and information transfer. FL stories were observed in situ synchronously and also asynchronously via compact discs (CD) and online videos. I used a combination of participant observation of storytelling sessions (Finnegan, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spradley, 1980) and qualitative semi-structured exploratory narrative interviews (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2006) (in person and in-world) with both storytellers and listeners from FL and SL storytelling communities. Participant observation allowed me to observe the multifaceted and multidirectional information transfer that occurs during live storytelling (including but not limited to proxemic, kinesic and paralinguistic cues, social presence, practice, and behaviour), and to account for
the unique nature of virtual communities (the physical distances between members and their seemingly anonymous nature). The interviews were required to “fill in the holes” (Patton, 2002, p. 317), and discover why people do what they do. This section of the design was particularly necessary for SL tellers and listeners as avatars can be observed during storytelling events, but the behaviours of their respective residents (which can be captured by interviews) cannot. It should be noted that in order to pre-test the effectiveness of participant observation as a method for collecting data, a pilot study was conducted in the summer of 2011 in which 10 publicly accessible storytelling sessions were observed (five in FL and five in SL). From the pilot study it was concluded that participant observation was an appropriate method for this study’s objectives. Moreover, the observed sessions proved most informative for the designing this study’s methodology.

**Storytelling groups observed.**

The groups observed in the pilot study (i.e. The Storytelling Guild of Second Life (SGSL) and 1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling) were again selected as appropriate for the full study. In addition, CDs from current and former members of 1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling were also investigated, as were online videos of FL storytellings undertaken at publicly accessible sessions of The Moth (http://themoth.org/), and later uploaded onto the internet by the same group. It should be noted that while the Storytelling Guild of Second Life at the time of the
full study had approximately 400 members, one need not be a member of the
group to attend their sessions. Likewise, those present at any given 1001 Friday
Nights of Storytelling session (tellers and listeners) need not be members or
repeat participants. As such, observations were made of participants technically
from outwith of these groups, although it should be noted that those who were
subsequently interviewed were all regular attendees and active participants.

1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling is a recurring event and not a group per se. As
such, the populations attending these events are both transient and amorphous.
This is not deemed to be an issue for this study as although these individuals are
the participants being observed and interviewed, the units of study are the stories
being told. As such, the final number of participants observed was based entirely
on the number of individuals or avatars who attended the observed storytelling
sessions. Attendance numbers at the FL sessions were generally between 30 to
40 individuals per session (with the majority attending multiple session), while for
SL sessions the attendance generally ranged from 10 to 20 participants per
session (with a core dozen attending regularly). Accounting for repeat attendance
the observed and identified participants during the pilot study included 38 FL
participants over five sessions, whereas for the same number of SL sessions 60
avatars were actively observed. Over the course of the pilot and full studies 227
active tellers and listeners were identified and observed. It should be noted that
more listeners were in fact present during these sessions, but they made no
contribution that was noted in this study. In regard to CD and video sessions only
the teller was observed.

Little if anything has been written about these groups themselves save what they have self-published. For the Storytelling Guild of Second Life there is nothing more than the group’s online profile:

Storytellers and lovers of storytelling unite! This is the guild for those who are interested in telling and shar[es] stories, myths, legends and tall tales. Guild founder is storyteller Gilbert Sapwood (RL storyteller and author Dale Gilbert Jarvis). If you are a member, you can invite others!
(Second Life, 2009)

The 1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling webpage (http://www.1001fridays.org/) is somewhat more informative:

Every Friday night since 1978, storytellers and listeners have been gathering in downtown Toronto for an open evening of oral stories. Each Friday night is unique, and everyone is welcome to come and listen, come and tell. On these nights, we come as listeners and as tellers, not as readers: we might speak, sing, recite, ramble, or recount, but we do it spontaneously or from memory, not from a written page. You might hear traditional tales, stories of personal experience, literary stories, original stories, ballads, or episodes from history, all told through the human voice.
(2009)
To this can be added *Tales for an unknown city: Stories from One Thousand and One Friday Nights of Storytelling* (1992), collected by Dan Yashinsky. The book is, however, much more than a collection of tales transfixed on paper. These tales also tell the story of the group, and of the people who came to tell, to listen, and to share. Additional information regarding 1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling can also be gleaned in the individual writings of three of its founding members, namely Dan Yashinsky (1992; 1998; 2005; 2013), Alice Kane (1995), and Joan Bodger (2000).

As previously noted, during the course of this study two additional research sources were identified, the first being CDs of stories told by various 1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling members (hereafter referred to as AO, audio only), and the second being online videos of stories told and recorded at various Moth sessions. Founded by the poet and novelist George Dawes Green in 1997, The Moth is:

An acclaimed not-for-profit organization dedicated to the art and craft of storytelling. It is a celebration of both the raconteur, who breathes fire into true tales of ordinary life, and the storytelling novice, who has lived through something extraordinary and yearns to share it. (2014)

Comparable to 1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling, The Moth:

Has presented thousands of stories, told live and without notes, to standing-room-only crowds worldwide. Moth shows are renowned for the great range of human experience they showcase. (2014)
Moreover:

Since each story is true and every voice authentic, the shows dance between documentary and theater, creating a unique, intimate, and often enlightening experience for the audience. Moth stories dissolve socio-economic barriers, expose vulnerabilities, and quietly suggest ways to overcome challenges and see with new eyes. (The Moth, 2014)

These additional AO and Moth sessions were added to this study to further explore the role of social presence in relation to oral narrative sharing, and as they presented different levels and combinations of mediation than those in either the synchronous FL or SL sessions, including physical, and spatial, but also temporal.

The various storytelling units (6), the multiple sessions (38 over 52 hours), and the numerous noted participants (227), in conjunction with the inevitable overlaps within this study (as the same individual could be a listener and teller in multiple sessions, including AO, and also interviewed), present situations rife for misattribution. As such, the nomenclature created for this study’s field notes and reflexive journal has been be re-employed here for the sake of clarity. The nomenclature includes a pseudonym, and when in relation to a storytelling session a Greek letter to indicate the relevant storytelling unit (θ, β, Φ, Δ, Ω, ψ), and a numeral (indicating a temporal placement within the set). As such a reference to the third SL pilot session (but not in relation to a specific person) would be β3. Whereas, a reference in regard to Frankie from the 5th FL pilot
session would be (Frankie, θ5), from the 2nd FL session would be (Frankie, Φ2), from Frankie’s AO session (Frankie, Ω1), and from Frankie’s interview (Frankie, Φ). For a comprehensive list see Appendix A. Finally, it should be noted that these groups were selected not only because of their respective longevities, but also on the grounds of accessibility, their prolific storytelling, their generosity regarding the sharing of stories, and quite simply their willingness to participate.

Observation.

Within the spectrum of participant observation (Spradley, 1980) I adopted a participant-as-observer role (both in person and in-world). The role of participant-as-observer was selected as I am a known listener (and occasional teller) at 1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling sessions, and as two of my SL avatars (Gnutt Muggins and Eckland Stormcrow) are members of the Storytelling Guild of Second Life. Moth and AO sessions were conducted in private from publicly accessible media. Additionally, numerous individuals from both FL and SL groups were aware of the research project, from the pilot study and had expressed interest in participating. While the presence of a researcher can increase the possibility of affecting those being observed, as these sessions were performative in nature and as I was a known individual within said FL and SL groups, the habituation of my altered role from listener to participant-as-observer was not expected to create any significant affects, and this indeed appeared to be the case during both the pilot and full study. As the meetings of
the FL, SL, and Moth groups are fully open to the public and take place in public venues, I did not seek informed consent of observed participants (this research practice was approved in the ethics reviews). It was assumed that those who attended were aware that their behaviour was visible to others. In each of these venues, participant observation was appropriate as the situations I was interested in collecting data about consisted of naturally occurring behaviours in real life settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spradley, 1980). As the storytelling sessions generally only lasted one to two hours (SL and AO sessions 1 hour and FL sessions 2 hours; Moth storytelling videos were combined to create approximately 1 hour sessions), the goal was to observe these sessions in full. It should again be made clear though that an observed unit for this study was individual narratives and not a given session, or specific teller(s) or listener(s). However, as the number of stories told during any given session was unpredictable, an individual session may have a dozen stories and a similar number of tellers, but could also consist of a single teller with a single story (or part thereof in the case of an epic). Although it would have been possible to observe a fixed number of stories via each participant group regardless of the number of sessions required (e.g., 20 SL stories taking 14 sessions contrasting 20 FL stories in 2.5 sessions), such a decision would have applied a level of importance to the narrative unit over all other factors that was and is unsubstantiated. Adding to the five FL and five SL sessions already attended for the pilot study between July and September of 2011, the full study included an
additional nine FL and nine SL sessions, as well as five AO and five Moth sessions, between July 2012 and August 2013 for a total of approximately 52 hours of oral narrative observation. While observation does not readily allow for getting at the reasons for particular types of behaviours, participant observation did allow me to observe verbal and physical strategies used by tellers and listeners as they participated in these sessions. This said, “[t]he complex nature of orality, or word-of-mouth transactions, renders the goal of isolating and studying orally based information challenging” (Turner, 2010, p. 370). As such participant observation allowed me to observe the multifaceted and multidirectional information transfer that occurs during live storytelling (including but not limited to proxemic, kinesic and paralinguistic cues, social presence, practice, and behaviour), and to account for the unique nature of virtual communities (the physical distances between members and their seemingly anonymous nature). Furthermore, it was relatively unobtrusive and, as was discovered during the pilot study, even my fully disclosed presence and purpose (at the FL sessions) seemed to have no effect on the behaviour or the participants.

During the pilot study it was discovered that in SL storytelling sessions there are three distinct information channels utilized: visual, audio, and textual. While every effort was made to (a) watch the participants, (b) listen to the narrative, and (c) read the Local Chat, it proved impossible to comprehensively do all three at the same time. As such, the SL Local Chat that occurs during the session was
subsequently captured. Unlike SL IM which has a level of privacy, Local Chat is open to any avatar within geographic proximity to residents’ respective avatars (30 virtual metres). Therefore there is no inherent belief of privacy. However, out of context from the oral narrative being transmitted via Voice, Local Chat is the equivalent of hearing disjointed snippets from various telephone conversations. As such, for Local Chat to be of any real value an audio capture of the initiating narrative was also required. As there are only two information channels in FL storytelling sessions, no recordings of the narratives were ever made.

Storytelling Guild of Second Life events take place at a variety of times and locations within SL. As such, a diverse set of events with various locations, hosts, and storytellers were attended by the researcher’s SL avatars (Gnutt Muggins and Eckland Stormcrow), and subsequently observed by the researcher via a computer. Said computer was in my home and I was alone during observations. The level of privacy at individual participant locations was solely their decision and responsibility. Whenever possible, specific avatars, identified as storytellers, were solicited in a snowball process (Patton, 2002). In every other way the researcher’s avatar followed the suggested etiquette for attending a live performance in SL including:

- Enabling and setting audio, video, and voice chat functions,
- Disabling the text-chat gesture and sound effects,
- The use of IM (instant messaging) for all private conversations,
Using chat only for public conversations and commenting on the venue or performance,
Using restraint in regard to activating gestures: “You’ll probably annoy no one by sticking to modest cheer and clap gestures whenever they seem appropriate,”
Always keeping in mind that “gesture sounds override the live audio stream and will be heard over the performer,”
That “typing feedback (silently, if done during the show) is also appreciated by most performers,”
“Be very mindful of lag, [and that d]ifferent audience members experience lag differently at the same time.” As such, “it is very common for SL residents not to see a performance as it was intended or performed by its producers,” and
“Tipping performers in Linden dollars at the end of a show helps pay for basic expenses involved in producing more elaborate performances... The amount is completely up to you, but if there is no admission ticket to pay, about L$250 (approximately $1CDN) is an average tip. Just give what you feels [sic] right to you” (Sant, 2009, pp. 147-49).

Conversely, 1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling events occur and therefore were observed on Fridays, from 8:00 to 10:00 p.m., at the Innis College Café, 2 Sussex Avenue, Toronto. On occasion however, their events are held elsewhere, generally when the Friday in question is also a public holiday and the Innis
College Café is unavailable. These particular events were not observed as they often take place in “a private home in the neighbourhood,” and participants (tellers and listeners) must “ask us if you want details” (1001, 2009). Storytelling etiquette at 1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling required less preparation: sit, listen, enjoy. Anyone wishing to tell (time permitting) need only accept the *talking stick* (a ceremonial object of no fixed size or shape that recognizes the authority of the speaker (Yashinsky, 2005, p. 56). There are exceptions for special events where programs are organized, but these sessions were not part of this study. Exclamations, gasps, laughter, and clapping from the listeners are acceptable within moderation. Interjections, while they do occur, appear limited only to those known by the teller and appropriateness will no doubt vary with individual tellers. Conversations, public and private, do occur between stories, but should never take place during a telling. If for any reason a listener must leave the venue (i.e. to catch a bus or spend a penny) it is polite to wait until a teller has finished telling. Furthermore, while beverages are often provided (for a nominal donation) during these storytelling sessions, common sense regarding refills and consuming noisy food should prevail. It should also be noted that tipping storytellers is neither expected nor appropriate. Having said this, and while there is no admission price, a *suggested* donation of $5 CDN to help defray the cost of renting the space is appreciated.
Finally, all AO and Moth sessions were observed in a controlled private venue, and afforded the same level of privacy and anonymity as the FL and SL participants.

**Disclosure.**

Due in no small part to the disclosures made during the pilot study, the researcher, and his purpose at a given session (whether as James Ripley, Gnutt Muggins, or Eckland Stormcrow), was already known to numerous FL and SL individuals in attendance. During the observed sessions, when previously unaware listeners or tellers became aware of the researcher’s actions, his purpose was explained as was the fact that nothing would be recorded which might identify specific individuals. To maintain the good will and cooperation of the hosting groups, were any objections to the researcher’s presence noted the researcher would have removed himself or his avatar (as appropriate) from the venue immediately; thankfully this never occurred. Because Gnutt Muggins and Eckland Stormcrow (James Ripley) are members of the Storytelling Guild of Second Life, advertisements for all Guild events (public and private) were received. Only storytelling events that took place in public venues, whether in FL or SL, were observed. Moreover, due to the disclosures of the pilot study, and as advertisements and snowball sampling were used to identify potential interviewees, a large percentage of attendees at any session were aware of the study.
Interviews.

In addition to session observation, purposefully-sampled qualitative semi-structured exploratory narrative interviews (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2006) were conducted with both storytellers and listeners from FL (in person) and SL (via e-mail) storytelling communities. FL interviews included participants of the 1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling Group and AO sessions. No Moth tellers were approached to be interviewed as the technological mediation of their tellings was the same as the 1001 interviewees (i.e. live, in-person, via microphone). Only the mediation of my listening to their stories differed (i.e. video recorded, time-delayed, and spatially disparate). The choice of the interview method arose from the need for the participants to reflect thoughtfully on their current practice within an awareness of their prior experience. Interviews “permit [participants] to move back and forth in time – to reconstruct the past, interpret the present, and predict the future” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 273). The choice of narrative interviews (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009) specifically rested upon three factors. First, this study is concerned with the effectiveness of narrative information transfer, and “telling stories is essentially a meaning-making process” (Seidman, 2006, p. 7). Second, the narrative interview method fits the base units of the study, namely told narratives. Finally, the narrative interview method fit the known interests and behaviours of the participants. Those interviewed from both FL/AO and SL were selected from those who expressed an interest in participating in the interviews, and those
willing and believed to possess an informative perspective (Seidman, 2006). This purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2006) included both tellers and listeners, those comfortable and uncomfortable with the introduction and use of technology in storytelling sessions, and professionals and amateurs alike. Whenever possible individuals were approached in person (Seidman, 2006, p. 46) and information sheets were available for all those who were interested. According to Seidman, interviews are “an interactive reflection of every step of the interview process and different for each study and each researcher” (2006, p. 55) and, as such, the number of interviews required for saturation could vary. Therefore for this study the number of individuals to be interviewed in each group was not predetermined, nor did the number of participants interviewed from each group necessarily need to be the same. As such, FL/AO interviews continued until saturation was reached at eleven (i.e. participants were no longer sharing any new information), whereas in the case of SL until volunteers ceased to volunteer, at only four (Seidman, 2006). While Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest saturation is often reached with 15 to 18, this quantity was not necessary in regard to FL/AO interviews as saturation was reached with slightly fewer participants, and not possible for SL interviews. Although multiple attempts were made via various avenues to solicit SL interview participants and many expressed some interest, unfortunately only four SL storytellers ultimately agreed to be interviewed. Thankfully said participants were highly informative both in regard to their SL but also significantly their FL storytelling practices. As such, in
conjunction with the 1001 participants a total of 15 interviews were conducted, meeting Miles and Huberman’s (1994) 15-18 suggested saturation window. Further attempts to solicit more SL interviewees were ultimately stopped lest residents begin to feel pestered and my goodwill within the group be damaged. Interview schedules for participants from each of these groups (see Appendix B (for FL/AO) & Appendix C (for SL)) were written to accommodate the perceived unique natures of the varied modes of narratives, as well as the stories of the respective tellers, while seeking to afford all individuals with comparable prompts to elicit narrative information. Participants were asked to reflect on micro through to macro levels, and although participants were only be able to reflect on their own contributions, this highly subjective self-analysis, utilizing their own experiences, observations, and insights, often proved illuminating.

To encourage participation and provide a semblance of security for both participants and researcher, interviews for in person participants were conducted f2f and held at mutually agreed-upon public venues conducive to the interviewee (e.g., coffee shops, libraries). For FL/AO interviews digital audio files were made and stored on a secure computer. The files were subsequently transcribed and anonymised. Interviews with SL participants were offered as avatar-to-avatar (In-Avatar Interviewing) and were to take place in a purpose-built space on The University of Western Ontario’s island. Surprisingly the first interviewee, due to time constraints and differing time-zones, asked if the interview could be conducted via email. As every effort was being made to accommodate
interviewees this request was granted. Subsequently, all SL interviewees requested the same accommodation, and the interviews took place via a series of emails. Disappointingly, all of the effort of constructing a SL interview space was unnecessary and it has since been deconstructed. In the case of both FL and SL interviewees, follow-up verifications were sought, thus affording them the opportunity to make revisions, clarifications, and additions to said interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Data Analysis.**

A holistic case sensitive analysis (Patton, 2002) was undertaken, utilizing session observation field notes (including environment drawings and a prolific number of kinesic gesture sketches, including hands, arms, faces, and body positioning (See Figure 4), and a reflexive journal (both marked with discrete coding) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), Local Chat (in the case of SL sessions) and interview data, which were open coded for emergent themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The raw data was assembled, case records constructed, nested case studies written as narratives (Patton, 2002), and then between-case comparisons were conducted (Palys, 2003). In an attempt to remain open to “new
opportunities and insights" (Soy, 1997, Step 5 section, para. 1), all observational, chat, and interview data was compared both within and outwith its originating environment. Finally, both formal and informal member checking was undertaken (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Rigour and trustworthiness.**

In an attempt to demonstrate rigour and establish trustworthiness in and for this study, an array of methods and steps were utilized to establish credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was established by employing a series of measures advised by Lincoln & Guba (1985), specifically:

- Prolonged exposure to the participants and groups to provide context, build trust and account for distortions (internal, external, perceptual, and selective),

- Persistent observation to allow for the recognition of pervasive qualities and the identification of irrelevancies and atypical behaviours,

- Triangulation through multiple sources (groups and individuals), multiple methods (observation and interviews) and multiple theories (narratology and social presence),

- Peer debriefings with a series of “disinterested peers” (pp. 308-09),

- Negative case analysis which involves the ongoing “process of revising hypotheses with hindsight” (p. 309),
• Inclusion of referential adequacy, namely the preservation and storage of raw data, in this case interview audio files and transcripts, and
• Informal member checks of interview transcripts by the participating interviewee, via summaries of interviews by other interviewees, and from “insights gleaned from one group... tested with another” (p. 314).
Furthermore, transferability was sought by providing “the widest possible range of information,” also known as a “thick description” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316). Dependability was achieved through an ongoing inquiry audit by the researcher's dissertation committee. Finally, confirmability was established through an extensive audit trail of triangulation, an archive of transcripts, audio files, and the keeping of a reflexive journal.

Confidentiality, privacy, and intellectual property.

Pseudonyms were used to identify all participants in all aspects of this study. SL participants were not asked to provide their FL names or those of any avatar(s). SL residents often have multiple avatars referred to as alts. Details regarding individuals and events (e.g., names, specific dates, locations) that may identify the same have not been included in the study results.

All field notes, audio files, and transcripts were stored at the researcher’s home for the duration of the study. Moreover, all electronic information related to the study was stored on a password protected computer at all times. All field notes and transcripts were anonymised. Finally, while the aforementioned data
will be kept by the researcher for an indefinite period of time for teaching and further research purposes, all original narratives told at any session, be it FL, SL, AO, and or The Moth, remain the intellectual property of the teller.

Representational issues.

While a consideration of issues regarding researcher representation is necessary for all research, for those researching in virtual worlds the issues of researcher appearance and disclosure takes on some unique elements. Although full disclosure was given, linking the identities of the researcher (James Ripley) and his avatars (Gnutt Muggins and Eckland Stormcrow), as well as their purpose in SL and at the various storytelling events, the ability to adopt literally any appearance, clothing, race, gender, species, and dimensions, presents opportunities to be utilized as well as added considerations for acceptance by the desired participants.

To begin with, avatars need not resemble their residents. The realities of SL allow for individual participants (known as residents) to have multiple distinct avatars each of which can have an unlimited number of appearances, including clothing, multiple skins (be they skin-like, faux-fur or feather, mock metal or marshmallow), and forms. Some forms are human, others are humanoid, fantastic, and even inanimate. They include but are not limited to the SL equivalent of male and female anatomy and can mimic various human racial physical characteristics such as skin tones and facial features.
In that people are influenced by appearances (Dowd, 1989; Milgram, 1974), there are clearly ethical considerations for how researchers present themselves (Berg, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spradley, 1980). Extrapolating to include research on the influence of appearance in SL (Nakamura, 2008; Yee et al., 2009) the issue then becomes that this influence would be based not on the appearance of the researcher but rather on the appearance of the researcher’s avatar. Unlike FL researchers, avatar appearance, including apparent age, race, gender, species, and size are all easily malleable and could be tailored to intentionally, or through a lack of consideration, inadvertently affect the behaviour witnessed and information afforded by SL participants. This is not, in and of itself, a justification for unobtrusive or deceptive observation methods, rather a highlighting of a potential issue that if considered carefully can be mitigated.

The primary issue became one of disclosure, and how to present oneself, via one’s avatar, without misrepresenting, misinforming, or misleading the potential and actual participants. One possible answer was to create an avatar physically comparable to the FL researcher. This practice within VW is referred to as real-play. While such an option is possible in SL, in utilizing an avatar that is potentially physically comparable to the FL researcher, there may in fact be more potential for misleading.

Figure 5. Wagner James Au and his SL avatar Hamlet Au.
research participants, even if unintentionally (Blascovich & Bailenson, 2011). Adding to this dilemma, in the participant culture of SL and in SL’s own acceptable behaviour policy, there is nothing mandated that an avatar should resemble its resident. As such, there is widespread speculation (although no accurate census data exists) regarding the racial and gender makeup of avatars compared to their residents (Nakamura, 2008). Furthermore, avatar idealization and role playing is now a fundamental aspect of SL culture and commonly understood by SL residents. The utilization of an apparently female avatar by a male resident may be a commonly assumed reality for SL residents but would be ethically dubious for a FL researcher.

Considering all of the above issues regarding physical characteristics of avatars for researchers in SL, to avoid any assumptions by participants or unintended deceptions on my part, the most appropriate solution seemed to be not to use a highly realistic and representative avatar (see Figure 5), but quite the opposite: a fantastic (see Figure 6). By utilizing a fantastic avatar, rather than a human one, there should be no misunderstandings, misinformation or misleading. I do not look like Gnutt Muggins or Eckland Stormcrow. No one does, and that is the point. If a human avatar was used, they could be taller, thinner, more athletic, better dressed, more handsome, wearing a doctor’s white coat, or

Figure 6. My SL avatars, Gnutt Muggins and Eckland Stormcrow.
conversely a black uniform. As such, the possibility exists that some of that avatar could be interpreted as me. These decisions were made so as to foster without distracting from the interview process. The information being elicited from the participants was always the primary focus.

The accommodation of participant avatar appearances was also in need of consideration. This is not to suggest that a researcher’s avatar should mimic the appearance of a participant. However a Tiny or a brontosaurus may be more comfortable speaking to a researcher’s avatar of similar scale. As such, avatar skins, ranging from a Tiny sand crab to an adult dragon, were cached within the researcher’s Inventory should they have been required.

Limitations of the study.

Factors intentionally not addressed in this study, or limitations by design, were the questions surrounding the potential effects of:

- The age of participants (listeners and tellers),
- The cultural origins of either the narratives or of the participants themselves,
- The durations, genres and tenses of the narratives,
- The position of the 4th wall, and
- The skill of the storyteller(s), the oral literacy level(s) of the listener(s) and or the size, make-up and location of the participants.
Whether these elements, participants and or related narratives have any effect or to what degree they may influence the effects of electronic mediation on oral narrative story co-creation and information transfer was considered beyond the scope of this study. So delineated, potential issues still identified in this study can be divided into issues of comparison, mediation, genre and saturation.

Potential issues of comparison.

Although 1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling, The Storytelling Guild of Second Life, and The Moth each have long histories and their respective story-sharing outputs are prolific, comparisons of the stories shared during their sessions may still not be ideal as the ratios of professional to seasoned and or novice amateurs are unknown. While the skill levels of participating storytellers, for practical reasons, was not a factor for inclusion, disproportionate skill levels of tellers could potentially skew observational conclusions. Additionally, comparable durations of stories shared by these groups in no way guaranteed comparable quality of tellings. Furthermore, while the units of study for this research are the stories and not the sessions, SL sessions predominantly featured only one to three predetermined tellers, compared to 1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling sessions where anyone could tell if they wished, AO sessions that consist of only a single teller, and Moth sessions (as defined for this study) which were artificially assembled to conform to the other groups’ session durations. As such, SL tellers were unlikely to present the variety of skill levels that regularly appeared at 1001
Friday Nights of Storytelling sessions or that were selected by The Moth for uploading to the internet. The final comparative concern was that the Storytelling Guild of Second Life sessions consisted predominantly of stories being read aloud in contrast to the other groups telling stories without the use of any fixed text. Discovered during the pilot study, this revelation was absorbed into the study for consideration as differing definitions of storytelling, and with fixed narrative text as yet another form of technological mediation. Ultimately, although where issues were found in comparing telling and reading stories aloud they were addressed, some concerns still exist in regard to these differences and the comparability of these two variants of storytelling.

**Potential issues of mediation.**

Another potential weakness of this study was that while SL was selected because of its highly mediated nature, (i.e. between teller(s) and listener(s) are microphones, computer screens, speakers, a lot of geography and the anonymity afforded by each participants avatar/persona), in contrast to the relative intimacy of FL telling, multiple levels of mediation may limit any potential generalizability to less mediated platforms such as Skype, teleconferencing, or microphones. This concern may be mitigated by the inclusion of AO and Moth sessions.
**Potential issues of genre.**

While the stories included in this study were not limited by genre, as 1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling, the Storytelling Guild of Second Life, and AO sessions, unlike The Moth, are not technically genre specific, it is possible that the type of story may matter. So, whereas 1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling and the AO sessions included a variety of story types (e.g., family stories, faerie tales, and folklore), the Storytelling Guild of Second Life sessions are predominantly either fiction, faerie tales or myths (collocated thematically), and The Moth sessions are supposed to all be both personal and real.

**Potential issues of saturation.**

As previously discussed the disappointing response rate for SL interviews was at the time a cause for concern. Working under the preconception that I would need to conduct 15-18 interviews from each of the FL and SL groups to reach saturation, being able to secure only four SL storytellers for interviews seemed woefully short of Miles and Huberman’s (1994) suggested number. However, when these goals were set the study was still only considering FL and SL storytelling, and the presumption was that the two groups would be discrete. While ideally a larger number of SL volunteers would have agreed to be interviewed with the subsequent inclusion of both AO and Moth storytelling sessions, the extra 10 sessions presenting even more variations in technology, the study moved away from the initial one-to-one comparison between FL and
SL. Of the 15 participants who were interviewed 13 tell in various FL sessions, four tell in SL sessions, at least two post videos of their tellings online, one spoke of creating storytelling CDs (numerous participants mentioned owning such formats although rarely listening to them), two are published authors and another one posts his stories online as text and likes to listen to Moth tellings via podcasts. As such, FL and SL storytelling are clearly not an either or endeavour for these storytellers and to consider and present them as such would be to cherry-pick and ultimately misrepresent their storytelling and storylistening. Moreover, the initial seeming imbalance of 11:4 FL:SL storytellers interviewed is misleading. Whereas the more representative 15:13:4:2:1:2:1:1 (tellers:FL:SL:video:CD:author:blogger:podcast) ratio and the subsequent triangulation between all of these formats proved highly informative.

Finally, the methodological limitations of observation (e.g., observer effect, focus on external behaviour, limited focus) and of interviews (e.g., distortion, recall error, reactivity, volunteer bias) were mitigated through a mixed method triangulation of the two methods and, in the case of volunteer bias, by comprehensive purposeful-sampling (Patton, 2002). Even so, as a qualitative and comparative study any conclusions drawn here may have limited transferability.
Chapter 3: First You Shoot the Arrow then You Draw the Circle: Observations from Storytelling Sessions

Dear hoopoe, welcome! You will be our guide; It was on you King Solomon relied
To carry secret messages between
His court and distant Sheba’s lovely Queen.
(ʻAṭṭār, 1177/1984, p. 29)

Preface

As a known participant at both 1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling and the Seanchai Library (affiliated with the Storytelling Guild of Second Life), and within the spectrum of participant observation (Spradley, 1980), the role I adopted for this research was that of participant-as-observer (Finnegan, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spradley, 1980). Such a position tends to problematize the relationship between observer objectivity and participant participation. Over the past three years I spent a great deal of time not only listening to and watching storytellers, but also personally experiencing their storytelling. As such, my observations are unapologetically subjective in their accounts of my responses and my subsequent interpretations. As a participant-as-observer, this influence cannot and arguably should not be separated from the research and has a significant part to play in the exploration that follows.

The incongruity in writing about oral narratives has been, and continues to be, an ongoing discussion within the storytelling profession. It boasts an extensive provenance, including, but not limited to, numerous tellers and titles that are arguably canon for storytellers (Bailey, 1913/1971; Bodger, 2000; Sawyer, 1990,
Shedlock, 1915; Yashinsky, 2005). Storytellers often write about storytelling through observations, opinions, and conclusions in consort with the topics at hand, namely as personal, chronological, narratives. In keeping with that tradition, this dissertation will at times adopt a similarly personal, chronological narrative, embedded within the broader scholarly form.

The question of how to best present the depth and breadth of the visual information being shared and how this information is being affected by the various mediating technologies utilized in sharing oral narratives, is similarly problematic. Observations made during the telling of several hundred stories, by 112 different tellers, to hundreds of listeners (227 of note), over 52 hours, from 38 sessions, at numerous venues, via four very different media, revealed a variety of notable behaviours, attributes, and elements, too many to comprehensively address in this venue. Therefore, this analysis will focus on three stories, by three tellers (Yusuf, Morag, and Fantine), shared via three different technological mediations (microphone, virtual world, and online video), in three different venues (Innis Café at Innis College, Seanchai [pronounced; shan-uh-kee] Library (SL), and my living room via YouTube), and the most impactful of said behaviours, attributes, and elements. A limited selection of other tellers, and their stories in part, will be included to illustrate specific points when Yusuf, Morag, and Fantine’s tellings are not applicable.

The first story is from Farīd al-Dīn ʻAṭṭār’s poem *The conference of the birds* (circa 1177 A.C.E.), which served as the narrative basis for the stories told by
Yusuf during multiple 1001 sessions. Born in Neyshābūr (now north-eastern Iran) ‘Aṭṭār’s epic poem about Sufism is imparted via a multi-level narrative following the quest by the world’s birds to find a king (‘Aṭṭār, 1177/1984). The hoopoe bird tells the assembled birds that their king is in fact Simorgh, who lives very far away, and as such it would require a hazardous journey to meet him. Over the course of the story their enthusiasm increasingly fails, and various excuses are given for either not going or turning back. The hoopoe bird (now the journey’s leader) counters each excuse with an anecdote (‘Aṭṭār, 1177/1984). Ultimately “only thirty (ṣī) birds (morgh)” finish the journey, there to discover that “the Simorgh they have sought is none other than themselves” (‘Aṭṭār, 1177/1984, p. 16).

The second story is The resident patient, as written by Arthur Conan Doyle (originally part of The memoirs of Sherlock Holmes, first published in 1893), and read in full by Morag as part of her TEA TIME [sic] at Baker Street series, in the lower level of the Seanchai Library (in the virtual world of Second Life). According to the pen of Dr. Watson, it was a “rainy day in October” (p. 487) in the 44th year of Victoria’s reign, when Mr. Sherlock Holmes was engaged to investigate the ramifications from the Worthington bank robbery: betrayal, vengeance, and suicide. Ultimately deducing that “this is no suicide… it is a very deeply planned and cold-blooded murder” (Doyle, 1953, p. 499).

The ghost of Rue Jacob (the third story) is a personal narrative told by Fantine at a Moth storytelling session, which was later shared both via YouTube and The
Moth’s own website. While faerie tales, myths, urban legends, tall tales, and the like are often told in storytelling sessions, considering The Moth’s motto “true stories told live” (2014), it was somewhat surprising to discover a ghost story amongst the stories being told. Unlike ghost stories oft told to scare young campers round a campfire and occasionally at a 1001 session, or those read from the pages of *Scottish ghost stories* (Robertson, 1996) during multiple sessions in Second Life, the story Fantine shared was her own, and if I am any judge of character, it is one she truly believed.

Emerging from these and the other stories shared over the course of this study, the most impactful behaviours, attributes, and elements identified were kinesics (i.e. the non-verbal visual means of information exchange), reciprocity (i.e. the exchanging of information between participants), and space (i.e. where the stories exist).

**Kinesics**

*Some die to hear his passionate complaint.*
*So death draws near, and as the phoenix sings*
*He fans the air with his tremendous wings,*
*A flame darts out and licks across the pyre --*
*(ʻAṭṭār’, 1177/1984, p. 117)*

**Yusuf’s story (Session 01, July 8, 2011): the first of 14 FL sessions, in which 75 tellers told more than 200 stories over 28 hours.**

With hands clasped behind his back, and rigid as a pole, Yusuf stood in front of a near-capacity audience in the Innis Café, 35 pairs of eyes and ears trained, waiting for the first teller of that week’s 1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling session
to begin. Before him, the tables were draped in dark greens, browns, and gold, each topped with a flickering tea light. The plate-glass wall to his left bathed the room in the soft light from a warm summer’s evening (see Figure 7). Yusuf stood at least a foot away from the microphone and began the introduction to the story he intended to tell. Although based on a section of Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār’s poem *The conference of the birds* (circa 1177 A.C.E.). It was not a recitation of ʿAṭṭār’s words nor an English translation of the same, but rather an intersemiotic manifestation of his poem, told as a story. Having situated myself in the back corner of the room, in this the first observation session of the entire study, being unfamiliar with Yusuf and his storytelling, ʿAṭṭār and his writings, and still undecided in regard to what would be of value to the study, I madly scribbled everything of potential value into my field notes, including:

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6 Placing the greatest distance between myself and the storyteller’s microphone, while providing the widest vantage point of the listeners, and remaining out of the participant’s sightlines so as to not disrupt (See bottom left of Figure 7).
- **Distractions:** any ambient noises (e.g., refrigerator and air conditioner), distracted listeners (e.g., seat-shifters, lint-pickers, and knee-bouncers);

- **Characters:** including Hoopoe, Parrot, Partridge, Owl, and Sparrow;

- **The plot:** the actants’ journey across seven valleys, as bird after bird found some excuse to quit, leaving only thirty in the end to find the legendary Simorgh, the choosing of the King of the Birds, and enlightenment;

- **The narrative structure:** the various paths, arcs, directions and levels utilized during the sharing of the plot (e.g., prolepsis and analepsis, omniscient, hetero or homodiegetic narrator, discourse versus story time);

- **Yusuf himself:** his gaze, voice, and tempo; and

- **Yusuf’s gestures:** via figure and gesture sketches of the physical actions he undertook during his telling.

Immediately, and based on everything observed, Yusuf’s gestures compelled further attention. Most noted at the time were his gestures that suggested to me that I was no longer watching Yusuf himself telling the story, but rather that it was the narrative’s characters, Hoopoe, Sparrow, and others, speaking and gesturing. Ultimately though, those actions and countless other comparable gestures by other tellers comprised only a small fraction of the sheer variety and quantity of equally significant gestures that would ultimately be witnessed during this study.
“The study of body movements and their role in communication,” or kinesics, is believed, in part, to “emphasize thoughts, ideas, and emotions” (Jackson & Goman, 2014, p. 58; see also Harrigan, 2005). The taxonomies used to classify said movements range from very concise to extensively precise (Birdwhistell, 1970; Ekman and Friesen, 1969; Harrigan, 2005; Maricchiolo, Livi, Bonaiuto and Gnisci, 2011; McNeill, 1992, 2000). While multiple kinesic taxonomies exist, serving a variety of research interests (e.g., instruction, mental mapping, cross-cultural applications, sign language), according to Maricchiolo et al, “there is general agreement on the main categories of hand gestures” (2011, p. 756):

- Illustrators or ideational gestures, related to semantic content of concurrent speech (illustrating or indicating it), include iconic gestures (reproducing forms or movements of the object being spoken about, which the gesture refers to);
- Metaphoric gestures (their form is metaphor of the abstract concept which they refer to) and deictic gestures (pointing);
- Conversational gestures (e.g., cohesive and beats), accompanying speech without relation to the semantic content (relating to the internal structure of linguistic emissions as well as controlling synchronisation);
- Adaptors (hand movements of touching and manipulation), which include self-address, object-address or person-addressed hand movements. (Maricchiolo et al, 2011, p. 756)
Although this taxonomy is both tidy and comprehensive, it does not adequately address the variety and significance of the kinesic information shared during oral narratives. Moreover, the subsequent oral narrative kinesic taxonomy that has been created from the gestures, body movements, and facial expressions observed during this study (see Appendix D) was done independently of the aforementioned taxonomies and paradigm.

Marking the transition from his introducing the story to its actual telling, Yusuf’s hands emerged from behind his back; there was a discernable softening of his tone, his tempo slowed, and his fingers both opened and relaxed. Whether this was done intentionally (due to the nature of the narrative’s actants) is unclear, but there was on multiple occasions the impression that Yusuf’s open and curved fingers were the feather tipped wings of whichever bird was speaking. To be clear, Yusuf was not creating distinct voices for each character (some tellers do) nor employing clichéd associations (i.e. Owl never hooted and Parrot never asked for a cracker), but as with the discernable shift from introduction to narrative, Yusuf’s intensity and tones changed as the dialog moved from one bird to the next allowing for distinctions to be made. Additionally, the tempo of his telling went up and down with the narrative, as did the intensity of his gestures, and on several occasions, when the pace of the story or character was calm or introspective, Yusuf in fact closed his eyes. Some gestures were clearly intentional, such as the open finger/feather tips slowly drawn over Yusuf’s eyes and cheeks to emotively represent when the birds were weeping, and the frail
juddering of Sparrow's wings that reminded me of Gus the Theatre Cat, who
“suffers from palsy, which makes his paws shake” (Eliot, 1939, p. 35). Yusuf’s
simple scanning of the room while speaking as Sparrow, who in turn was
speaking to an ever dwindling few, made those listeners present at that moment,
for myself at least, and for Yusuf I believe, ‘Aṭṭār’s band of [avian] brothers
(Shakespeare, trans. 1923b, 4.3. 62). As such, we were no longer in the Innis
Café, but were atop a great mountain overlooking a mighty valley. The
unintended evocativeness of this simple gaze was, I believe, due in a large part
to the gestures that Yusuf had been employing. The experience immediately set
me wondering whether this imagined metamorphosis was a feature of Yusuf’s
talent and or style of storytelling, perhaps coupled with my own susceptibility, or
had I just witnessed something more fundamental to the practice of storytelling?

Over the course of the fourteen 1001 and five composite Moth sessions
attended, an increasing variety of gesture types were noted. Comparable to
spoken narratives within the realm of narrative theory, in which being “both
intangible and so omnipresent that they have been all but overlooked” (Ripley,
2011, p. 1), with gestures:

We are [also] discussing a phenomenon that often passes without notice,
though it is omnipresent. If you watch someone speaking, in almost any
language and under nearly all circumstances, you will see what appears to
be a compulsion to move the hands and arms in conjunction with speech.
(McNeill, 2000, p. 1)
McNeill’s assertion was upheld during my observations of the 1001 and Moth storytellers’ gestures. Moreover, as my awareness of gestures became more practiced, I noticed a greater range of nuance and variety. Whether intentional or otherwise, 1001 and Moth tellers more often than not utilized gestures as part of their tellings. Some tellers’ gestures were understated, calming, and even self-soothing, while others were diverse, prolific, and energetic. Common gestures observed during the 1001 and Moth sessions included those which represented, implied, or suggested character re-enactments, shapes, scale and distance, direction, speed, and motion. Other gestures conveyed information regarding repetition, tempo, and phrasing, pointing, grouping, and self-reference, force, intensity, and emotion, nominal listings, abstract and non-specific story motion forward, and when motionless, the absence of gesture. The quantity and variety of gestures undertaken varied from storyteller to storyteller, and ranged from tellers who quite literally stood motionless throughout to those whose tellings were reminiscent of Bollywood dance numbers. Individual teller’s gestures also varied to some degree when telling different stories and during different sessions. With such variety, clearly not every gesture type would be appropriate for each telling nor in some cases comfortable to each teller. As an example, one particular teller, over the course of the 1001 sessions, was observed telling six different stories on six different evenings, during five of which she undertook a wide variety of gestures, including but not limited to those representing objects (e.g., a bowl made by cupped hands), the actions of characters (e.g., a bird
gently placing a single seed into another character’s hand), emotive gestures (e.g., a man’s greed exemplified by clawing hands), and even distance (e.g., with an ever skyward gaze and a diminishing voice); but not the sixth. During that telling, with closed eyes and hands clasped, she proceeded to tell of the death of Mama during childbirth, and of the “blood, red as any sunset all over the bed” (Yolen, 1991, p. 202). This was one of the most memorable and evocative tellings of the entire study. Its power arose from the subtlety and calmness with which it was shared, her hands remaining clasped in front of her and her only movements a very slight turning of her head.

**Yusuf’s story (Session 05, August 13, 2011): the fifth of 14 FL sessions, in which 75 tellers told more than 200 stories over 28 hours.**

When Yusuf stepped forward on this night I only just managed to contain my smile. The evening had already taken an unexpected tangent when that night’s host got the idea in his head that as it was a wonderful night out, or rather “l’heure entre chien et loup” as he put it (the hour between the dog and the wolf, or less poetically, twilight), the session should relocate outside to the courtyard. What initially I took as a spanner in the works ultimately turned into a windfall. Not only was I witnessing a technologically unmediated session (as there were no electrical outlets available), but now I had the same teller with and without a microphone. When Yusuf announced that he would be telling a story based on a later section from Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār’s *The conference of the birds*, I was ecstatic. With hands clasped, standing perfectly still and his eyes closed, Yusuf lowered
his head (in a manner that reminded me of prayer or contemplation). Following a contemplative pause Yusuf opened his eyes, raised his head and his voice, and began to tell. As in his previous telling, Yusuf’s hands and arms seemed to suggest the feathers and wings of the birds he was either telling of or as: wide arms, bent elbows, open relaxed fingers. More overt gestures were also undertaken when various birds worried that their wings could get singed [hugging himself very slowly], and when the dust on a bird’s forehead was gently swept off Yusuf’s brow. For these gestures it was very apparent that they were, if not rehearsed, then at least intentional. Whether large or small, Yusuf’s gestures were impactful, but none more so then when one small bird looked up at the stars, and centuries later, in a city blanketed in light pollution, there stood Yusuf gazing at the same sky. While the majority of gestures noted within this study were undertaken with teller’s hands and arms, the potential impact of a facial expression, a nod, or a significant glance should never be forgotten. In addition, it should be noted that not all movements are gestures. Throughout Yusuf’s second telling his feet were often moving, although he never covered any ground; it was one foot forward, one foot back, one foot forward, one foot back, alternating between facing straight forward or 45° stage right. The reasons for these movements and directional favouring are unknown, although they seemed unrelated to any aspect of the narrative being told; it is possible that he is simply right-footed, or perhaps it was simply because there were more listeners to that
side, some of whom were older listeners and who may have needed more volume.

While ideally, for the sake of coherence, all observational examples presented in this dissertation would be derived from the three tellers and narratives selected as the primary access points (Yusuf, Morag, and Fantine), this is not always possible. As such, a small selection of Moth tellers (Earl, Rita, and Selma) have been identified to help illustrate some specific and important behaviours regarding the gestures observed during this study, but identified either after or not present in Yusuf, Morag, and Fantine’s tellings.

**Earl’s story (Session Ψ2, recorded July 20, 2008): the second of five Moth sessions, in which 24 tellers told 24 stories over 5 hours.**

While gestures can range from a subtle single finger wiggle through to full body re-enactments, Earl’s “awkward, non-sexy” (The Moth, 2013, January 17) striptease re-enactment gestures, accompanied with his recollection of Ella Fitzgerald singing Summertime from *Porgy and Bess*, is notable here for much more than the unique visualization they impart. Variations within gesture types, such as shape, speed and scale gestures obviously vary in relation to the shapes, speeds and scales of the things or characters being described or referenced. However, the expressive range of such variations is expanded markedly when combined into composite gestures that represent or suggest comparisons and or opposites. While Earl’s shoulders and hips swayed awkwardly back and forth, his hands moved simultaneously in opposite directions
up and down his torso in a tentative fashion. This composite gesture was only one of a myriad of comparison/opposite gestures employed by Earl in this telling. In retrospect, one of the more frequent gesture types, comparison/opposite gestures, whether concurrent (e.g., as done during the Gershwin striptease) or consecutive (e.g., as Earl's night went from “from David Lynch [right-handed arc to the right] to Benny Hill [right-handed arc to the left]”), occur not only in relation to the nature of the events being related (e.g., surreal to slapstick), but also for people (e.g., us and them), places (e.g., here and there), and actions (e.g., going and coming). In addition to these numerous and diverse, yet clearly defined, composite comparison/opposite gestures, is an abstract comparison/opposite that was first noted during Earl’s telling in relation to an interesting juxtaposition of gestures, in which a palms upward gesture accompanied “a moment of clarity,” followed immediately by a palms downward gesture and doubt; “wait a minute, wait a minute”. These two proximal gestures lead to some speculating as to whether gestures related to positive things (e.g., be they emotions, actions, characters, or thoughts) were unintentionally being presented with palms upward, while gestures accompanying their negative counterparts were being presented with palms facing downward. As such, the field notes from all subsequent sessions were filled with +↑ and -↓ marginalia, as an attempt was made to either confirm or refute this conjecture, and also retrospectively when re-examining the gesture sketches and descriptions from the previous 1001 and Moth sessions.
Rita & Selma’s stories (Session Ψ3, recorded May 14 and October 29, 2008): the third of five Moth sessions, in which 24 tellers told 24 stories over 5 hours.

Over the course of the 24 Moth tellings observed, there were over 150 field note notations regarding palm directions, almost a third of which were made while observing these two particular tellings: the stories of how Rita declined an invitation to the casting couch (The Moth, 2011, April 28), and Selma’s harrowing experiences hitchhiking through Mozambique’s “gruesome, protracted civil war” (The Moth, 2012, June 29). These enable us to explore the significance, if any, of palms upward versus palms downward gestures being positive and negative, respectively. As was the case with Earl’s “moment of clarity” (The Moth, 2013, January 17) and doubt gestures, Rita, throughout her telling, consistently had upward facing palms while speaking about something positive and downward facing palms when mentioning something negative, such as:

- **+↑** “up and coming TV actress”
- **-↓** “to downward spiralling office temp.”
- **+↑** “and then I met this man, and I began to feel better,”
- **-↓** “now don’t get me wrong, I was still weeping daily.”
- **+↑** “this wonderful wonderful man,”
- **-↓** “sweaty, desperate, girl.”
- **+↑** “what if he wants sex?” (ambiguous as to positive or negative)
- **-↓** “I’ve never done that before to get a job.”
- **-↓** “truly horrible projects” (The Moth, 2011, April 28).
These combinations of aspects (⁺↑ and -↓) appeared to hold true for twenty-three of the twenty-four Moth tellers observed in this study. And then there was Selma.

In her early 20’s Selma discovered solo backpacking, first through Europe and North Africa, then Papua New Guinea, Mali, Congo, and Mozambique which was, at the time, in the middle of a 17 year long civil war. Having managed to hitch a ride in a convoy travelling along a notorious highway through the northern reaches of Mozambique from Malawi to Zimbabwe, the truck she was riding in broke down, leaving Selma and the truck driver stranded “like a wounded gazelle” (The Moth, 2012, June 29). Later a jeep full of government child soldiers armed with AK-47s took her, they claimed “to find me a place to sleep, but I knew, everybody knew what they had planned” (The Moth, 2012, June 29). As the sun set, lights in the distance led her to believe that the border was in fact relatively close, and mustering her courage she bolted through an open door and into the night, literally running for her life. Selma’s story has been included here because, unlike the other 23 Moth tellers, her gestures did not seem to fit with the positive ⁺↑ and negative -↓ gesture examples. Selma’s concept of positive and negative had different kinesthetic manifestations from those of the other tellers. To be perfectly clear, absolutely and in no way is the suggestion being made that Selma wanted to be kidnapped, or threatened with gang rape and murder, only that challenges, potential yet ambiguous danger, and chasing an adrenalin rush, were possibly considered, to her, as positives. This conjecture could be used to explain some of the early examples, such as:
• +↑ “harder, and harder places to go to, and more and more challenges.”
• +↑ “it was hard, it was really tough, but it was also exhilarating for me.”
• +↑ “how could I actually enter a country in the middle of a gruesome protracted civil war?”
• +↑ “adrenaline was rushing through me, and my hands were shaking terribly, and all my senses were acute” (The Moth, 2012, June 29).

There were however gestures Selma undertook which simply did not fit into this tidy +↑ and -↓ gesture schema:
• -↑ “I was in something so far over my head, that I couldn’t escape from.”
• -↑ “my life was out of control, I didn’t know what I was going to do.”
• -↑ [emphatic and repetitive palms up with] “how fragile my human life was, how vulnerable I was” (The Moth, 2012, June 29).

Although each of the above gestures was palms upward, it is impossible to view any of these last three examples in any way as positive experience, other than that she survived the ordeal physically, at least, unscathed. As such, although the instinctive utilization of +↑ and -↓ gestures was widespread within this study, the observation of ↑ and ↓ gestures, although a strong guide, cannot definitively be used to identify a teller’s interpretation regarding + and - attributes in the narratives they are telling. Additionally, not all palms upward or downward gestures can or need be interpreted or attributed with positive and negative connotations. Some ↑ and ↓ gestures were observed simply illustrating directions or scale. They were also used to induce and project calm, and at other times to
illustrate a comparison or juxtaposition, such as “from Malawi [left palm upward] to Zimbabwe [right palm upward]”, and [both palms stay upward for] “between these countries” (The Moth, 2012, June 29).

Selma’s telling was also notable for the frequency of a previously overlooked gesture. On multiple occasions in both 1001 and Moth sessions storytellers were noted touching either the microphone or microphone stand but not for the purpose of readjusting said technology. At the time these actions were dismissed, as they appeared unrelated to the narratives being told. This changed early in Selma’s telling, when she recounted how she “didn’t have much confidence back then” (The Moth, 2012, June 29), at which point she clasped her hands in front of her stomach. As an individual gesture it would likely have also been dismissed, except that between Selma’s character re-enactments, emphatic gestures, gestures of scale or of motion, her hands kept returning, time and again, to this clasped in front of her stomach position – on at least 25 occasions according to the field notes. While it was possible that it could simply be her default position, other tellers had previously been identified undertaking such poses (e.g., one teller repeatedly tucked his thumbs into front pockets with forefingers extended diagonally inward,7 whereas another simply kept his fingers

7 This particular gesture was undertaken so often, and in the context of the story in which the teller repeatedly professed that it was others and not he who had issues with his prepubescent son’s love of all things pink, that that the gesture was given the acronym LAMP [Look At My Penis].
interlocked throughout), the narrative at each of these points during Selma’s story had very distinct similarities: The gesture appeared to occur during or immediately following negative, dangerous, and or self-doubting moments, earning it the acronym BTSG [Back To Safe Gesture]:

- [BTSG] “I’d suffered from severe depression for much of my life.”
- [BTSG] “Mozambique itself was a complete wasteland. It was like dried up savannah land, burnt down villages, and towns reduced to rubble.”
- “Creeping along doing that 20 miles an hour [BTSG] and the sun was setting.”
- “His truck lurched, it coughed again, and it died.” [BTSG]
- [BTSG] “I heard in the distance the sound of an engine, of some vehicle coming down the road behind us.”
- “It could have been anyone, rebel soldiers, government soldiers,” [BTSG]
- [BTSG] “In a country like that, in a place like that, everything is up for grabs, and if you want something you take it. And they decided, as [name withheld] put it ‘to do things to me’ and they wanted to take me with them” (The Moth, 2012, June 29).

Whether intentional or not, Selma’s BTSG and the others’ practices of touching the microphone or microphone stand, seemed to act as a centering for the tellers: an act of self-calming or self-soothing. In a narrative, such as the one Selma told, which was more serious than the majority of those observed during
this study, such a touchstone seems entirely understandable. Ultimately, due to the discrepancies between Selma and every other Moth teller, any conclusions regarding her tellings and her gestures should be both qualified and or deferred until such point as other tellings by her, both of this and other stories, have been observed.

The consistencies observed between Yusuf’s two observed tellings can also be traced to circumstances specific to this teller. It was readily apparent from my observations that Yusuf had told these stories on numerous occasions, honing their telling. In addition, Yusuf is a professional storyteller, and this is his craft. Moreover, the two observed tellings were only five weeks apart, and while different events were recounted, both narratives existed within the same larger story. In contrast, consider the tellings by Rita, a professional actor. During an earlier telling of the same story (barneygreengrass, 2008, December 16), the consistency she had shown regarding +↑ and -↓ in the 2008 session, was not at all present. It is conceivable that there was some development of her telling (28 months elapsed between the uploading of the tellings in question) rather than of the specific story, although the consistency of gestures was also lacking in a more recent and completely different story (barneygreengrass, 2011, January 21), uploaded only three months prior to her Moth telling.
Fantine’s story (Session Ψ5, recorded July 15, 2009): the fifth of five online video sessions, in which 24 tellers told 24 stories over 5 hours, complied from 21 Moth sessions that took place over a period of 9 years in four North American cities.

Fantine, like Yusuf and the other 1001 and Moth tellers, undertook a variety of gestures during her telling of *The ghost of Rue Jacob*, including re-enactments both of herself as the protagonist and of other characters, as well as self-referential gestures, and gestures that evoked shape, direction, emphasis and emotion. Two gestures deserve a special note. The first was a prop aided re-enacting gesture, as Fantine adjusted her own glasses as if she were the snooty secretary at the cathedral. While re-enacting another character’s movements has been seen on countless other occasions this was the first time it involved an actual object present at the telling although tellers have been known to repurpose a talking stick (a custom adopted by the storytelling community from numerous First Nations in which the holder has the right to speak (Werness, 2000)) as various imagined items (e.g., rifle, sword, cane). Unless a story included a microphone or a bottle of water such an option would rarely present itself, unless the teller specifically brought a prop for that purpose. The second gesture, and the more exciting one, involved Fantine’s hand on her forehead. This was done twice, on the first occasion when she was telling how she woke up with her sheets tugged tight as if someone was lying next to her, and as she gently stroked her fingers across her own forehead, Fantine described “this soft little hand touching my forehead” (The Moth, 2013, July 19), repeatedly re-enacting this ghostly action. By and of itself this action, save that it was being done by a
non-corporeal character, is neither unique nor seemingly significant. However, later in the story Fantine expanded that “I didn’t tell anyone what happens at night in my room, and in fact, I’m really lonely, so you know it’s not bad” (The Moth, 2013, July 19). What is important to note is that as she said “it’s not bad” (The Moth, 2013, July 19) Fantine repeated the gentle stroking of her forehead gesture. Without words she had re-enacted what she was referring to as “not bad” (The Moth, 2013, July 19), and showed the listeners that she found the gesture tender and comforting. As such, if you did not see her do this gesture, a listener would never know what was “not bad” (The Moth, 2013, July 19). The significance of this gesture is unparalleled in this study. In every other case the gestures undertaken by the various tellers added some aspect of information to the words being spoken, but in this case the gesture alone imparted the information. Contrast the nearly identical gesture undertaken by Earl, re-enacting the gesture of the elderly john, wherein “immediately he just starts stroking my hair and he says ‘Oh, you have such beautiful hair. I’m so glad they sent a real redhead this time’” (The Moth, 2013, January 17), where the significance of the gesture is imparted primarily by the john’s words. The differences in how such gestures are undertaken, imparted, and interpreted are clearly of import, and as such some consideration and awareness of their physical actions and limitations (e.g., forced proximity to a microphone, holding a book, arthritis) should be undertaken.
Through these observations of FL storytellers, whether witnessed in person or viewed subsequently via video, it was apparent that the gestures undertaken during the sharing of oral narratives can provide additional levels of information in support and even independent of the words spoken. While said information is not always intentional on the part of the teller(s), and if it is even perceived can be ambiguous for the listener(s), visual information is clearly being transmitted.

**Scripted gestures and lip-syncing.**

Storytelling in a virtual world such as SL presents a different set of interesting opportunities and challenges for both tellers and listeners. While SL storytelling venues can be (and on occasion are) *rezzed* (i.e. created or made to appear) to visually approximate those of FL storytelling venues, the physical abilities of SL and FL tellers are not the same. While directional movements such as walking, running, and flying are controlled by the keyboard navigation keys (←↑↓→), other actions and gestures such as pointing, waving, clapping, nodding, yawning, shrugging, and laughing are scripted gestures. Scripts are the proprietary program coding that “enable Residents to add functions and program behavior such as motion or interactivity into their creations” (Au, 2008, p. 256), including gestures, which in turn can include avatar animations, sounds, and even special effects. These gestures can be activated by either typed commands (e.g., Fuego!, /12), keyboard shortcuts (e.g., Shift+F2, Ctrl+F8) or via multiple drop-down menus. While countless options are available for acquisition, such gestures
must already be in place prior to undertaking. For example, during this study Gnutt had a selected set of almost 30 gestures that range from the mundane (e.g., yawning, shrugging, and pointing), to those appropriate to his persona (e.g., purring, growling, and howling), and even some specifically chosen for their presumed usefulness in this study (e.g., faux-reading, laughing, and clapping). During this study, due to the quantity of gesture shortcuts available, a list was kept inside the front cover of my first SL field notebook, as there were too many to practically memorize, and leaving the Gesture List Window open would have occupied screen space intended for observations. Even so, with all of the gestures available to the Residents and their Avatars, during the 14 hours of SL storytelling sessions observed, there was not a single observation made of any avatar listeners present enacting anything recognizable as an intentional gesture. Similarly, only rarely were Gnutt’s gestures ever employed, and even then it was primarily the clapping gesture, which was only ever used after a story had concluded. Occasionally a teller would activate a recurring gesture prior to beginning, such as a repeating series of varied hand gestures that one might see from a FL storyteller, although they would be unrelated to and independent from anything shared in the narrative. Generally the only movements observed, from either the tellers or listeners, were the automatic gestures scripted as part of a piece of furniture (e.g., the occasional bouncing of an avatar’s crossed leg), an avatar’s clothing (e.g., diaphanous clothing wafted by a non-existent zephyr) or body parts (e.g., the occasional and apparent shifting of a standing storyteller’s
weight from one foot to the other, fluttering faerie wings, and the slow flapping of one avatar’s rather grand ears).

Frustrated by the lack of informative gestures, or physical activities of any sort, being undertaken during SL storytelling sessions (compared to the plethora of such gestures in the FL, and subsequently during the Moth sessions), and a perceived lack of engagement to either the teller or the narratives being told, the decision was made to move my camera view close enough so that the teller’s face filled half the screen (24” LCD monitor), obviously something not possible in a FL storytelling session. With this newly focused view, it became apparent that the teller’s avatar appeared to have a lip-syncing script. While this faux lip-syncing was nowhere close to a lip-reading level, it did appear to be linked to the teller’s volume level, and as such would pause when he paused. Repeating this camera view during a later session, again it appeared as if the avatar’s lips were only loosely synchronized to the teller’s voice and moved with her fluctuating volume, as visualized by pulsating green brackets (((((●)))) ) that hovered over her head. Speculation that the lip-syncing script was by default, and was active for any SL avatar whose resident was employing the Voice option, proved only partially correct; a “basic lip sync” (Lip Sync, 2009, para. 1) was added in 2009, but is disabled by default. This option, at present, enables only a very limited set of facial movements (four basic mouth shapes) giving, from a distance, the impression of speech. Unfortunately, even pairing these stock mouth and unfocused eye movements (side to side, and occasionally downward) the
avatar’s face, and by extension all SL avatar faces, would best be described as non-expressive automatons. Finally, while this impression regarding the current state of avatars should be qualified, in that the expectations of devotees of science fiction (this researcher included), based on decades of promised visions, are very high (e.g., *Do androids dream of electric sheep* (1968) and *Blade runner* (1982); *Alien*(s) (1979-92); *Star trek: The next generation* (1987-2002)), at present, no SL avatar’s involuntary scripted eye movements could hope to fool a Voight-Kampff test (Deeley, 1982; Dick, 1968).

Ultimately, the sheer quantity and variety of gestures being employed by 1001 and Moth storytellers, whether intentionally or otherwise, has the potential to add an equally impressive quantity and variety of information to the storylistener’s co-creation of the stories being told. Although to what degree, if any, they are being noticed and or included in said co-creation is at present unknown. During this study gestures have been observed that represent, imply, and or suggest character re-enactments, shapes, scale and distance, direction, speed, and motion, repetition, tempo, and phrasing, pointing, grouping, and self-reference, force, intensity, and emotion, nominal listings, abstract and non-specific story motion forward, and when motionless the absence of gesture. Gestures have been explored that address comparisons and opposites, those with positive and negative connotations, self-calming, object manipulation, and even those independent of spoken words. While in each case these gesture types could fit into one of the four tidy groupings introduced by Maricchiolo et al; namely
illustrators, metaphoric, conversational, and adaptors (2011), their value for this study is in exploring the aspects that make them different, and the information said gestures can impart.

In contrast to the plethora of gestures undertaken by FL and Moth tellers such as Yusuf, Earl, Rita, Selma, and Fantine, the dearth of informative gestures in SL storytelling sessions, presents other avenues of consideration. If, for instance, the non-specific scripted body and facial movements undertaken by the telling avatar provides no narrative specific added information for a listener in their co-creation of the given narrative, then the same no doubt holds true for the teller, when observing and interpreting the body language of the various listeners. While such reciprocal readings by FL participants can inform listeners regarding the narrative being shared, and allow FL tellers to gauge the listeners’ interest in the same, this particular information channel is, at present, empty for SL storytelling participants. This disparity of kinesic information, abundant during FL storytelling and absent in SL tellings, might suggest that SL tellings are more comparable to AO stories which also do not include this particular information channel. There is however more exchanged during an oral narrative than kinesic information. One must ask, what if anything, does an avatar’s presence in these shared, if virtual, locations afford those present? Additionally, to what degree does reciprocity require physical presence?
Reciprocity

“But I have been seated quietly in my chair, and what clues can I have given you?”
(Doyle, 1953, p. 488; Morag, Δ1)

Séamus’ session (Session β1, August 30, 2011): the first of 14 SL sessions.

An old man stood at the front of the room, framed by two large glass walls overlooking an ocean, a small blue hardback book open in his hands. Before him two dozen green upholstered chairs, although only a handful occupied, had been arranged into three concentric rows. To one side a pair of giant floor cushions sat empty, while a large jungle cat lay in one aisle, cooling himself on the pavilion’s mottled slate floor. To the man’s right stood a lithe woman wearing a form fitting cat costume, while a second perched atop a giant scratching post dressed in a cheetah print unitard that left nothing to the imagination except why she was holding a tiger cub in her mouth. The old man began to read:

The Naming of Cats is a difficult matter,

It isn’t just one of your holiday games;

You may think at first I’m as mad as a hatter

When I tell you, a cat must have THREE DIFFERENT NAMES. (Eliot, 1939, p. 9; Séamus, personal communication, August 30, 2011, β1)

I had only teleported into the Seanchai Library to look at the venue (sessions were often advertised at this location on the Storytelling Guild of Second Life listserv), but upon arrival discovered a story session already underway. To
clarify, the ‘I’ in question was my primary avatar Gnutt Muggins, a short, barrel-chested, green-scaled creature, seemingly the offspring of a sexually adventurous gnome and a curious dragon. While anatomically improbable elsewhere, in this particular userConstructed virtual world, everything is possible. As it happens, I was very glad that he/I/we stayed.

Having created my first SL avatar in January of 2007, understandably, I was approaching this research with certain preconceptions regarding virtual worlds, particularly in regard to the use of technology for storytelling. In the past I had encountered and even studied with storytellers who swore adamantly that putting any technology, be it a microphone or a book, between teller and listener(s) changed the experience, due to the reciprocity that occurs in storytelling. As such, technologies constituted, if not a barrier, then at least a membrane between these co-created experiences. This preconception was reinforced with each technological glitch observed during the 1001 sessions. Tellers proximally tethered to and or telling to the microphone resulted in listeners being visually overlooked or disregarded. Feedback and other noticeable distortions, due to a combination of a teller’s volume and proximity to the microphone, produced audible distractions from the stories being told. For some tellers specific words containing the letter P, T, B, and H (e.g., sleeP, grouP, camP, Tool, aBove, and Held Hands) resulted in noticeable amplification such as you would hear with poor quality microphones on a w[H]indy day. All of these problems, however minor, have the ability to sever a listener’s connection to the storyworld that
listeners in part create when they engage with the story being told (Kuyvenhoven, 2009). Issues with microphones while commonplace and more pronounced in SL storytelling were not limited to SL sessions. This particular technology was generally also employed for the 1001 sessions (where some minor microphone induced distractions were noted), and always so for AO and Moth storytellings (although there such issues were rarely noted).

When discussing the technological issues affecting reciprocity in storytelling, we must also consider a certain cultural difference in FL and SL storytelling communities: that being the proclivity of SL tellers to read stories aloud from books rather than telling stories per se. Over the course of the five SL pilot study sessions the false assumption that storytellers tell rather than read stories, and that readings such as those from *Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats* and *Scottish ghost stories* were anomalies, were well and truly dispelled. In a world where avatars gather while their resident tellers and listeners sit in isolation, some SL storytellers do believe that there are differences in the telling and reading aloud of stories (see Interview Observations). However, more often than not, storytelling in SL means reading, and moreover, SL storytellers generally make and see no distinction between the two. Holding that a multidirectional understanding of story co-creation (see Narrative theory in practice), however storytelling is defined, “depends on the combined skills of both teller and listener” (Martin, 1996, p. 143), with the introduction of technologies such as SL, YouTube, Skype, or even amplification placed between said co-creators, the
affect, if any, of these and other technologies have on such factors as reciprocity, community, and presence require investigation.

Morag’s story (Session Δ1, March 10, 2013): the sixth of 14 SL sessions, in which 10 tellers told multiple stories over 15 hours, to 130 noted participants, at seven venues.

What if the written and printed word, as invented constructs, are also technology? With this in mind I sought out a story session that was obviously being read directly from a book. The Seanchai Library’s *TEA TIME* [sic] at *Baker Street* fit the bill:

"The Memoirs of Sherlock* [sic] Holmes is the second collection of stories by Arthur Conan Doyle, featuring his famous detective. Morag Toonser cracks open the cover of this volume, and continues with THE ADVENTURE OF THE RESIDENT PATIENT. (Seanchai Library, personal communication, March 10, 2013)

Morag’s session was fortuitous as not only was I already familiar with the works of Doyle but I also had a copy of the relevant text in my possession.

Standing next to the fire-place, her raven hair pinned up in a style deemed appropriate for a married woman in Victorian England, one could be forgiven for mistaking Morag for “the woman” (Doyle, 1953, p. 177) as she began to read:

In glancing over the somewhat incoherent series of Memoirs [sic] with which I have endeavoured to illustrate a few of the mental peculiarities of my
friend Mr. Sherlock Holmes, I have been struck by the difficulty which I have experienced in picking out examples which shall in every way answer my purpose. (Doyle, 1953, p. 487; Morag, personal communication, March 10, 2013, Δ1)

Then without warning my camera and possibly Gnutt himself fell through the floor into the virtual soil beneath the Seanchai Library; it was impossible to tell which as the screen showed nothing but green and the controls were unresponsive. After a few minutes of nothing but green screen and audio, Gnutt, Eckland, and I were unceremoniously logged out of SL. Several minutes later I eventually managed to log back in, although the visuals still seemed to be lagging as if something was buffering. Moreover, Gnutt and Eckland’s appearance (at least to me) was nothing more than a red gaseous state, the majority of the avatars present were visible as if they were wearing grey morphsuits, and one avatar directly to Gnutt’s right seemed to be frozen in the body modification pose; imagine a floating crucifixion without the cross. Eventually, whichever gremlins were making mischief in either my computer or the SL platform seemed to have worked themselves out and I turned my focus to those present to see what conclusions could be drawn from observing a dozen stationary seated avatars. I, like Watson:

Was still far from satisfied. “In the example which you read to me,” said I, “the reasoner drew his conclusions from the actions of the man whom he observed. If I remember right, he stumbled over a heap of stones, looked up
at the stars, and so on.” But I have been seated quietly in my chair, and what clues can I have given you?” (Doyle, 1953, p. 488; Morag, personal communication, March 10, 2013, Δ1)

And the dozen remained motionless. Hesitant to move my camera around the space, lest I make things worse and possibly get logged out again, I resigned myself to listening to Morag’s reading and reading the resulting Local Chat from those residents whose avatars were present.

Unlike the main floor pavilion space which was set up with rows of seating around a fixed focal point, the downstairs venue was more casual, with high wing backed leather chairs in formations seemingly more appropriate to intimate conversations (see Figure 8). Whether the location was chosen for ambiance, in relation to the story being shared, or because fewer listeners were expected is unknown. Ultimately though, there were chairs enough for everyone (a dozen listeners in total), even if Gnutt’s legs did rez through the cushion, as they often do due to his shorter stature. There were only two familiar names that night, one being Morag who would be reading from her Kindle, and the other (Georgia) who was at the time wrongly assumed to be her technical support,
although everyone present was known to Morag. Gnutt was dressed in his most inconspicuous black attire, while all others present came in period dress, or at least what they believed to be the appropriate dress for the period; top hats, smoking jackets, and billowing dresses abounded. The donning of thematically appropriate clothing, costumes, and skins by tellers and listeners is common for SL storytelling sessions. Unlike the cat, Scottish ghost, and Arabian nights (see Space) sessions, all present at this particular session, save Gnutt and Eckland (who was comfortably perched on Gnutt’s shoulder), came in the skins of adult Caucasian humans.

While Morag’s reading of Doyle’s work, was interpretive in some ways (e.g., voices, accents, intonations, and timings), it was very literal with the wording. As such she would have had to have been looking primarily, if not solely, at the text on her Kindle. Even so, Morag made numerous minor inconsequential errors. Only three instances were noted when Morag’s errors could have affected the listeners’ visualizations. The first was a minor reporting of Mr. Bessington’s “rooms” (Doyle, 1953, p. 496) as a “room” (Morag, personal communication, March 10, 2013, Δ1). The second was the introduction of a question by Police Inspector Lanner where Doyle intended a statement: “Then Blessington must have been Sutton [?] ‘Exactly,’ said Holmes” (Doyle, 1953, p. 501; Morag, personal communication, March 10, 2013, Δ1). Third was her erroneous addition regarding Watson’s recollection of Beecher’s “mission which he undertook on behalf of the North at the time of the [American] Civil War” (Doyle, 1953, p. 489;
Morag, personal communication, March 10, 2013, Δ1). Although, moments later Morag lowered the 4th wall to correct herself: “Sorry, it’s not the American Civil War, it was another civil war” (personal communication, March 10, 2013, Δ1), how she came to this realization is unknown.

Surprisingly, with all of this attention to the text on her Kindle, Morag still continued to observe and on numerous occasions to respond to the Local Chat that took place. A select set of examples (although more exist) include, when during a momentary pause Morag could be heard sipping from a drink, and moments later in Local Chat a listener jokingly commented that “apparently Morag is drawn to beverages” (Rennard, personal communication, March 10, 2013, Δ1) (no doubt alcoholic beverages was the implication). Morag promptly replied via Voice, and with feigned indignation, “it’s tea” (personal communication, March 10, 2013, Δ1)! After Holmes proclaimed that “it is inconceivable that this fellow could have made two such vindictive enemies as these appear to be without knowing of it” (Doyle, 1953, p. 497; Morag, personal communication, March 10, 2013, Δ1), a listener, via Local Chat, both reiterates the likelihood and parodies the situation by drawing an allusion to Sicilian criminal mastermind Vizzini from *The Princess Bride* “Incontheivable” [sic] (Scheinman & Reiner, 1987; Cary, personal communication, March 10, 2013, Δ1). Morag adamantly responds via Voice that “Holmes doesn’t lisp” (March 10, 2013, Δ1) and then chuckles to herself. Such jocularity between listeners, and on occasion also with tellers, is common in Local Chat. Immediately following the
above conversation, one listener in Local Chat “covers her mouth and giggles” (Jill, personal communication, March 10, 2013, Δ1), while another disparages that such reactions are “encorwynaging [sic] him” (Thora, personal communication, March 10, 2013, Δ1), to which he willingly acknowledges that he is “after all, encorwyngable” [sic] (Cary, personal communication, March 10, 2013, Δ1); “groan” (Rennard, personal communication, March 10, 2013, Δ1).

While these interactions between the Morag and some of the listeners could be seen as a parallel to FL tellers responding to the visual clues afforded by FL listeners (e.g., audible and or visual exclamations of worry, interest, or apathy), it is also possible that splitting one’s attention between two sets of text could be, in whole or in part, responsible for the numerous errors Morag was making in her reading aloud of Doyle’s story. Having said this, not all of Morag’s deviations from Doyle’s text were unintentional. The most notable being her excluding a reference to an ejaculation by Dr. Watson; “My dear Holmes! I ejaculated [exclaimed]” (Doyle, 1953, p. 500; Morag, personal communication, March 10, 2013, Δ1), the vernacular of the word having changed since The resident patient was first published in 1893. One can only imagine what the responses in Local Chat would have been had Watson’s ejaculation remained.

Although ultimately informative, this session was fraught with technical difficulties, including audio hiss and lag, video lag and freeze. Moreover, while frustrating, my experiences during this session were by no means unique. Clear evidence was observed via both Local Chat and In Voice that other participants
during various sessions also experienced a variety of technical issues, including the tellers, as Morag attested:

I’ve discovered that, um, when sending out the group IMs I have a much much better chance if I'm up in the library office... [of] them actually going through and not having to fight the system, because the lag is a little less up there than it is down here. (personal communication, March 10, 2013, Δ1)

After Morag’s reading from *The memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, the question came to mind of why exactly are people virtually gathering together to sit by themselves alone and listen to stories being read? The audio is often poor and the visual interactions between the avatars present range from minimal to non-existent. Why not just borrow the book or even an audiobook, if so inclined, from a local public library? Is there something about it being *live*? Is there a sense of *presence* with the other participants, and if so, to what extent and in what ways is a virtual presence perceived by the participants? Perhaps a reconsideration of *alone* is required when addressing contemporaneous yet physically isolated experiences? Looking beyond the opportunity to dress-up, an indulgence not possible to this degree at FL events, and that many SGSL residents (via their avatars) like many present at 1001 sessions are familiar with each other, the sense of presence afforded during these particular sessions appears to be related to a resident’s existence being recognized. Whether this is in relation to an avatar’s actions, appearance, or the Local Chat produced by the controlling resident, someone recognized their existence at that time and place and
commented on their presence. In this regard, and even though it is not necessary to see a resident’s avatar to respond to their chat or in voice contributions, it would be interesting to know whether, and if so how, the sense of presence felt by SL residents differs from those who participate in live local chat rooms. Although beyond the scope of this study, such an enquiry could ultimately prove helpful in identifying the impact of avatars’ proximity to each other on social presence.

Marcie’s telling (Session Φ6, October 19, 2012): the eleventh of 14 FL sessions, in which 75 tellers told more than 200 stories over 28 hours.

With eyes closed in remembrance and her hands clasped as if in grief Marcie told those gathered how “Mama died four nights ago, giving birth to my baby sister Ann. Bubba cried and cried, ‘Mama gone,’ in his little-boy voice, but I [emphasis added] never let out a single tear” (personal communication, October 19, 2012, Φ6; Yolen, 1991, p. 202). In that moment had a pin been dropped it would have waited silently in deference of her loss before falling to the ground, as those present prayed that Marcie was sharing a faerie tale and not as feared a highly personal narrative. So powerful was this sharing that even my recollection of it here has brought me to tears. Mentioned previously for the subtlety and calmness with which it was shared, narrative events soon made it apparent that this was not, as feared, a family story, and upon conclusion Marcie credited the story’s author Jane Yolen. Yolen’s young-adult vampire story “Mama gone” (1991) was likewise subtle in its description of the setting and its written dialogue
(Marcie affected no accents), each in their own way suggesting to the reader(s) and listener(s), without ever explicitly stating, that this story was set in the Appalachian Mountains. While beautifully written and told, “Mama gone’s” significance here is for what was not said. Unnoticed until well after the telling, from the first words spoken to the very end, the narrator’s gender remained ambiguous. This would be in and of itself unremarkable, were it not for the unquestioning assumption, by this listener, that the ‘I’ in question was a young girl. In examining this assumption, the most plausible explanation was that the protagonist was believed to be female simply because the teller herself was female. Later, upon consulting Yolen’s written text, only twice was the protagonist’s gender indicated when she was mentioned by name (i.e. Mandy Jane), although both instances are well into the story. If however either of these instances were uttered by Marcie during her telling in question they were not consciously noted by this observer. Thus, the narrator’s perceived gender in the storyworld I visualized during Marcie’s telling of Jane Yolen’s story was created somewhere in the space between the writer, the teller, and listener.

**Narrative theory in practice.**

“Mama gone” was a watershed telling for this researcher, suggesting powerfully that narratives are co-created, and that a reciprocity exists between teller(s) and listener(s). To understand the reciprocity that occurs during the sharing of oral narratives, we must first recognize and then consider the various
active participants in a narrative and the roles they play. The concept of reciprocity in narrative was greatly aided by the move away from the Russian formalist unidirectional narrative paradigm of real authors (A), to implied authors (A^I), then narrators (N), characters (C), narratees (N^I), implied readers (R^I), and real readers (R), and wherein authorial intent was absolute (O’Neill, 1996):

A → A^I → N → C → N^I → R^I → R. In subsequent multidirectional narrative models influence moves in both directions, and with all parties contributing, to various degrees, in the creation of the narratives being created (O’Neil, 1996):

A ↔ A^I ↔ N ↔ C ↔ N^I ↔ R^I ↔ R. What is essential to understand are the real and implied roles of both the authors and the readers. An implied author (A^I) is a persona of the real author (A) constructed by individual real readers (R). A telling example would be the assumptions one makes regarding the horror novelist Steven King based on such works as Carrie, The Shining, Cujo, and Pet Cemetery, and subsequently about the characters one would expect to find in his stories (Ripley, 2011). Said persona would differ for each real reader based on their presumed knowledge of said author. Conversely, implied readers (R^I) are who a real author (A) believes their real readers (R) to be (McQuillan, 2000). In a multidirectional model narratives “aren’t neutral but come to us filtered through a teller’s (or writer’s) background, through his or her insight, emotion, and personality, and through his or her body and voice” (Martin, 1996, p. 143). Subsequently, they are also imbued with each reader or listener’s insights, emotions, and personality, as these active participants visualize a myriad of
details not shared by the writers or tellers, such as the time of day or year that stories are set, the gender, race, and age of characters, the styles and colours of clothing worn, and even the environs and geographies they inhabit.

The level of participant involvement required by a teller can vary dramatically due to a variety of factors, and the level of participant involvement given will ultimately define the individual storyworlds co-created. “[T]here are storytellers who ask little from the audience except receptivity and audible appreciation of the storyteller’s technical virtuosity,” while other tellers’ “work depends on an audience’s contribution of thoughtful, vibrant attention” (Birch & Heckler, 1996, p. 141).

While a multidirectional narrative theory was an improvement over a unidirectional concept of narrative even this construct it was still inadequate for addressing the unique nature of oral narratives (Ripley, 2011). To address such narratives required the introduction of real narrators (NR), and the replacing of implied (RI) and real readers (RR) with implied (LI) and real listeners (LR), resulting in an even more complex oral/aural narrative paradigm (Ripley, 2011, p.5): \( A \leftrightarrow A^{I} \leftrightarrow N^{R} \leftrightarrow N \leftrightarrow C \leftrightarrow N^{I} \leftrightarrow L^{I} \leftrightarrow L^{R} \). As such, in this model the real listener (LR) of an audiobook of Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep (1968) read by the author Phillip K. Dick (A/NO) would hear him also take on the role of homodiegetic narrator (N/C), as the lead character is also the story’s narrator. Last, but far from least, we must first add and then consider the impact of the
implied narrator ($N^I$) (i.e. who individual real listeners ($L^R$) believe the real narrator ($N^R$) to be): $A \leftrightarrow A^I \leftrightarrow N^R \leftrightarrow N^I \leftrightarrow N \leftrightarrow C \leftrightarrow n^* \leftrightarrow L^I \leftrightarrow L^R$.

*With the introduction of an implied narrator ($N^I$), and to unify the nomenclature, narratees, previously $N^I$, are now $n$.

Modifying the previous example, an audiobook of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968) as read by Harrison Ford ($N^R$), with the added baggage of him having played the lead, Rick Deckard ($N/C$), in its movie adaptation (1982), would also add a second Deckard, plus any role that has become affixed to him. Ford’s impression on real listeners ($L^R$) would thus be derived from their collocated understanding and impressions of him as $N^I/N^R/C^2/C(s)$. Although the impact of Ford’s Indiana Jones, Han Solo, or even his accident prone if well-meaning exploits as a pilot on a real listeners ($L^R$) story co-creation would arguably be miniscule, the point being made is that the stories that we co-create are built on so much more than the words that are spoken, and a real narrator has a perceptible impact on story co-creation. Taking this to an extreme to illustrate the point, consider a hypothetical audiobook of *The Maltese falcon* as read aloud by Julie Andrews, of Mel Gibson reading *The catcher in the rye*, or *Anne of Green Gables* read by Arnold Schwarzenegger: “Red hair is my life long sorrow” (Montgomery, 1942).

Storylistening is not a passive experience. Assumptions about the teller by real listeners ($N^I \leftarrow L^R$), the teller’s perceived motives, choices, and actions, all influence a listener’s contributions to the co-created narrative. Conversely, “told
stories require that their listeners respond” (Martin, 1996, p. 143), at least mentally, although physical responses can also be highly informative. As such, “part of the art of the storyteller depends on the teller's ability to ‘read’ an audience” (Martin, 1996, p. 143) (N → L). In this multidirectional information sharing, observing, and interpreting:

The storyteller must be constantly gauging, constantly modifying and reshaping the story. In the act of the telling, the teller is intuitively responding to such questions as: are the listeners getting it? Is the heat making them restless? Is the lighting too dim? Is that noise too distracting? In the act of telling the teller must work with such inner and outer contingencies (and many more). (Martin, 1996, p.153)

For a live oral narrative such as Marcie’s (N) telling of Jane Yolen’s (A) “Mama gone,” beyond her knowledge of and skill retelling the narratives events, for a successful telling Marcie must not only choose an appropriate tale to tell to those present (L) but also continually read the room and adjust her telling as need be (L). Other factors that also impact a story’s co-creation are the discourse time (t) the story requires to be told, and the space ( ) in which and the community to whom it is told (N + L(s)) (Ripley, 2011). All of these elements, to varying degrees, raise questions as to how does or can reciprocity exist and work between teller(s) and listener(s) when said participants are physically removed from each other's presence, when “at its core, storytelling is the art of using language, vocalization, and/or physical movement and gesture to reveal
elements and images of a story to a specific, live audience” (McWilliams, 1997, para. 1)?

**I chat therefore I am: Reciprocity and presence in Second Life.**

Beyond the superficial similarities of FL and SL storytelling, namely that they both include the sharing of narratives orally, specific and arguably significant differences can now be seen to be emerging in regard to gestures, presence, and reciprocity. Within the SL sessions a previously unseen type of interaction and reciprocity was taking place, communal instant messaging (Local Chat). This realization was noted early in the SL session observations, in part because it was impossible to listen to the stories, observe the avatars, read the listener chat, and write field notes at the same time. As such the decision was made to prioritize listening to the audio and writing field notes. It should be noted that the added need for detailed scrutiny and field notes was specific to me as a researcher but not for the regular participants, who seemed to have no difficulty both listening to the live narratives via Voice and participating in the simultaneous and collective

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8 The Local Chat that occurred during the course of the session was cut and pasted for consideration immediately after each session had concluded; everything written in Local Chat is known to be publicly viewable. While each post does include the contributing avatar’s name (which was converted to their pseudonym prior to saving), unlike blog posts no IP [internet protocol] address or other information is embedded or recorded.
Local Chat. Local Chat at story sessions generally fell into several broad categories:

- Technical questions: “are we on [sic] voice?”,
- Greetings and farewells: some from the session technical helper (“please sit”), others from listeners (“Be Right Back!!”, “¥”, “see ya”), and some occasionally from the tellers themselves (dropping the 4th wall “what a wonderful bear”),
- Playful interactions between listeners: “:P”, “שלום”, “pppssssstttttttt…”, and “pppsssst back”,
- Exclamations: “WHOA”, “*rOfl*”, “lol”, “:O”,
- Text to emulate sounds and or actions: “*CLAPS*”, “smiles”, “**!!Faint!!**”, some of which can be very context specific, such as “I lift my leg to you with honor and respect”,
- Interactions between listeners present: “come sit next to ur [sic] mother”, “hun youre [sic] still dead lol”, or “Ach..mein Bären - ist heute wieder ganz wild”; which according to Google Translate (as my German is woefully inadequate) means “Oh .. my bear - is once again quite wild”,
- Part of a conversation in relation to what is being told in voice by the storyteller “yes i [sic] see [to Georgia] she will kill mommie [sic] later on platform gigling [sic]”, or
- Congratulatory: such as “nice :)”, “Brava!”, “♫~~♫~~APPLAUSE~~♫~~♫”, “❤”. 9

Having noted various differences in the content, timing, and quantity of Local Chat being produced, nine of the fourteen SL sessions were placed under greater scrutiny in an attempt to identify which, if any, variables could account for said differences, including:

- the tellers;
- the different combination of listeners at each session;
- the various locations;
- the days and times of the week;
- the number of chatting listeners present; and
- the quantities of chat created. 10

9 All of the examples used in this bulleted list were shared either before, during, or immediately after a telling by Georgia, and by various persons present (personal communication, September 11, 2011, β5).

10 The chat from the remaining five SL sessions was not considered due to various anomalies, such as: Séamus’ ghost story session being cut short due to malicious griefers; the early morning yoga ‘narrative’ session where no listeners were present except for Gnutt; and the three sessions where major portions of the Local Chat was lost either to technical issues or because Eckland left the naturist erotica reading prematurely, at the time believing it to be anachronistic to the study.
At the nine sessions in question the number of residents chatting ranged from 10-22, producing the equivalent of 4-10 pages of Local Chat. The sessions took place on a variety of days of the week, both in the afternoon and at night SLT (Second Life Time), for this resident, although participating residents' physical locations spanned at least 11-12 time zones (from Hawaii-Aleutian to Greenwich Mean/British Summer Times). It should be noted that none of these aspects seemed to relate to the content of the chat being produced, nor to any given teller’s interaction with said chat. While it is up to individual tellers whether to interact with the chat being produced and to what degree, the content of the chat appeared to vary based on the listeners (both individual residents and collectively) and in relation to who was sharing the stories. Generally the chat produced, during both telling and readings, was playful, including puns, dated novelty song lyrics, pop culture references, and listener interactions with each other. This type and quantity of chat was often acknowledged in Voice by the teller during the sharing of the narrative. Curiously, these same listeners who at other sessions were very chatty, contributed very little playful chat during Kaleo’s sessions. A self-described “native Hawaiian Writer and Storyteller [who] was among the very first live presenter[s] of stories in Second Life in her first avi, in 2005,” Kaleo’s sessions “include[d] her native legends, and stories written by others and herself” (personal communication, March 12, 19, and 24, 2013, Δ2, Δ3, & Δ6). Local Chat was still produced in quantity during her sessions although it generally took place only between the narratives, and the chat in question was
primarily appreciative in nature, such as clapping, and praising. Also highly informative were the differences between Georgia’s two sessions (β5 & Δ8). Although neither took place at the Seanchai Library venue, many of the β5 listeners were recognized from other SGSL sessions, whereas the listeners at Δ8 knew Georgia from that thematic environ but not as a storyteller. Save Georgia herself, not one of the Δ8 listeners had been noted at any storytelling session anywhere in SL. Session Δ8 produced the least amount of chat from any session, even though the session itself was double the length of a typical SL session, and included extended periods of absolutely no chat being produced whatsoever. This session with no regular or perhaps knowledgeable listeners created very little chat. One could speculate that those present simply did not know the etiquette. Ultimately, the quantity of chat undertaken during these sessions ranged from generally prolific to non-existent, and seemed to be dependent on the listeners present (knowing that this behaviour is acceptable), not the teller telling. The qualities of the chat produced was influenced by the interaction of the teller. Local Chat during storytelling sessions appears to be a learned social behaviour, and as such was noticeably absent when the listeners were from outside the SGSL diaspora. Within the SGSL diaspora the volume of Local Chat increased both as the number of listeners increased but also as the narratives progressed. This observation should be qualified in that not all residents at these sessions participated in Local Chat, while those who did were often prolific.
Beyond Local Chat typos (which are frequent) there are other ways in which unintended visual information is being shared, case in point being the profile bubbles that exist above each avatar’s head. While some of the content (e.g., avatar name, group affiliations) is controlled by a given avatar’s resident, it is in the control of each viewing resident whether or not they wish to see the information of those avatars on their screen. During early SL sessions these information bubbles were observed only briefly to note the names of each avatar present; in SL you cannot always identify people by the way they look. Then during Georgia’s Arabian nights Cindertale session it was noted that an avatar’s information/status bubble listed him as “Away” (Lancelot, personal communication, September 11, 2011, β5) his head slumped forward with his chin to his chest. Later a large bear, only minutes before graciously greeted by Georgia upon his late arrival, was listed as “Busy” (Winston, personal communication, September 11, 2011, β5). These status options are available for all in SL and are comparable to utilizing AFK [away from keyboard] to inform those interacting with your avatar that they are not being ignored, but rather that said avatar is temporarily unmonitored. While the reasons for these particular temporary absences were never specified, for those present such behaviour was both acceptable and deemed unremarkable, as no one remarked.

Of course, both audible and visual distractions can also be found in FL sessions, ranging from wandering attentions, snoozing, and fidgeting, to one memorably annoying session when a stranger proceeded to eat a very crunchy
meal. Multitasking and or distracted listeners may be depriving tellers of their reciprocity but such behaviours are distinct from deliberate attempts to disrupt the storytelling through a practice known in SL as griefing. While all SL residents must [agree] that they will not “engage in malicious or disruptive conduct that impedes or interferes with other users' normal use of or enjoyment of the Service” (Linden Research, Inc., 2014), griefers are not known for their honesty, but rather “dedicated to annoying or upsetting… through confusion and trickery” (Au, 2008, p. 253). Although generally unknown outside of SL, this brand of cyber-bullying received mainstream news coverage after the now infamous flying penises incident during the interview between c|net reporter Daniel Terdiman and SL entrepreneur Anshe Chung (Hutcheon, 2006), and again with the tit for tat grieving tactics by the rival supporters of then Senators Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama (Lawton, 2008). Griefing in SL can take a variety of forms; you can be blitzed, orbited, spammed, spoofed, deformed, caged, pushed, stalked, and or verbally abused, and all are arguably forms of reciprocity, although clearly negative (Second Life, 2009). During the session in question, a group of, it was believed, five griefers descended on the Seanchai Library, pushing, swearing, and generally disrupting the session with their behaviour, contributions in the Local Chat, and via Voice. As such, numerous guild members were, in addition to listening to Séamus, forced into a multitasking situation, watching for, identifying, and banning identified and suspected griefers in a Potteresque wizard battle. Unfortunately, said guild members’ efforts met with only limited success, as
succinctly conveyed by an unknown griefer via Voice: “You fucking idiot, you banned the storyteller” (personal communication, August 27, 2011, β2), and ultimately led to the early ending of the session. While there are many ways in which people can be annoying, both in FL and SL, in the latter they are generally protected by a degree of anonymity.

Participants at any storytelling, in that they are to various degrees listening, watching, exchanging information, and coping with distractions, could be interpreted as multitasking. Although opinions vary regarding the potential positive or negative ramifications of multitasking, the quantity and variety that occurs during SL storytelling sessions does appear to be exponentially large in comparison to FL sessions (Blascovich & Bailenson, 2011; Konnikova, 2014; Kuyvenhoven, 2009; Turkle, 2011; Yashinsky, 2005). Computer culture scholar Sherry Turkle explores some of the numerous facets of multitasking in her 2011 book Alone together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other, including issues of guilt, avoidance, control, labour, branding, isolation, time, focus, and notions of self. The “surreptitious multitasking” (Turkle, 2011, p. 13) that allows us to play solitaire on our computers while talking on the phone, and skim audiobooks on our drive to book club, results in shallow listening and “diminishes the level to which the listener can engage with the story” (Ripley, 2011, p. 3). One of Turkle’s guilt-ridden participants encapsulates my concerns regarding multitasking in relation to narratives, in discussing her own guilty multitasking secret during Skype conversations with her grandmother: “I do my e-
mail during the calls. I’m not really paying attention to our conversation” (2011, p. 14). Considering the precariousness of narrative storyworlds, in that visualizations are all too easily lost if one is distracted, and subsequently difficult to recreate (Kuyvenhoven, 2009), limiting multitasking during narrative co-creation situations, such as regularly occur in lecture halls, classrooms, boardrooms, and courtrooms, would seem advised. Although, in those situations, a status bubble above students heads could prove very useful (e.g., Lost, Daydreaming, Texting, and Guilty). In the case of SL storytelling sessions what it tells all those who read the status bubbles or notice the dropped chins is that the resident behind the avatar in question is probably not listening and has made a conscious decision to not participate in the co-creation of the story. The qualifications attached to the aforementioned are included as it is possible to be listening to a SL session without actively manipulating one’s avatar, in fact it may be preferable to do so (see Interview Observations).

Thus far the discussions and observations have focused on the behaviours, attributes, and elements of FL and SL storytelling. However, in SL with session teller(s) and listener(s) geographically dispersed a more appropriate comparison might be stories being shared over the radio. For the purposes of this study CDs of storytelling sessions were utilized. Further enhancing their comparative value, all five of the AO [audio only] tellers either are or were active members of 1001. As such, there were opportunities to listen to multiple tellings of the same stories via a combination of CD and live at 1001 sessions. All of the CDs utilized in this
study were and are commercially available, and as such, no extra ethics review nor permissions were sought. Two of the sessions were recorded at publicly accessible storytelling sessions, such as occur at 1001 (they may actually be 1001), two were recorded specifically for the tellings and the tales to be saved and shared (either online or on CD), and the fifth was made from a radio program; there were at least two listeners physically present for that recording, Frankie’s producer and a fiddler.

Christine’s story (Sessions Φ6 & Ω2, 2012 & recorded in 2006; heard in 2013 respectively).

One such multiple telling observation opportunity was Christine’s telling of the story *The owl was a baker’s daughter*. The story was inspired by a passage from Hamlet, in which Ophelia makes allusion to a biblical story, “they say the owl was a baker’s daughter. Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be” (Shakespeare, trans. 1923a, 4.5. 50-53). Although variations of this story can be found, as one would expect both of Christine’s tellings seemed quite similar to each other. However, a comparison of my fieldnotes from the 1001 and studio produced AO tellings, revealed marked differences. During her 1001 telling she held and handled the talking stick, at first on a diagonal with hands at both ends and then later cradled it with her forearm; otherwise, there were very few gestures during this telling. At one point she lost the thread of the story and momentarily lowered the fourth wall to address the listeners. Christine changed the volume of her voice to represent different characters but did not attempt
different accents, and during this telling there were several ambient distractions, including the café’s refrigerator, and three non 1001 people opening the toilet door over by the café’s kitchen. The AO fieldnotes focused on the visualizations I saw during this telling (see Appendix E), including numerous elements that were never mentioned by Christine. These unprompted visualizations included the interior layout of the building, the hearth on the left hand interior wall as one entered the front room, the kitchen door to the right of the hearth, and the colours (browns) and textures (dark wood) of the rooms where this narrative occurred, and ultimately of the owl herself. This particular AO session was remarkable for the lack of ambient noises, and the total absence of any community. While this is as one would expect with a recording made in a studio setting, compared to the AO recordings made at live events the studio session seemed somewhat sterile. There were no gasps of horror or delight, no laughter or applause from listeners, as any listeners present would have been isolated from the teller in a recording booth. The relevant points in regard to reciprocity are that the non-textual information being shared with the listeners varied, due in part to the technology being used but also due to the places the tellings were occurring. It also raises the issue of the potential influences of fixity (i.e. the impact of words being fixed on or into tangible documents, such as, but not limited to, books, audio and video recordings) on reciprocity.
Frankie’s story (Session Ω1, recorded in 1999; heard in 2013): the second of five AO sessions, in which five tellers told 39 stories over 5 hours.

In contrast to Christine’s AO session, Frankie’s live telling in a radio booth, while edited between stories, allowed for no do-overs, and as such the presence of listeners and the hiccups, gaffes, and flubs allowed me as a listener of the CD to feel as if I was part of the community of listeners present at the time of the telling. During his show Frankie told a humorous short\(^{11}\) story about a bilingual mouse, some cheese, and a cat. As with Christine’s tellings about the baker’s two daughters, I had heard Frankie tell this particular story previously at a 1001 session, as well as having read versions of the story in books authored by both Frankie and another long-time 1001 storyteller Edith. According to Edith, she remembered reading the story in a magazine in her dentist’s office some 25-30 years earlier. Frankie in turn related in his book how he remembered hearing it told by Edith at a 1001 session, although he made no mention of this during the version told on his radio program. While some narrative elements differ in these versions (see Appendix F) settings, levels of detail, and the specific words spoken by a mother mouse in her attempt to scare away a cat, the most important difference in this case lies not in the narrative elements themselves, but rather in my own response as an individual listener. In each of these

\(^{11}\) AO stories observed for this study ranged from 1 to 28 minutes in duration, although the longest story available on these CDs was by Christine at over two and a half hours in length.
versions, in my head, I distinctly hear Frankie’s voice, his intonations, and his
cadence. For this story, for me, Frankie has attained authority as the *definitive*
voice.

To clarify the chronology, I read Frankie’s version before I heard him tell it in
person, and then heard his radio recording of the story before seeking out Edith’s
version. Whether my hearing Frankie’s voices is due to his live or CD telling I
cannot definitively say, but over the course of this study on several occasions I
have heard multiple 1001 tellers tell the same stories, and never fixed a teller’s
voice to the tale as has happened with Frankie and *Mother mouse* (Ω1). The
impact of such authority over a narrative may at first appear inconsequential.
Hearing and seeing a young Daniel Radcliffe’s voice and face (2001-2011) while
reading the *Harry Potter* books (1997-2007) certainly does them no disservice.
Issues of fixity are however muddied further when multiple fixed versions are
available. With Potter and Radcliffe being so indelibly linked, it is difficult to
imagine the possibility of *now* reading *Harry Potter without* hearing and seeing
the voice and face of Radcliffe in one’s visualizations. Once seen, who could
read Dashiell Hammett’s *The Maltese falcon* (1930) *without* hearing the distinct
voice of Humphrey Bogart’s Sam Spade (1941), Harper Lee’s *To kill a
mockingbird* (1960) *without* the dulcet tones of Gregory Peck’s Atticus Finch
(1962), or William Goldman’s *The princess bride* (1973) *without* Mandy Patinkin’s
“Hullo [sic], my name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die”
(1987). In these roles, in these narratives, these actors’ voices and faces are
inseparably fixed to these characters, regardless of the intentions of their authors. Although narrative theory has moved beyond the paradigm of authorial intent being absolute, the potential authority of one fixed intersemiotic manifestation over another should be of consideration both when fixing narratives and when utilizing them. Certain intersemiotic manifestations, particularly those which achieve a popular cultural status through visual recordings, can both achieve and impose an authority of *definitive* status in our imaginations. Charles Perrault’s introduction of a fairy godmother, a pumpkin carriage, and most notably glass slippers\(^{12}\) in *Cendrillon*, and which were subsequently utilized in *Walt Disney’s Cinderella* (1950), is a case in point (Heiner, 2012). These elements have become quintessential to the Cinderella narrative, overshadowing the diverse and global plethora of other Cindertales (ATU510)\(^{13}\) (Heiner, 2012). Such is their sway that Perrault’s version has assumed not only an authoritative status, but also an undeserved *original* story provenance (Heiner, 2012; Hallett &

\(^{12}\) Commonly, yet erroneously, believed to be a translation error, from *pantoufles de vair* (squirrel-fur-trimmed slippers) to “*pantoufles de verre*” (Perrault, 2006) (glass slippers), first postulated by Honoré de Balzac in 1841 (Heiner, 2012; Rawson, 1994).

\(^{13}\) Aarne-Thompson classification ATU510 encompasses an estimated 1500 stories; including Strabo’s *Rhodopis* (Egypt, c100BCE), Tuan Ch’eng-shih’s *Yeh-hsien* (China, c856-860ACE), Giambattista Basile’s *Cenerentola* (Italy, 1634-6), and later the Grimm brother’s *Aschenputtel* (Germany,1812), and Joseph Jacob’s *Cap O ’Rushes* (England, 1890) (Heiner, 2012; Hallett & Karasek, 2002).
Karasek, 2002). It is also possible that authority may become affixed to one's favourite or first fixed version, thereby earning, in my opinion, Alastair Sim (1951) the status of the definitive Ebenezer Scrooge, and thankfully I visualize Robert Redford (1974) rather than Leonardo DiCaprio (2013) whenever I read *The great Gatsby*.

In comparison my hearing Frankie’s voice when reading Edith’s version of *Mother mouse* could be seen as making a mountain out of a mole mousehill. Moreover it could be argued that viewing said movies or listening to such CDs of storytelling sessions makes them part of our personal histories, and therefore no different than my go-to visualization of a bird (barring other information) being a robin, or that in my paradigm north is up. Cruikshank, however, in her work researching First Nations storytelling, casts fixity in a more sombre light:

> The writing down of oral literature, no matter how well-intentioned or how well carried out, petrifies it. It is like a molecule by molecule replacement of an organic plant by stone. A petrified log may look like wood, but it is actually stone. (1998, p. xiii)

While one’s go-to imagined bird can and will vary due to a variety of ever-changing factors, fixity establishes and imposes some degree of authority in the minds and imaginations of tellers and listeners that does not occur in oral narrative. The degree of authority imposed on a given observer will vary due to a variety of factors, and as such, simply that a narrative is fixed does not automatically create enough authority to fix it to a specific person. I, for one, can
read, listen to, or watch versions of Hans Christian Andersen’s *The Ugly Duckling* without hearing Christine; unless it is actually her telling said story (Ω2). And yet, when I read or hear any of the countless stories from dozens of countries regarding the exploits of the “wise fool” (Frankie, Ω1) Hodja Nasrudin, be they ancient or contemporary, by any writer or teller (several of which tell at 1001), I hear Frankie, even if I have never heard him tell that particular story.

During our conversation it became clear that Frankie brings an entire set of visualizations with him for his tellings of the Hodja stories:

> When I was a kid, I pictured him so vividly in my mind. I saw him, maybe it was from the illustrations in the book? I saw him, he was, in my mind he was a fat, short, old man with a white beard, and he had little slippers that curved up at the end, and had bells at the ends of them, and of course he had a turban, and always with a donkey, and he just ambled through the village of Akshahir, in Turkey. (Frankie, personal communication, Φ)

Frankie’s visualizations of Hodja are unwaveringly linked to his part in the co-creation (whether as a teller, listener, or reader) of any Hodja story. Interestingly, although I sensed his authority whenever I heard or read a tale about Hodja Nasrudin, I did not and subsequently still do not see the visuals as he described them. In contrast, my visualizations were much more generic, morphing with each Hodja story, although he was generally bearded with a bit of a belly, but not a white beard. The co-creation of these Hodja narratives is built in part on the scaffolding of Frankie’s personal history with the stories, his visualizations, and
his chosen words. In turn, every individual present’s experience of his telling, in that place and moment, in combination with, to some extent, our involuntary imaginations, and our own histories, will produce unique visualizations of Hodja and his environs as part of our individual and ephemeral stories, that can never be exactly duplicated. In the case of fixed narratives, comparable contributions by individual readers, listeners, or observers still hold true in their co-creation of their experience. Such contributions are not restricted to oral narratives. Drawing from individual scaffoldings, a person with experience of childhood violence, racism, the Deep South, and or the American judicial system would co-create with Harper Lee (and others, depending on the medium) a different version of To kill a mockingbird (whether the book, an audiobook, or the film), than those whose knowledge of such things was removed. Likewise for those who lost their mothers as a children (Marcie, Φ6; Yolen, 1991), were in actuality a baker’s daughter (Christine, Φ6), or had seen firsthand the “village of Akshahir” (Frankie, personal communication, Φ). It does make one wonder who though, who is Atticus Finch for those who have not seen To kill a mockingbird? Moreover, what bird do listeners visualize when all they are told is that “a bird” (Marcie, personal communication, θ1) gently placed a single seed into a poor man’s hands?

Fixity of narratives can be defined to include more than the document it is inscribed, printed, and or recorded on or in, but also in the very structures of said narratives. On one level this can illustrated by numerical patterns that are common within many narratives and storytellings. In numerous European
cultures (and their diasporas) the number three, be they objects (e.g., three roads), participants (e.g., three sons), or actions (e.g., three trials), is so common in narratives that it is known in storytelling communities as *The rule of three* (Livo & Rietz, 1986). A variety of explanations have been postulated regarding the significance of threes in such narratives, including ritual and or Biblical allusions, repetition as memory device (e.g., three dishes, three chairs, three beds, and three bears), and even as the components of a narrative arc (e.g., beginning, middle, and end). (Bettelheim, 2010; Livo & Rietz, 1986; Lord, 1964). Other notions speculate some relationship to stages of life in relation to childbearing, to a child’s recognition of self (one for father, two for mother/couple, and three as child/self in relation to their parents), and even to various body parts historically necessary for procreation (Bettelheim, 2010). For whatever reason, a degree of expectation can easily develop when such numerical repetition is employed in a narrative.

**Christine’s story (Session Ω2, recorded in 2006; heard in 2013): the second of five AO sessions, in which five tellers told 39 stories over 5 hours.**

Christine’s telling of the Albanian wonder tale *The girl who took a snake for a husband* is an ideal example. In this story three princesses (sisters) find and marry three fiancées. Three challenges are undertaken by Lukja (the third princess) in an attempt to rescue her husband, the previously mentioned snake. The middle challenge requires three tasks to be successfully completed, resulting
in three gifts (the first of which is three silver hairs). This culminates in three problems being solved by the utilization of the three gifts, respectively, ultimately saving her father-in-law, mother-in-law, and husband in that order. The narrative then reverses the order of the three challenges for the return journey home.

While repetition can be very helpful in learning, telling and recalling of a story of this magnitude (*The girl who took a snake for a husband* has a discourse time of over 27 minutes), it also sets up multiple levels of expectation. When Princess Lukja is again attacked by a flock of black birds as she is undertaking the second task set to her by the *shtriga* (witch), and again prevails by holding the talisman filled with the ashes of her husband’s scales, it takes no stretch of the imagination to predict what will happen during the third task. Moreover, upon hearing that the gift from the first task (the three silver hairs) is used to solve her father-in-law’s problem, that the gifts from the second and third tasks will solve her mother-in-law’s and husband’s problems respectively is a foregone conclusion. While this particular story is an extreme example of the utilization of threes, the point being made is that the use of patterns within narratives sets up certain expectations that encourage listeners to think ahead in a story. Here therefore it would be appropriate to reiterate Kuyvenhoven’s warnings regarding the precariousness of immersion in a co-created storyworld and how easily we as listeners can be distracted (2009). Such patterns, while very useful as recollection devices for tellers, and for encouraging the real world participation of
children in the storytelling experience, can also easily dislocate listeners from being present, visualizing, and experiencing the moment in the storyworld.

**Edith and Frankie’s stories (Session Ω3 & Ω2, recorded in 1985 & 1999; heard in 2013): the third and second of five AO sessions, in which five tellers told 39 stories over 5 hours.**

On a smaller scale we should also consider Edith’s AO recitation of William Allingham’s *The fairy shoemaker* (see Appendix G), that she “learned long ago” (Ω3), and which over the course of this study I have listened to on multiple occasions. In conjunction with my observations of numerous other comparable rhyming poems and ballads, during various AO, SL, and 1001 sessions, what I came to note was that during such narratives markedly fewer visualizations occurred, and storyworld immersion was more difficult to achieve. Just as the numerical narrative structure imposed itself upon Christine’s Albanian wonder-tale, the rhyming patterns utilized in Allingham’s poem set up expectations, and focus a listener’s attention away from the moment and onto the completion of each rhyme. This sense of expectation held regardless of the type of rhyming scheme, be it an alternate rhyme (e.g., “heard… mound… bird… around”), couplet (e.g., “day… hay… marriage… carriage”), or some other variation (e.g., “tight… warm… winter… storm”) (Allingham, 1905, pp. 14-16; Edith, Ω3). In addition, the inclusion of solely audible nonsensical elements also seemed to actively distract from visualizing narrative elements:

Chary, chary, chary, chee-ee!
Only the grasshopper and the bee? -

[Rap a tap tap]

Tick-a-tack-too!

Scarlet leather, sewn together,

This will make a shoe. (Allingham, 1905, p. 14; Edith, Ω3)

This is not to say that all nonsensical elements and passages were devoid of visualizations. One of the oddest stories in the entire study was *Ali the Persian's bag*, as told by Frankie on his radio program. Based on a story told by Scheherazade on the 295th and 296th nights of her epic purported telling, Frankie’s version of this story tells of a Baghdad shopkeeper/storyteller who tells a story to the Caliph Harun al-Rashid. It is this level of the story that is of interest to us here, regarding nonsense and visualizations. A bag is taken from the storyteller’s store, the storyteller claims it stolen, while the accused Kurd claims it was stolen from him the previous day and he is simply reclaiming it. The dispute ends up in front of the Kazi (local magistrate), and there the nonsense begins. The Kazi decided that the best way to prove who the bag belonged to was to see who could tell him the contents of the bag. Both parties being agreeable they began an ever escalating game of one-upsmanship listing the purported contents of their respective bags. Ultimately, said lists would have taxed the tensile limits of even Mary Poppins’ magical carpet bag, extending from household items (e.g., “two silver styles for eye-powder and antimony for the eyes and a kerchief for the hands”) and animals (e.g., “a camel and two she-camels and a lioness and two
lions and a she-bear and two jackals”), to buildings and cities (e.g., “Bassorah and Baghdad and the palace of Shaddad bin Ad and an ironsmith’s forge and a fishing-net and cudgels and pickets and girls and boys and a thousand pimps who will testify that the bag is my bag”) (*Book of the thousand nights and a night*, trans. 1885). In Frankie’s version, the lists take on both contemporary and regional elements related to both the location of the narrative and of its telling, as the bag contained “*rahat lokum, baba ghanoush*, [inaudible], and green eggs and ham… all land that stretches from Cairo to Damascus to [inaudible] to Winnipeg. Plus it contains people driving down the road listening to great stories, children laughing in the back seat, sharing their toys. Not to mention [sic] the fact that it contains fiddlers, [and] storytellers” (Ω1). For those desperate to know the actual contents, according to the Kazi the bag contained either “bread and a lemon and cheese and olives” (*Book of the thousand nights and a night*, trans. 1885) or “three orange rinds, two date pits, and a dried crust of bread” (Frankie, Ω1), depending on the version.

Silliness aside, in stories so chock-full of potential visualizations (see Appendix H), during my listenings and readings they were in actuality few and far between compared to the other stories heard and read. Unlike Allingham’s *The fairy shoemaker*, rhyming in Frankie’s *Ali the Persian’s bag*, was relatively rare, and generally interspersed within these great and fantastical lists (e.g., “two sacks of wheat… bedroom suite”; “towers… powers”; “lotions… potions”), or the one-off Seussesque “do not let your judgement be blurred by the absurd words of this
false Kurd you've just heard" (Ω1). So why then the dearth of visuals? Does it come back to the nature of narrative, the sharing of events, by narrators, to narratees, in places (Bal, 2007; O'Neill, 1996; Ong, 1982; Prince, 1988; Ripley, 2011)? If so, “the king died” (O'Neill, 1996, p. 18), as a single event, in that it clearly refers to two separate states of events, the first in which the king was still alive and the second in which the king is dead, should afford narratees (be they listeners or readers) the opportunity for visualizations. Conversely, in that “‘all men are mortal; Socrates is a man; Socrates is mortal’ and ‘Roses are red / violets are blue / Sugar is sweet / And so are you’ do not constitute narratives, since they do not represent any event” (Prince, 1988, p. 58), these passages, as with the contents of the bag Frankie listed, should not produce visualizations. Yet, the distinction between event and no event is problematic, as we have already seen that individual words, such as Kristallnacht and even “bird” (Marcie, 01), do in fact have stories; the former has events embedded in its very essence (even if they are not recounted), and the latter because we bring our past and our present experiences to them (Ripley, 2011). As such, “The rose is red, the violet's blue, The honey's sweet, and so are you” (Ritson, 1866), while arguably not a narrative, does present opportunities for visualizations of a rose, of honey (plus its container), and of the colours red and blue. Is then story rather than narrative the essential element necessary for visualizations? If so, why then did Ali the Persian's bag not result in visualizations for bread, lemons, cheese, olives, orange rinds, date pits, dried crusts of bread, rahat lokum, baba ganoush,
and green eggs and ham, when each, as with Kristallnacht and bird, have their own stories? Looking beyond the increasingly fantastic purported contents of their respective bags, I would speculate that with such a vast quantity of items being listed over such a short period of time (7min 21s), it was not necessarily their listing that impeded their visualization, but rather, in part because there just wasn’t time. Moreover, as the listed items were not physically present in the narrative’s storyworld (i.e. within the Kazi’s courtroom), visualizations of the litigants undertaking their listings, generally superseded any visualizations of the unsubstantiated contents being listed.

To varying degrees we have seen how reciprocity can be influenced by various narrative participants, their backgrounds, experiences (personal and cultural), environs, and their sense of community and presence, by the narratives and types of fixity utilized, by multitasking, and by the time available. These behaviours, attributes and elements are complicated with the introduction of various technologies that can distance tellers from listeners. While expectations regarding the quality of avatar mapping of human movements and facial expressions will only increase with improvements in current motion-capture technology used in contemporary films such as The lord of the rings trilogy (2001-2003), Avatar (2009), The hobbit (2012) and Dawn of the planet of the apes (2014). However, as this level of technology is unlikely to be either widely available or affordable in virtual worlds such as SL any time soon, SL listeners’ empathy must for the time being be carried primarily by Voice and narrative.
Although recognizably an unfair comparison, the vacant stares presented throughout SL storytellings, accompanied only by occasional random eye blinks, infrequent shifting of weight, and complete absence of any visible facial expressions, even when a teller’s voice is expressing emotion, produces a problematic degree of disconnect. Avatars cannot make eye contact with each other, even assuming that residents were utilizing a mouse-view rather than camera-view; for a variety of reasons I as a resident of SL rarely adopt the former. While a faux-scanning of the listeners by the teller’s avatar might give an impression of contact, and it is possible to fake that action as avatars’ heads follow their resident’s mouse movements, moving one’s mouse over the listener’s faces to fake this connection would likely distract from the telling of the story. It should also be noted that storytelling venue administrators do regularly suppress the audible components of attending avatar scripts, such as clapping, whistling, and the music which often accompanies dancing gestures. While this does limit certain forms of reciprocity in SL storytelling, such restrictions are understandable as the cacophony that could occur could easily prove an overwhelming distraction for all present. Nonetheless, our avatars, tellers and listeners, represent us in these collective spaces, and do unexpectedly afford residents a sense of presence. In part mitigating the current technological problems faced in SL – lag, passive avatars, vacant expressions, stock gestures, and AFK residents. The decisions that listeners must make is a balancing act between encouraging that sense of presence (by viewing the entire space, those
present, and actively participating in the Local Chat) or favouring greater engagement with the narrative (by focusing one’s camera on the telling avatar’s face). However, when opting for a tight focus on SL storytellers’ faces much of the sense of presence was lost, and without the sense of a shared experience the stories shared seemed more akin to an amateur audiobook than a storytelling session.

**Space**

So I looked at a lot of apartments and they were too big or too small or too dingy or too dark or all of them too ordinary, until one day (The Moth, 2013, July 19, Ψ5) – Fantine

Thus far we have seen that co-created storyworlds can be both influenced and envisioned based on a variety of sources including gestures and expressions, narrative and text, memory and community. But they can also be affected by the spaces and places where they occur, be it storyworld, avatar environ, and or actual physical location. Before going any further the distinctions being made between spaces and places, as defined for our purposes here, should be clarified. To that end, *spaces* are the physical, or in the case of SL the virtual, environments we or rather our proxies occupy, be it an interior (e.g., a room, a box, or a cave) or a self-defined exterior location (e.g., a front yard, the darkness between distant streetlights, or on campus). *Places* are environments which hold subjective emotional attachments, such as a bedroom, one’s workplace, a library, or a homeland. As such all places are spaces, but not all spaces are places.
This distinction will prove relevant here considering the diverse variety of spaces and places that narratives occurred in during this study, including multiple FL and SL ones, those physically disparate, and even those imagined.

Fantine’s story (Session ψ5, recorded July 15, 2009): the fifth of five online video sessions, in which 24 tellers told 24 stories over 5 hours, compiled from 21 Moth sessions that took place over a period of 9 years in four North American cities.

Having only just moved to Paris to start a new job, Fantine chose to move into a seemingly ideal apartment on the fashionable Left Bank, despite warnings that it was haunted. Although initially dismissive of “such nonsense” (The Moth, 2013, July 19), after a series of unexplainable encounters and the protestations of a rather snooty French woman, some Italian friends, and her upstairs neighbours, she eventually came to believe that her apartment was indeed haunted. While the actions of the various characters in this story are both entertaining and illuminating, the level of detail Fantine shared in regard to her new home provided an interesting opportunity for greater scrutiny:

Up a stone staircase from the 17th century, the colour of honey or freshly baked bread. Two gigantic lacquered doors opened into a foyer, and there was a dining room on the right, and then there was a living room 18 feet wide, 18 feet long, and 18 feet high; a perfect cube. And next to it was an ‘American kitchen’ the realtor said, I was reassured. And there was a study. There was a long corridor, and at the end of that was a bedroom that was another perfect cube. All of this perfection covered in moldings from the late
18th century, five minutes before the revolution. The place was perfect. (The Moth, 2013, July 19)

During her telling, in my mind’s eye, I could clearly see the Seine from her rue. Despite having only ever seen the Seine while flying into Charles de Gaulle my visualizations were no doubt drawn from images of Paris accrued through countless viewings of Charade (1963), Casablanca (1942), and even A shot in the dark (1964). Once upstairs my visualizations of her perfect cube living room included very pale blue painted walls, although last painted some time ago. The sagging wooden floorboards were visualized dark stained, and during Fantine's party, as per the solicitor’s warnings, her most “corpulent guest” (The Moth, 2013, July 19) was stationed by the window lest he fall through. Her bed in my mind was a sagging single with crisp white sheets and pillows, and the bricked up fireplace she described with a marble mantelpiece that served as her headboard even though it reminded her friends of “a gravestone” (The Moth, 2013, July 19) I imagined as dark grey. I also noted that there was something above the mantel, although not a mirror, as if a section of the wall had been painted a slightly darker colour than the rest of the room.

As part of her narrative Fantine also shared its exact address [withheld]. Curious how my visualizations compared with Fantine’s recollections, I virtually walked her rue on Google Maps Street View. They proved inaccurate; far from being visible from Fantine’s street, the Seine was at least a six minute walk away. Based on the Google Map images of the apartment’s exterior and the
information later gleaned from an online residential listing for that very apartment, my visualizations of the apartment’s layout were no more accurate. In the case of this story, whether this matters is debatable, probably not. But based on Fantine’s description and the photographic data available, a plausible working floor plan where the bedroom and study can share a wall continues to elude me. Ultimately even with such detailed descriptions clearly some of what I visualized was not what Fantine visually recalled of her apartment. A teller’s ability to accurately convert what they know or visually recall into words such that a listener can both comprehend and visually reconstruct said information is fraught with opportunities for unintentional listener embellishment, misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Extrapolating these opportunities for multiple listeners of the same narrative, without the inclusions of shared visuals, the likelihood of ever more divergent visualizations between said listeners is therefore highly probable.

Frankie & Kaleo’s sessions (Session θ5, August 13, 2011 & Sessions Δ2/Δ3, Δ6, March 12, 19 & 24, 2013,): the fifth of 14 FL & the seventh, eighth, and eleventh of 14 SL sessions.

The discussion went on for approximately fifteen minutes as numerous new voices were consulted as they arrived. Would there be enough benches? What about the lighting, bugs, and amplification? Some were in favour, while others sceptical. In the end Frankie won out with “Let’s just do it” (personal communication, θ5)! Picnic benches were rearranged, and others brought closer. Chairs were brought out from the regular 1001 space, along with the teller’s chair
and table, and even a few large tablecloths (see Figure 9). As 8 o’clock drew nearer more and more people arrived, quickly recognized and seemingly embraced this new alternate venue, and after a brief series of ambiance-induced campfire songs about singing around campfires, canoeing, and a seemingly barren chicken induced into laying a variety of unusual eggs, the stories began with Frankie explaining “there is no such thing as a typical night” (personal communication, 05).

The very real significance of space for oral narratives is difficult to conceive when considering the rather generic student coffee house that has served as the 1001 storytelling venue for quite some time (including the entire length of this study). In a hard sunken box of a room, with beige tiled floors and beige walls decorated with plastic framed Imaginus posters, while sitting at non-descript square tables (some rather wobbly), on black metal straight back chairs, hard-warn Naugahyde benches, and a few upholstered armchairs that once may have been dusty pink but over time have become somewhat grey, listeners are transported through both time and space via narrative. If such drab spaces can house the co-creation of innumerable visualized storyworlds then one must wonder what do such places actually contribute? Equally generic SL storytelling
spaces such as the Seanchai Library are regularly decorated with rezzed objects to suggest locales relevant to the session’s given narratives, such as a lakefront cottage, a castle forecourt, a savannah, or even outer space. Even purpose built virtual world venues, which can lend an element of atmosphere to a SL storytelling session, are still far from creating an immersive virtual reality. Just outside the Seanchai Library a dozen avatars gather (see Figure 10). One whose skin on said night is that of a Polynesian male wearing what is assumed to be traditional attire including relevant foliage like materials and tattoos. Another sports a floral shirt and gifts leis to all those present. The non-human avatars present are resplendent in a variety of wings and scales. We sit on crates arranged in a circle around a crackling virtual fire pit, under virtual palm trees, next to a virtual ocean, as a singular perfectly cylindrical wave passes again and again past a perpendicular shoreline. Kaleo greets each upon arrival “Aloha mai e Robin… Aloha mai e Dash… Aloha e Hedy, how pleasant to see you, come sit, join us” (personal communication, March 12, 2013, Δ2) before starting the session, full of “her native legends, and stories written by others and herself” (Seanchai Library, personal communication, March 12, 2013), with a song:
Hone ana ko leo e 'ulili ē [The voice of the sandpiper is soft and sweet]
O kahi manu noho 'ae kai [Little bird who lives by the sea]
Kia'i ma ka lae a'o kekaha [Ever watchful on the beaches]
'O ia kai ua lana mālie [Where the sea is calm].

In addition these venues afford those present, whether in person or via an avatar proxy, a communal space for personalized, internal, and yet shared experiences. In the case of SL it is important to keep in mind that the spaces (although potentially places) discussed thus far are occupied by residents’ avatars, and not by residents themselves. As such, one early afternoon (2pm SLT) Gnutt and Eckland sat in a beautiful virtual forest glade atop a large grey mushroom with ambient bird songs filling the air. Giant pink toadstools (with space to comfortably seat two) were arranged in a half-circle and rustic benches made from roughhewn branches still sporting green leaves completed the ring (see Figure 11). Simultaneously at 5pm (EDT) I observed multiple Storyfest 2013 storytellers while sitting on a creaking second hand office chair in my living room (Δ4, Δ5, & Δ6, 2013). Somewhere in the late morning (11am HAST)

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on Hawaii’s Big Island Kaleo’s resident sat with “her ears on” (personal communication, March 24, 2013, Δ6) sharing stories about a sad little lehua tree helped by the industrious Menehune spirits who only work at night. Behind her voice and the various SL ambient bird songs an ambulance siren could be heard racing through Big Island’s VOG [volcanic smog]. If these generic and purpose built virtual spaces fail to convince of their impact on story co-creation then:

Consider the experience of reading Solzhenitsyn on a bitter winter’s night versus a warm summer’s day… *A Midsummer’s Night Dream* while sitting in the growing evening shadows of an old oak forest, or clearer still, when telling ghost stories around a campfire… the spaces that narratives are experienced in are primal to the very essence of the experience, even if not always so dramatically. (Ripley, 2011, 10)

It should be noted that while spaces and places can potentially have a significant impact on the stories being shared, telling in such a space does not in and of itself guarantee such a result. Within a large vaulted room with warm sandstone walls boasting multiple giant archways leading out to various sundrenched courtyards and gardens (see Figure 12) Georgia told a Cindertale that began as Cindertales often do, with a young girl and a cruel stepmother. A large ornate red and gold carpet

Figure 12: Georgia’s β5 session.
dominated the stone floor of the space, and there, while lounging on floor cushions, a disparate group of avatars, including a bear, a pixie, a gnome, a harlequin and a Mad Hatter, were transported to a rich and vivid storyworld full of circuses and gypsies, deserts and brigands. In contrast Georgia’s Δ8 session (previously discussed regarding its dearth of Local Chat) took place in a highly detail oriented Celtic roleplaying simulation outside an ironworker’s forge. There on virtually roughhewn benches and chairs around a roaring fire set on a cobbled dock next to an expansive and shimmering sea (see Figure 13) a group of listeners primarily dressed in appropriate costumes suffered through an uninspired epic of inconsistent fairytale questing, ecological disasters, and eventually even a crystalline alien spaceship. Spanning generations of characters, the story was a poorly written and disjointed tale during which I attempted to remain focused by watching the cyclical cloud formations and changing intensities of sun and moon lights flickering on the water. Even in this stunning venue brimming with ambiance I found myself unable to engage with the story or this telling on any level.

Physical and virtual storytelling spaces and places are only a small portion of those relevant to oral narrative story co-creation. While stories generally are
about characters they occur in spaces and places, the majority of which while mentioned and sometimes described by the tellers are visualized by the listeners. In an attempt to further explore the visualized spaces that are co-created as part of oral narratives the following stories have been selected for greater scrutiny.

Rita & Selma’s stories (Session Ψ3, recorded May 14 and October 29, 2008): the third of five Moth sessions, in which 24 tellers told 24 stories over 5 hours.

Although potentially inaccurate, visualizations are a common component created and utilized by listeners in co-creating stories. As part of The Moth session fieldnotes any and all visualizations were noted, many of which went beyond the levels of detail shared by the various tellers. During Rita’s story (she who declined an invitation to the casting couch) I visualized her “farshtunken apartment, it was a small little disgusting apartment” (The Moth, 2011, April 28) as barely wide enough for a single bed next to a bar fridge; the size of the bed and the refrigerator were never mentioned. The pasta pot from which she ate with her bare hands was large, straight edged grey with two metal handles, and the Ragu came from a bottle not a can; each of the aforementioned objects were mentioned in Rita’s narrative but with no descriptive details. At present the rhyme or reason of such visualized details is still unknown. However, oddly and in contrast, although Selma described herself while hitchhiking through Mozambique as a “twenty year old girl, blonde hair, tie-dye t-shirt, cut-off jeans, living out of the pack on her back” (The Moth, 2012, June 29), I saw no tie-dye
shirt or cut-off jeans. In fact tellers were rarely visualized as more than a generic shape within a setting. And yet, although not described at all, I did visualize a dark blue 2.5 tonne straight truck, a dirt road raised somewhat from the edges with the landscape all in parched browns, and a stand-alone two-story sky blue cinderblock building surrounded by a variety of trucks and jeeps. These visualizations are pure conjecture and as such highly unlikely to be accurate. Moreover, preconceptions and misinterpretations are all too easy. At the climax of her story as Selma described how “the sun was setting, and I could see in the distance that we were getting close to the border with Zimbabwe, I could see the mountains of Zimbabwe” (The Moth, 2012, June 29). What I as a listener visualized was a sunset over a mountain range that looked nothing like the mountains in Zimbabwe. In retrospect it was realized that not only was this not in fact what Selma had said; it was also geographically problematic in my visualized storyworld as the journey was incorrectly believed to be going from west to east, when in actuality the convoy was travelling south-west through Mozambique and as such the sun may have very well been setting behind the mountains of Zimbabwe, just not as it was visualized.

Looking at a collocated list of all of the visualizations noted during The Moth sessions, no clear patterns emerged regarding what was and what was not visualized. A piece of luggage mentioned in passing as “my little carry-on” (The Moth, 2013, May 16) was clearly in my mind a small white leather case with two pale blue stripes, comparable to a PAN AM stewardess carry-on bag circa the
1960’s. An undescribed bathroom in Jerusalem in which a man is accidentally given an electric shock while urinating was small, with a once white toilet, and had a floor tiled in a black and white geometric pattern, although some tiles were cracked and one triangular piece was missing (The Moth, 2012, March 30). While the inspiration for said luggage and bathroom are unknown, other visualizations were clearly based on my own recollections of personal experiences. As such the large birds who dive-bombed visiting physicists in a Corsican parking lot looked to me like the great skua I once saw above the Scottish island of Hoy (The Moth, 2013, May 9), and the generic visualizations of a capacity All-Star baseball game were seen from where my father and I always sat while watching our local intercounty minor league team; Go Red Sox (The Moth, 2013, February 7)!

Visualizations during these stories occurred for a variety of narrative elements, such as:

- objects (e.g., padlocks, clear plastic cups of water, ball-peatin hammers),
- vehicles (e.g., faux wood-panelled station wagons, taxis, airplanes, buses),
- interiors (e.g., open staircases, seniors’ centre pools, prison halls, dens with shag carpeting and Barcaloungers), and
- exterior settings (e.g., blue skies, a dark night over a foot of pristine snow, gravelled parking lots with chain-linked fences).

In retrospect, visualizations were surprisingly lacking for some rather significant narrative elements such as Rita’s telephone (The Moth, 2011, April 28), the
middle-aged naked couple sitting in a hot tub opposite Monica and her new boyfriend (The Moth, 2013, June 6), Hugh’s colonoscopy bag (although thankfully in that case) (The Moth, 2011, October 13), and the colours of Jessie’s prison jumpsuit (The Moth, 2011, July 28), Miriam’s bridesmaid dress (The Moth, 2012, July 5), and Tallulah’s fur (the cat responsible for Earl’s descent into a Benny Hill sketch [not her real name]) (The Moth, 2013, January 17). In fact relatively little clothing was visualized in any of the 24 Moth stories, save the incidental uniform colour of the police officer Silvio bribe with a free cherry lemon sorbet (The Moth, 2012, November 8), and the vintage navy blue silk and lace slip that Unis described in some detail when she first wore it and discovered “oh my gosh, I’m sexy” (The Moth, 2011, October 21). Also strangely absent were visualizations of the participants, especially the narrator/characters, who generally were no more than generic people shapes. In contrast vivid visualization did not ensure accuracy, as previously noted regarding the Zimbabwean sunset (The Moth, 2012, June 29). Equally vivid and yet clearly erroneous visualizations included the four inches of red plastic-coated partially stripped and rusting wire discovered during surgery protruding from an active pacemaker (The Moth, 2013, March 22), and a woman slow dancing at her sister’s wedding with the wrong Disney chipmunk.

Figure 14: Dale and Chip in their wedding attire (Disney Roots, 2013).
(Chip, with the black nose), to Chris de Burgh’s *The Lady in Red* (The Moth, 2012, July 5). When in actuality it was Dale (with the red nose) (see Figure 14) that Miriam propositioned, while hopped up on “three vodka tonics, two Disney Chardonnays, and a 10mg Ambien” (The Moth, 2012, July 5).

With Moth stories ranging from 5-19 minutes, cursory evidence shows no correlation between the duration of the telling and the quantity of my visualizations noted. Nor can anything currently be inferred as to when and why certain elements are visualized and others are not. While visualizations comprised a significant portion of the observations made during The Moth sessions, in retrospect the first noted visualization in this study would have been during Marcie's telling of “Mama gone” when I assumed that the protagonist was a girl. This aspect of narrative co-creation would prove imperative in the OA sessions, where 38 stories told by five FL storytellers (each currently or formerly tellers at 1001) were selected from 82 stories on 11 CDs compiled from five sessions that occurred in two North American cities over a period of 23 years, and were subsequently observed asynchronously over the course of 5 hours in my living room, as the spaces of the tellers and their synchronous listeners were not visually accessible. The visualizations that were noted during the AO sessions were comparable to those of The Moth sessions, such as characters’ surroundings, buildings, and objects. Unlike during The Moth sessions there were also a large number of visualizations of clothing, although this should be qualified in that during numerous AO sessions the clothing in question was
significant to the events of the narratives: Hodja was washing his shirt; the
servants made the Pooka a suit. Throughout the AO stories’ visualizations of all
types were frequently (to a degree more noted then during previous session
types) accompanied by colours, such as a Pooka’s new [grey] tweed suit, Hodja
hand washing his [dark blue] shirt, or a young princess’ [light blue with pink
animals] “pjs” (Frankie, Ω1). Most commonly colours were visualized in relation to
spaces, such as a red barn with white painted circles, a slate floored kitchen, a
sandstone portico, brown roads, blue skies, green fields, brown fields, brown and
green muddy fields, green rushes, and black and white snow covered forests.
This increase in noted colour visualizations could be due in whole or in part to the
lack of visuals (e.g., participants, space, and chat) being simultaneously
observed in FL, SL, and Moth sessions. Also worthy of consideration in these
asynchronous sessions (AO and The Moth) is the possible impact of the space or
place of the teller and their synchronous listeners. The difference in live fixed
versus studio fixed storytelling on the atmospheric influence on an asynchronous
listener has already been discussed, but as they would be influenced by their
space, so subsequently could an asynchronous listener be influenced by the
implied space at which they were believed to have been, including the size and
time of the gathering, and the mood, location, and type of venue.

After all of the places and spaces where stories were heard, seen, and
visualized over the course of this study, it seems somehow fitting to return to the
least contrived (no judgment intended) of them all, Frankie’s alfresco session
(05). Considering the lack of amplification it should not have come as a surprise that what was most noticeable during this unamplified session were the issues with sound. In a large part this was due to the fact that the listeners now faced an increased variety of environmental ambient noises competing with the teller. Now instead of having to deal with the intermittent air conditioning and refrigerator noises, out in the courtyard listeners now had to cope with an unmuffled air conditioner on the roof, passing cars, pedestrians in conversation, dogs, helicopters, motorcycles, airplanes, and even a wandering raccoon. So while the ambiance of the venue inspired campfire songs, and was aided by the light zephyr that teased the flickering candles as dusk turned into a comfortable summer's night, the cacophony of city noises were not cooperating. In retrospect it might have proved more illuminating for tellers to have chosen stories set within the city rather than the multiple stories about frogs, snakes, and chickens; sadly no actual frogs were heard that evening, although thankfully neither were any chickens or snakes. As it was, other than the previously mentioned sing-along, there were no discernable difference to the types of stories that tellers chose that evening. In fact the only noted anomaly from this session was that more tellers elected to sit while telling than during any other 1001 session, either before or after. Perhaps the seemingly increased informality of the session due to the setting lead to the increased number of sitting tellers. It is also possible that as with sessions where one teller chooses to hold the microphone leads to others doing the same, Frankie's (as the host) decision to sit simply planted the idea for
other tellers. As far as comparing mediated and unmediated sessions the ideal comparison would have been with an unmiked indoor session at 1001, but save constructing storytelling sessions in experimental conditions (which was initially considered but deemed both impractical and quite frankly less interesting) one can only observe what happens. Ultimately, while tellers were not in control of the various ambient noises that surrounded them they would most assuredly have been aware of them, of the space we occupied, and the fact that they were not being electronically amplified, pointing to yet one more way in which the space we tell oral narratives affects our ability to co-create stories.

As tellers of narratives, be they faerie tales, elevator pitches, or classroom lectures, we will rarely be able to hand pick the venues in which we they will be told. We can and should however be cognizant of said spaces and places, and of the influences and impact that they can have, in relation to said narratives, for our listeners and their co-creation, comprehension, and hopefully retention of our stories. My observations, presented here, on the kinesic information, reciprocity, and venues, utilized and undertaken during the sharing of oral narratives are however only part of what has been discovered over the course of this study. They were also significantly augmented by the observations of numerous professional and amateur storytellers and storylisteners who generously agreed to be interviewed as part of this study, and it is to their observations that we will next turn our gaze.
Chapter 4: Listening to Storm Fools: Interviews with Storytellers

As conceived for this research study, purposefully-sampled qualitative semi-structured exploratory narrative interviews (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2006) were to be conducted with FL and SL storytellers and listeners to aid in the determination if electronic mediation affected oral narrative story co-creation and information transfer, and if so, how are oral narrative story co-creation and information transfer was affected when so mediated. To this end, 15 interviews were conducted, with 11 core participants from 1001, and four from the Seanchai Library (part of the SGSL). Each participant was asked a series of questions, tailored to their particular vehicle for storytelling, including but not limited to:

- how they became storytellers;
- the introduction of the microphone at 1001, and of Voice to SL;
- the type of storytelling events they attend (FL, SL, other), and why;
- their experiences of story listening;
- how SL storytellers deal with being physically removed from the listeners;
- the physical practice of SL storytelling;
- their recollections from the most recent storytelling session they attended; and
what, if any, did they believe were the effects of electronic mediation on oral narrative story co-creation and information transfer?

Additional questions were posed to those interviewed based on the answers they gave and from the conversations that ensued; the preplanned questions are available in full in Appendices B and C. With the later inclusion of both Moth and AO sessions, and due to the fluid nature of a comparative case study in which multiple factors were under scrutiny (including but not limited to proxemic, kinesic and paralinguistic cues, social presence, practice, and behaviour), that “the original purpose of the study may not be accomplished and an alternative or unanticipated goal may be identified in the data” (Berg, 2009, p. 354) is not surprising. In this instance said changes and observations resulted in the refocusing of the research from the effects of electronic mediation on oral narrative story co-creation and information transfer to the effects of technological mediation on the visual information shared during oral narratives. As a result, and in contrast to the observations, the interviews, which were meant to “fill in the holes” (Patton, 2002, p. 317), and discover why people do what they do, contributed far less relevant information to the “alternative or unanticipated goal” (Berg, 2009, p. 354) than initially expected.

Fifteen interviews were conducted as part of this study, eleven with 1001 participants and four with SL storytellers. In the case of the FL participants interviews were continued until saturation was reached, whereas unfortunately only four SL participants were willing to be interviewed as part of this study. As
previously stated, while Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that saturation is often reached with 15 to 18 participants, this quantity was not necessary in regard to FL/AO interviews as saturation was reached with 11 participants, and not possible for SL interviews. While gender differences were not part of the remit of this study it should be noted that 2/3 of the interviewees were female (seven of the eleven FL participants & three of the four SL storytellers). The above distinction between participants and storytellers has been undertaken as of the 15 participants who agreed to be interviewed 13 were regular storytellers at their respective venues, while two of the FL participants (Diana and Betty) although each admit to having told a few times in addition to acting as a host for multiple 1001 sessions, do not consider themselves storyteller's and seem to have no desire to become one.

Given the opportunity and a willing listener, storytellers as one would expect can be prolific talkers with topics ranging from ambient noise and amplification, to writing and word of mouth, and those interviewed were very generous with their time, their knowledge, and their opinions. The words they utilized to describe the acts of storytelling and storylistening while wide-ranging were primarily in either oral or aural terms, such as: told, said, heard, listened, piped up, translated, described, spoke, extolled, communicated, retold, interpreted, memorized, remembered, talked, and projected (in past, present and future tenses). In addition there was also a selection of ambiguous terms (that could include oral and aural elements), such as: did, presented, performed, understood, enjoyed,
liked, learned, represented, engaged, exchanged, stumbled through, shared, made, made up, and happened. Most interesting and surprising was when visual terminology was used to describe storytelling and storylistening, such as: observing sessions, going to see stories, looking at storytelling, best vantage points, watching, witnessing, imagining, and even describing the colours of voices. Although it could be argued that people are not always precise in their choices of wording, Diana was explicit in this sentiment: “I think you have to make sure that everybody has a good visual as well as being able to hear. Cause it’s an experience right, to watch somebody” (personal communication, Φ).

Kinesics

The majority of discussion regarding gestures by the FL interviewees was in relation to the introduction of the microphone to 1001. Although opinions regarding said introduction ranged from positive through accepting to negative, even unacceptable, the microphone’s impact on storytellers’ gestures was always discussed as an obstacle or impediment:

- “I was actually not crazy about it, and I don’t love it, you can’t gesture as freely, and move around as much... but I understand that it is necessary so I do not fight it at this point” (Sally, personal communication, Φ). As such “you just should learn how to use it. Some people stand too close… and the Ps especially tend to pop,” while
others “tend to move their heads around, and the sound is inconsistent” (Sally, personal communication, Φ).

- “Somebody like [name withheld] says ‘I CAN’T HEAR YOU!’ And when I projected, which I can, others would say ‘YOU’RE TOO LOUD!’ So what can you do? And, so that is the way that storytelling became miked. And there is something that is lost in that. People, cannot, there is a certain naturalness of movement, they have to stand there in front of the mike, the mike limits the amount of movement that you can make. And I’m a mover when I tell a story” (Jack, personal communication, Φ).

- “It gets in the way, you know, if you want to move. The arm gestures. So there is a discipline, the expert storytellers last night, they stand quite still don’t they? They don’t, there’s some action with their hands, but they’re very centered and calm, and they don’t move around too much, and they don’t move their faces too much. They just tell the story… I don’t know whether they do that because of the microphone [or] whether they do that because the style of storytelling that they tell” (Jean, personal communication, Φ).

Considering the quantity of gestures observed and noted during this study the belief amongst tellers that their and other tellers’ gestures are being impeded is
quite interesting. Would they in fact do more if they were not orally tethered to a fixed microphone? A teller’s mobility is certainly limited as the mouth must remain in relatively close proximity to the microphone head lest their amplification fluctuate. Tellers must also remain aware and adjust accordingly to even small distance changes and head turning motions which will alter and or impede a microphone’s ability to capture and amplify their voices. Despite these proximity issues and the genuine belief of many of the storytellers interviewed, the quantity and types of gestures noted during the miked and unmiked sessions appeared comparable. It should be noted that of the three tellers quoted above neither Jack nor Jean was in attendance at the unmiked session (65) and Sally while present did not tell that night. Although she did lead the group in a rousing rendition of *Land of the silver birch* no gestures were noted.

A notable example regarding the limiting of gestures caused by the introduction of the microphone to 1001, although not personally observed, was recounted during my interview with Diana:

So [name withheld] did a piece of that [*Persephone and Demeter* saga] for us the one night, and it’s not her natural way to use the microphone because she’s a dancer and her story is in her muscles. So she moved a lot, and that’s how she knows what comes next. So, I watched her. She said “oh, oh,” she said, “you need me to use the microphone?” And somebody said, probably [name withheld], “well yes we’d appreciate that.” Anyway, so he said, “well, we would appreciate if you would use it because it’s hard for
some people at the back and over there to hear.” And she goes “okay, yeah, I can do that.” But, she still had to try and move, and she looked uncomfortable. And she came in the [location withheld] the next day. I saw her and I queried her about that, and I said, “oh, I was interested that you respected the group and used the microphone, because it looked like you really, your story was about gesture,” and I’d been in a workshop with her at the storytelling festival that I got to go to this year, and she’d introduced herself and said that she did dance and theatre and she said “well, my normal way” she said, “I carry my story in my body, I don’t carry it in my head.” She said it was okay, and she still did some gestures but she had to stay close enough to the microphone that that people could hear her. So, I should think that would be limiting to a certain extent for somebody whose telling involves use of body gesture and movement. When she was standing over here she was one person, and then when she was standing over there she was another person. Whereas with the microphone you’re more limited as to your movement, because the microphone is just there, unless you are holding it in which case it is hard to gesture with both hands. (personal communication, Φ)

The question of whether, and if so to what degree, gestures undertaken during the telling of oral stories are either preplanned or spontaneous produced a variety of responses from the FL tellers. Selections from the responses of Moira, Yusuf, and Jean have been chosen for inclusion here due to their candidness in
discussing their own use of gestures during storytelling, whereas others interviewed focused on the gestures of other tellers. A distinction is being made here between the countless informal stories people tell every day, “you know when you are sitting and visiting with friends in cafes, people tell stories usually you talk, you might gesture” (Diana, personal communication, Φ) and oral narratives as presentations (be they for entertainment or instruction), and it is of the latter that these three speak.

The first to be considered is Moira. To place her comments in context some background is required. Although the telling of stories had previously been a large portion of her professional life, Moira’s professional storytelling did not begin until much later in life. This shift in purpose, which saw her telling in larger venues, together with the introduction of a microphone at the 1001 sessions, now regularly necessitated her utilization of said technology. Moira’s initial “dread” of microphones (“I was very conscious that it was picking up everything”), although now mitigated (“I’ve learned to ignore it… it doesn’t bother me any longer”), has recently led to her “trying to change my style because I use my hands” (personal communication, Φ). Although recognizing that “there are differences in the styles” (personal communication, Φ) of gesture utilization in storytelling Moira also had been aware of perceived issues with her use of gestures for some time:

When I started [fifteen years ago] [name withheld] said to me “Moira, sit on your hands.” So, and I thought, hmmm? But about six weeks ago I came to that door [1001 venue], and the [sic] person was already at the microphone,
she was telling, and she did the, I couldn’t hear what she was saying, but the hands or the gesture, so I spoke to her and she said, yeah, she had taken a course in gesture, and I said, they’re just beautiful. (personal communication, Φ)

Thus inspired the week prior to our interview Moira attended a storytellers’ festival and undertook a gestures workshop. While there she also attended a session with “three Southern Baptists. A-MEN! It was fantastic, absolutely. And I was, it was amazing, and I watched their gestures, because they were definitely professionals. They had obviously, had choreographed their gestures” (personal communication, Φ). As such Moira now believes that:

“[Name withheld] was right about sitting on my hands, because the gestures, there are very few of them. You just use them to emphasize, or as I, I don’t know, this is one of the things that you, and you [generally] do it subconsciously.” (personal communication, Φ)

Moreover, Moira has now come to believe that, for her, gestures are “something that I definitely have to choreograph” (personal communication, Φ).

Having discussed Yusuf’s gestures in some detail already (see Yusuf’s story) it only seems fitting to let him discuss them as well. As part of our conversation I asked him directly about the gestures he undertakes, and specifically regarding to what degree they are planned, rehearsed, or simply spontaneous. In response, Yusuf told me that:
People have remarked upon my gestures. Now some people are actually, are quite open to those gestures and they even say it’s almost like I’m dancing, with a lot of dance gestures. And I think, in my telling, when I use those gestures, I am sort of inspired in a way by gestures in dance, particularly in dance in Asian traditions, and I’m very interested in that, and I think on one level I am consciously trying to draw on that tradition and bring it to my storytelling. But by the same token I’m not sure that it is necessarily rehearsed, in the sense that you know I’m working with a choreographer, and I’m being told, well you know, move your hand this way. It’s something that I try, that sort of grows when I learn the story, and the gestures sort of come from learning the story itself. And sometimes I, I mean the more I tell a story probably the gestures that I’ll use in that story will somehow conventionalize. (personal communication, Φ)

Yusuf’s gestures clearly differ from those of Moria, her mentor (an acclaimed professional storyteller), the Southern Baptist tellers whose style of telling Moria admires, or the “centered and calm [tellers who] don’t move around too much” (personal communication, Φ) as previously discussed by Jean. Yusuf’s gestures are used to accentuate a variety of narrative elements within the stories he tells, and while they may have been inspired by gestures observed and become “somehow conventionalize[d]” he maintains that they are still “organic” in nature (personal communication, Φ).
Jean’s perspective on mobility and gestures during storytelling is somewhat different from the majority of those interviewed during this study; she utilizes oral narratives in her occupation as an academic. While numerous participants hold doctoral degrees, in her case the sharing of stories requires the use of a microphone, which “adds a layer of formality to it” (Jean, personal communication, Φ). While she was raised in a culture where people told stories, Jean was hesitant to identify either them or herself as storytellers (as she perceives them to be here in North America), as “it’s like, here it’s like storytelling has this formal ‘oooh, you’re a teller’” (personal communication, Φ)! According to Jean, this opinion is due in part because her parents were “quite Victorian,” and therefore as children should “be seen and not heard” (personal communication, Φ). Growing up Jean “did a lot of listening to adults telling stories” (personal communication, Φ). She recalled how “when they’d all get around, they’d all drink and they’d all tell stories. Some of them were excruciatingly boring. A lot as a kid you don’t get them. But… it’s part of the [place withheld] culture” (Jean, personal communication, Φ).

For Jean the microphone represents more than just a physical embodiment of the contrast between the informality of her childhood experiences of telling stories and the more formalized storytellings at 1001, as “it’s not just in the storytelling, I associate microphones with various other academic situations (personal communication, Φ). In such situations, although she “would like to do without it,” as “it gets in the way, you know, if you want to move,” Jean
recognizes that she has a “soft voice” and wants “people at the back to hear
(personal communication, Φ). Yet she finds “the sense of being tied, tethered, to
this object, it is constraining” and stress inducing:

Because I can’t move around, I'm not free to move [inaudible]. And because
I’m nervous about performing in public, I find that being able to move kind of
loosens that up. So when I’m teaching I move around a lot. But when you’re
tied, you have to keep that set distance. (Jean, personal communication, Φ)

While all of the comments and opinions shared by this study’s participants are
derived from their own experiences, Jean’s personal reflections on telling stories
and storytelling, and the constraints and benefits of amplification during the
same, provide a different perspective as during her interview she informed me
that “next week will be the first time. I’ve committed publicly to telling my first
story” (personal communication, Φ).

Not constrained by the specifics of our conversation, Jean’s observations went
beyond the effects of using microphones in storytelling, but stretched to consider
the wider implications of technologies in our lives:

You don’t want to have to do the kerfuffle or say “help,” or move things
around, and “I don’t think this is the right height or the right distance.” I
don’t, it adds a layer of, human beings have to accommodate to it
[technology] rather than the other way around, and I object to that. I do
object to that, and not just in storytelling, but people’s lives are ruled by
technology, and that’s not, I think, what it was originally intended to do. So why don’t we design technology that really fits with human action rather than expecting human action to be constrained? (personal communication, Φ)

Like many of the participants interviewed, Jean acknowledged that “technology, well it’s necessary in some cases, right, depending on the venue, to make it so that people can hear” (personal communication, Φ). Interestingly though she was also keenly aware that “people need to be able to see,” recalling an occasion at 1001 when the technologies utilized had to be rearranged “because the microphone blocked some people’s view of the teller” (Jean, personal communication, Φ); There are in fact multiple accounts within my fieldnotes noting where my view of the storytellers face was obscured by the microphone, and occasionally other listeners’ heads. Although begrudgingly accepting of the accommodation of technology “so as long as it doesn’t get in the way,” Jean was adamant that “you have to make sure that everybody has a good visual as well as being able to hear, cause it’s an experience right, to watch somebody… as well as to listen to the story,” assuming that “you are somebody who keeps your eyes open when you listen, and not everybody does” (personal communication, Φ).

Finally, while the majority of interviewee observations regarding kinesics and technologies related to hand gestures and mobility, the significance of faces,
eyes, and lines of sight cannot be overstated. As such when Marley informed me during our interview that I have:

A very good face for storytelling. It is very expressive, and your eyes are so expressive. And not everybody does that. I mean a lot of the people who stand up at 1001 Friday Nights, their eyes are almost glazed over because they are trying to remember the words. And I think, that’s the difference between living it, and presenting it. (personal communication, Φ)

The ability and willingness to share both orally and visually during the telling of an oral narrative can be an integral element to the co-creation of a story, and this reciprocity between tellers and listeners, in all of its forms, was most generously explored by both FL and SL interviewees.

**Reciprocity**

Both FL and SL participants produced diverse bodies of observations regarding reciprocity between tellers and listeners during their respective storytelling events. Not unexpectedly, how said reciprocity was undertaken and expressed varied depending on the venues and technologies utilized. As such the observations of FL and SL interviewees will be presented separately.

Without ever mentioning the word *reciprocity* over the course of their interviews the eleven FL tellers and listeners expressed time and again, and in a
variety of ways how reciprocity is taking place during the course of sharing oral narratives. From the perspective of tellers, Moira shared how:

When you are telling you are gathering the energy of the eyes of the listener, you get the energy from the eyes, and you will change it [the story]…. you will change your delivery according to the energy you get from the listeners. When you’re reading, you are focusing on this [looks downward at an imagined book], you’re focusing, and you’re up, and you’re down, and you’re up [looked up and down repeatedly]…. so you are not getting the same kind of energy. (personal communication, Φ)

Whereas Marley expressed how she wants to communicate with the audience and that “the beauty of storytelling is the fact that you are telling the story and… people are there listening” (personal communication, Φ), thus distinguishing storytelling from what she deemed less interpretive performance media such as reading [aloud] and acting. As such, when telling Marley is keenly aware of the facial reactions and body positions of those she is telling to, and not above rebuking (in her mind) those who wrongly believe that storylistening is a purely aural and passive endeavour.

Drawing similar conclusions regarding the utilization of print between tellers and listeners Diana related how “if I get up in front of you and read something, you watch me, I read, and then I look at you. But… if I know my story I can engage you in a different way, because I’m not constrained by having to look at
my notes” (personal communication, Φ). Diana is not alone in questioning the implications of placing technologies between tellers and listeners. Jean related how she finds “technology quite alienating in terms of human interactions… the prospect of telling the story next week is actually made harder by the microphone,” and is “anticipating that it’s going to be more challenging because, because of the constraint that it imposes on me” (personal communication, Φ). Such opinions are not however universally held, as depending on the listeners in question Alice advocated for some constraints. According to Alice, she “will never be a storyteller who moves around a lot” and that “is partly from working with children” (personal communication, Φ). Eschewing unnecessary movement, gestures, and books Alice claims that “if you are very focused on what you are doing then the children don’t get distracted. If you are always paying attention to something else then they get distracted,” whereas “if I was just focused on what I was doing, and telling, and on them, then they would stay with me” (personal communication, Φ).

Reciprocity between oral narrative participants is a conversation that includes to varying degrees the sharing of oral, aural, and visual information. The differences to be explored here between FL and SL storytelling only tell part of the story of reciprocity. Even within a given medium reciprocity is not a homogenous universal, but is influenced by an infinite number of variables and combinations. This diversity is illustrated in Jack’s recollection of a story about the founder of the Mali Empire Sundiata Keita. In contrast to stories where the
teller tells and the listeners listen, here “the storyteller speaks and the audience responds “So true,” speaks, “So true,” speaks, “So true,” speaks, “You said it brother, so true. And this is back and forth” (Jack, personal communication, Φ). This type of oral narrative reciprocity was also recounted by Frankie in relation to a storytelling festival in Burkina Faso, where the invited tellers are chosen carefully:

Because the audience is completely participatory. In other words they don’t have any sense at all that this is a performance and we’re spectators…. they’ll interject, they’ll comment, they’ll make, you know, they’ll say “you know, I don’t think the king should do that, that’s stupid.” And he says “not all storytellers can dance with that energy, they have to be able to respond.” (personal communication, Φ)

And yet at times the reciprocity between tellers and listeners can bridge cultural and even language differences. Two of the interviewees related such personal experiences, Frankie as a teller, and Diana as a listener. To place Frankie’s experience in context you need to know that he is a self-proclaimed storm fool (a wandering storyteller):

We'll find our listeners anywhere. We’ll just wander off and there’s an audience. And one time when I really felt that in action was, I was in a festival in Graz Austria, Graz being a very nice, very bourgeois, beautiful city in the south of Austria, and we were in the opera house, and like $30
tickets, and people come dressed up when they go in Austria to a show, even to a storytelling show, they show up in a suit and tie, and all of that was very nice, and it was really a terrific festival, but at some point or other I just wandered away, and was wandering around. And in, and so I found myself in kind of the poor part of Graz, and it was hard to find because it is a very, nicely set out city, architecture, everything. And I heard kids laughing, and I had not heard that, that was not a sound I particularly associated with Austria, or at least Graz, and they’re laughing. So I was in a little park, a little very urban park, and all, and I guess the kids were basically Turkish. All their moms were wearing headdresses, like you know, scarves, and they are all sitting in the corner of the park, and the kids were in a program of some kind, and I came up to the woman who was running the program and I said, “Look, I’m a storyteller with this festival, and I’d be happy to tell stories.” And she said “Look, these kids barely speak German.” And I said, “Well we’ll figure it out.” And a friend of mine was with me, and so she translated from English into German, and the kids gathered around, and somehow they understood. (personal communication, Φ)

Diana’s story of interlingual oral narrative reciprocity took place in Montreal, Quebec when she was invited to attend a bilingual storytelling event. According to Diana it:

Was a really different experience because I had a really hard time understanding the French. I had a hard time understanding the dialect. But
the teller, the one teller…. even though I couldn’t understand a lot of [name withheld] story, you could get his story even though you didn’t understand the language; he was that good…. he sat there, he had his violin, the story had something to do with a horse and a train, and I’m not sure if the horse got run over by the train, but I understand the word *cheval*, and… he did the horse running almost the whole time. His foot was tapping the floor all the time…. it was like probably at least twenty to twenty-five minutes long. And he was up there, and so for the horses he was doing this foot tapping, and then the train he did with his violin, right, to make the screech of the train. And he was so phenomenal as an entertainer, but I can’t tell you everything that happened in his story. But [name withheld] was, and [name withheld] was there sitting beside me, and she doesn’t understand French much at all and she says “Oh,” she says, “that was amazing,” she says, “I don’t understand French,” but she said, “I got, I got it.” (personal communication, Φ)

The conversations that occur during the sharing of oral narratives go beyond the comprehension of the words exchanged. We have seen that they include our memories and experiences. They can include a variety of visual information, be it gestural, communal, and or spatial. As a medium it looks to the past while continuing to move forward, adapting, surviving, and even flourishing via new technologies. With that spirit in mind we begin the shift to the observations of the SL tellers by looking backwards, and a lesson from the late Joan Bodger; one of
the founders of 1001, the *Appleseed Quarterly*, the Toronto Festival of Storytelling, and the Storytellers School of Toronto, Joan was and continues to be “legendary” (Brown, 2002) within the storytelling community. During our interview Jack recalled how:

Joan Bodger used to tell us “look at the word you’re speaking, and break it down, and you find sometimes the older meanings of it.” Like the word con-spire, con-versation, con, together, con-verse, always together. So within that, it may not be the actual meaning to this day and age, but within it are the remnants of why that word exists. (personal communication, Φ)

Jack went on to argue that “the demand and need for interaction through storytelling or…more important[ly] story listening is as powerful as it has been ever,” and despite misinformed opinions that “storytelling is a dying art, it isn’t. It’s a changing art, and anything that is changing can start looking like it’s entering into death by somebody who is outside of that movement or process” (personal communication, Φ).

The introduction of technologies between a teller(s) and listener(s) has been a contentious issue amongst some storytellers. While none of the 1001 participants was also telling in SL (at the time of the interview) not all are averse to experimenting with technologies and storytelling. Most notable amongst the participants in this regard was Frankie. While acknowledging that “we live in the world of the web and Facebook and so on, and I think that is a challenge to storytellers,” Frankie both wonders and encourages others to consider “how a
story, and all the things we like, which is live, the voice, the memory, narrative, how that connects to the world of the web, even to video games (personal communication, Φ). To that end Frankie posed two questions, first “is there a way to bring even a little element of live storytelling to the person on the other end of the screen,” and second, “could a folktale go viral” (personal communication, Φ).

Based on the knowledge “that Homer went viral. Not all at once, but everyone in the Mediterranean knew elements of the Odyssey…. I mean that is the nature of oral tradition, is to go viral. That’s what makes it a successful tradition right” (personal communication, Φ) Frankie created, filmed, and uploaded a set of stories specifically:

For the web. And what I mean by that is they’re stories told in a way that is that they are challenging to listen to, because they are told in the second person present tense. So “you” are the hero, i.e. the view the listener the spectator, and you are in your story right now. (personal communication, Φ)

Additionally:

There is no back story, everything is foreground. So, you are walking down a dark and lonely road, you have nowhere to stay. You see a farmhouse ahead, and when you come up to it, now you are coming up to it, and you see an old man at the front, chopping wood with his axe, and you say “may I stay in your house?” (Frankie, personal communication, Φ)
The *challenge* identified by Frankie was “how do you break the frame or the fourth wall,” as “on the screen there is the perennial fourth wall. It doesn’t matter what video game you are playing, how immersive it is… there is a pretty strong sense of fourth wall” (Frankie, personal communication, Φ). Four such stories were created and uploaded, the first of which was also submitted to an online storytelling contest and it won. According to Frankie “the reason it won… is nothing to do with the quality of the video, it is shitty quality,” what made it stand out was that it “was the only video adapted to the web” and was “responsive to the fact that the web distances you” (personal communication, Φ). Finally, although winning the contest, at the time of the interview “not a single one has gone viral. But at least it was a fun experiment” (Frankie, personal communication, Φ).

Frankie’s foray into and exploration of reciprocity in fixed online storytelling brings us neatly to the live but geographically disparate storytelling of Georgia, Uná, and Morag, and their insights into reciprocity in SL. Although each of them was asked the same questions, their responses embody three very different perspectives on the experience of sharing narratives orally in SL. What is more, they each unknowingly address elements of the challenge identified by Frankie: namely “how do you break the frame or the fourth wall” (personal communication, Φ) when, in the case of SL, it includes multiple computer screens in disparate physical locations?
Georgia was a storyteller in “RL [real life]” (personal communication, Δ) before discovering storytelling in SL. As such, her reflections on storytelling included numerous illuminating comparisons of the two media. In reply to questions regarding her experiences and practice of telling in SL and how she deals with being physically removed from the listeners Georgia wrote:

I find telling to audiences in SL is very different to RL. For me the main, major difference is that I rarely tell ‘live’, that is – not reading from a text. In RL I have the main structure of the story in my memory and am telling in words that come to me in the moment. Obviously I rehearse, but each telling is unique. When I am up in front of a live audience this comes easily, adrenalin helps. And seeing the audience in front of you means you can connect. But in SL – often I am telling quite late at night, which means my brain may not be able to focus so well. Also the lack of ‘real’ audience is hard, tho [sic] I know each person is real where they are. But I also think when you are telling live, it is like any live performance – you can make mistakes, repeat yourself, and so on, and it doesn’t matter. But if you do that on a recording then any mistake sounds awful. Somehow- telling in SL has some of the quality of a recording about it. So I do tend to play safe and read. Maybe I’m just lazy. But I do always sort of improv around the text, rather than reading it word for word, so it sounds as tho [sic] I am telling live. (personal communication, Δ)
Georgia’s use of the acronym RL rather than FL is contentious in some SL circles, as is her use of the terms *live* and *real* to differentiate from what happens in SL as what happens in virtual worlds has been shown to have real FL ramifications (Boellstorff, 2008; Yee & Bailenson, 2007; Yee, Bailenson, & Ducheneaut, 2009). Even so, for Georgia the differences extend to not only the telling, but the preparation and even the material selected for telling. Whereas “in SL [sic] I can tell without rehearsing, I can just pick up a book and read it cold and still make it sound like a live telling. In RL I have to work a bit harder” (Georgia, personal communication, Δ). This difference was brought home to Georgia the previous summer when she was asked:

To tell live at a camp in Somerset. I was telling every evening for 3 days. I had all my material worked up and ready, then on the spur of the moment I decided to tell a different story. I got a bit wrong in the middle and fluffed it a bit. It wasn’t a good experience. But it was good to be reminded of my RL origins as a story teller. (personal communication, Δ)

In reflecting upon the experience Georgia concluded that:

SL is making my brain soft. Also- in RL I can use the same material over and over, because I am usually telling to new people. In SL I get regular gigs, with the same people coming each week. So I always have to find new stuff. (personal communication, Δ)
Additionally Georgia looked beyond her role as a teller in SL to her experiences as a listener in the same. Her candid response proved highly informative to the study in relation to my own SL storytelling behavior, because:

Listening in SL is very different. You are constantly interrupted by IMs and I often find I have missed a story completely because of that. I will frequently play solitaire to help me concentrate because of the local banter as well as the IMs and notices. In RL I might daydream or drift off but that is a sign the teller isn’t that good. In SL you can get that even with an excellent teller.

(Georgia, personal communication, Δ)

During this study while SL avatars were observed attending storytelling sessions it was not feasible to observe their associated residents listening, and as such I could only speculate based on my own behaviours and what the small number of SL interviewees were willing to share.

Uná is “a librarian in RL” who like the speculated disproportionate number of librarians in SL “visited dozens and dozens of libraries, and they were almost all empty, no traffic, no events, usually a prim computer which linked to their online catalog, sometimes notecards with books in the public domain…but none of it resonated with me” (personal communication, Δ). Somewhat astutely Uná saw past these failings and recognized the potential of SL “as a dynamic, socially interactive platform,” and “Voice is the only way to do it! Voice provides the value–added aspect, and is the real delivery vehicle” (personal communication, Δ).

According to Uná, in return the Seanchai storytellers:
Always invite the audience to make pertinent comments in chat, and each of us deals with those to varying degrees. Sometimes they throw me off my rhythm, sometimes I can blend the comments right in. But we welcome those comments, since it shows folks are listening. (personal communication, Δ)

Although an explicit invitation was never noted, that such behavior is both the norm and acceptable is readily apparent for anyone attending a Seanchai Library session. What was not apparent was that such contributions by the listeners were valued by tellers such as Uná, because otherwise “it’s sooo [sic] hard to know what to think if/when there are no comments” (personal communication, Δ). Uná later recalled one particular telling when she was unaware that her microphone was turned off “and no one mentioned it, they were all sitting there politely waiting for me to start. 😞 But I thought they weren’t enjoying it” (personal communication, Δ). As such, due to the anonymity afforded in SL and the opportunity for multitasking during SL storytelling session:

- It can be more difficult to judge the audience response, especially if they are a quiet bunch. I know that some are listening, but making dinner, or sorting mail, or paying bills…but since I don’t see that, I can pretend they are totally enveloped in the story. Of course some probably just wander off, and we don’t know…but you would know in real. (Uná, personal communication, Δ)

Conversely, “you don’t have to look at folks scowling if they don’t like the story, or cringing during the scary parts, but the ones who comment let you know if you
are having the desired effect” (Uná, personal communication, Δ). Other “great advantages” perceived by Uná included:

- Meeting (virtually) an otherwise disparate worldwide community.
- Providing stories for those with mobility issues and their caregivers who may not otherwise have access to storytelling.
- “We've made believers out of folks who said it wouldn’t work. We have had stories in live voice constantly and consistently since March 2008. That is like… [sic] forever… [sic] in SL time” (personal communication, Δ).

Finally, “we offer everyone some fun, social interaction, and good literature…. one of our regulars calls it her bedtime story hour… [sic] she listens in her pjs, with a glass of wine, and it helps her wind down for the evening. I consider that very high praise” (Una, personal communication, Δ).

After over a quarter of a century working in theatre “though not as a performer,” and “hundreds of hours” telling stories in SL, Morag admitted that she had “become a little jaded. This is going to sound snobbish, and it is not intended that way, but I have heard a lot of bad storytellers in SL. People who just read. They have little expression, little pacing or emotion” (personal communication, Δ). In contrast, from her theatrical background, Morag had “been exposed (among other things) to the theories of Constantin Staniskavski [sic] on acting and theatre-making,” and had “seen true Stanislavski (not the American version of it) performed by Russian professionals” recalling how “it can be utterly transporting for an audience” (personal communication, Δ). Drawing on this
knowledge and Stanislavski’s theory “about ‘communion’ with the audience: where the performer and the audience become engaged in a connectedness that adds depth and impact to the performance,” Morag is very critical of “people telling stories in SL who are clearly in it for themselves” (personal communication, Δ). She “can hear it in their tone of voice and the way they present … their telling lacks authenticity – they aren’t sharing the story with the audience” (Morag, personal communication, Δ). Whereas according to Morag:

> It takes both [performer and audience] to make it happen. It is a thousand little cues given and exchanged between audience and performers – and it is an amazing experience to be a part of. That sort of thing is hard as hell in SL because the screen forms a veil for you. You don’t get the same clues you would get from a FL audience, where you can hear and sometimes feel their reactions. (personal communication, Δ)

As such, Morag’s response when asked to compare her perceptions and experiences of FL and SL storytelling was somewhat surprising in that “the first word that comes to mind in [sic] ‘intimacy.’ Storytelling in SL is very intimate… despite the ‘veil’ of the screen” (personal communication, Δ). Following her own “primary rule of virtual storytelling,” to “serve the story, not yourself,” Morag claims to have “long since stopped fussing about the audience and what they are doing or thinking” (personal communication, Δ). Moreover since she “cannot connect with the audience, pick up clues from them and ‘sense’ them… [sic] making adjustments accordingly,” she has to be her own audience, and listening
“intensely,” and working “hard to transport myself, to entice and seduce myself with the tale” (Morag, personal communication, Δ).

For Morag, the technological mediation between teller and listeners, “the microphone and the audio technology make it [SL storytelling] very personal and intimate. It is not like telling a story to 12-18 people at once. It is like telling a story to 12-18 people individually, at once” (personal communication, Δ). Lastly, having recently begun “performing literature live in FL,” Morag notes that it is “a different experience” (personal communication, Δ). In these FL tellings “a lot more of my formal theatre training and experience comes into play in more explicit ways. I find myself making deliberate connections with the audience, which can sometimes be a little distracting,” but while always remembering that “stories are to be shared with, not to subject to, an audience. (Morag, personal communication, Δ).

**Space**

The observations by SL tellers regarding differences, interactivity (reciprocity), and intimacy (social presence) in FL and SL storytelling was in and of itself informative. Juxtaposed beside their observations regarding SL space is also illuminating, although for a wholly unexpected reason, namely its absence. Considering the transformational possibilities of SL space, and the efforts taken by SL tellers to tailor the venues in which they will be telling in relation to the narratives they intend to tell, it was very surprising to discover that even when
specifically asked about their experiences in and with SL storytelling, the space in which they were telling was never mentioned.

In contrast FL participants were very talkative on the subject of space, generally in relation to its effect on their storytelling and storylistening, and often in relation to the introduction of the microphone to 1001, but in the process also addressing ambient noise, access, availability, acoustics, and cost. While all FL participants spoke to some aspects, it was Frankie who was the most comprehensive and began by explaining that:

In a way the mike is a problem of our own devising, because it’s very hard to find quiet spaces in the city. The previous space we had been in was a quieter space, … and it was a reasonably acoustically good space, I mean there is only one thing storytellers need and it’s quiet, that’s what we like, so you can hear the quality of the voice. (personal communication, Φ)

The current space, while meeting all of their physical needs in that is available absolutely every Friday year round, is wheelchair accessible, is close to the subway, and is both big enough yet contained, is not without issue. Frankie explained that “we shouldn’t need a mike in a space that size and an audience that size, but we’re in a space that has background noise… and so it ended up being hard to listen to the storyteller’s voice without the amplification” (personal communication, Φ). As such, there were “at least a few people… who stopped attending that venue because they couldn’t hear the tells” (Yusuf, personal
communication, Φ). While a few tellers expressed idealistic objections to the introduction of amplification to the 1001 sessions, most were either resigned or took a practical view, like Yusuf, to dealing with the ambient noise from the air conditioning unit and the later introduction of a sliding glass door refrigerator: “I prefer not to perform with microphones, but I am aware that there are spaces where it just won’t work, you need that technology there” (personal communication, Φ). Proclaiming himself a “neutral” in that his only concern is whether “you hear the voice of the teller clearly,” Frankie recalled how at one point the last time he was hosting the all the mechanical noises stopped and “it became quiet in the room, and everyone relaxed” (personal communication, Φ). This observation was extended to further consideration of “background noise, we’re so used to it, and then when it’s gone you realize how much of a strain it has produced for you to distinguish the teller’s voice or whatever you’re listening to… above that constant drone” (Frankie, personal communication, Φ). As such, while the physically the space meets all of the groups requirements “the acoustic space is not so welcoming” (Frankie, personal communication, Φ).

Storytellers tell stories in a variety of spaces and places, some more welcoming than others, and this holds true for amateurs alike. Although all those interviewed were active participants in a subculture interested in the sharing of oral stories, on occasion certain participants expanded their answers to include their experiences with unstructured telling of stories. Having grown up in an active oral culture, when Jean was asked to reflect on storytelling she recalled it
then and there compared to here and now. Moreover, Jean’s consideration of
place versus space was insightful and moved beyond the physicality of the
venues in question. In regard to storytelling *then and there* Jean noted how:

It’s easy to sit and chat with people, but it’s another thing standing up
formally, well it adds a formality to what I would consider more of a kitchen
table activity, it’s what, people don’t do this formally, it’s, they just, they
exchange just as a part of, a part of life. (personal communication, Φ)

Whereas in regard to *here and now* at 1001:

There’s a formality to this group, and visually the microphone is the, it acts
as the core point, in that people have to come to the microphone. The
microphone [inaudible]. So it acts as a static point around which people
have to tell their stories. And there is always kerfuffle isn’t there, around the
microphone. (Jean, personal communication, Φ)

Moreover “not everyone will stand up at a formal event, with a microphone, and
have, it’s a different kind, you’re speaking into a different kind of space, because
of the formality,” and:

I think that misses something about people’s experience, and in a way there
is an elitism about a group like this that I enjoy but also don’t enjoy. So,
we’re not hearing from homeless men, that, it’s a very high-brow group of
people who are extremely well educated and articulate and maybe with a
history, and they play with language and words, and create songs, and it’s
glorious for all of that, but it’s, there are lots of stories that are not being told. A lot, not many sad stories, a few sad stories, a little about death, it’s hard to ignore death in stories, in storytelling. (Jean, personal communication, Φ)

Once again reflecting on the differences between then and there versus here and now Jean shared how her:

Father was a superb raconteur, all of my family, my [place withheld] side of my family were excellent raconteurs, storytellers. My father was brilliant, he would be invited to dances and he’d tell often quite off-colour jokes, get people laughing, and then people up dancing…. when he grew up there was no television, there was no telephone, they made their own entertainment. So I feel like I’m in this slightly odd generation where television… [sic] it was only black and white, he was too cheap to buy colour. We were probably the last people in the whole of the [place withheld] to get colour television, and the reception was terrible. This was before satellite. So the television came into that space and so the people telling shifted. (personal communication, Φ)

The loss of spaces and places previously used for storytelling was noted by a few of the tellers interviewed and to various degrees these threads also addressed perceptions of wider societal impressions of storytelling as backward-looking or even dying. More often though the participants interviewed preferred to
talk about the variety of places that they did tell or listen to storytelling. Although only a few could rival Frankie’s dedication to being a storm fool, despite the introduction of various technologies between storytellers and storylisteners those interviewed were generally quite optimistic about the future of storytelling wherever and however those stories are shared:

And even here, we’re in the middle of the farmers market, here at Artscape Wychwood Barns… they’re setting up for a storytelling tent…. to me it is a natural place for storytelling. I know in Morocco there is a very famous square, I think in Marrakesh, where the storytellers are there, professional storytellers, apparently they are not considered very, how shall I say, they are a step above the jugglers, but they tell a huge repertoire, and people gather in the market and people listen. (personal communication, Φ)

While back at Wychwood:

We’ve probably told stories to two or three thousand people, and they just drop in, and it’s an exchange… The host will often ask the listeners “who’s your storyteller?” And people will start talking about, “oh my grandfather,” “my mother,” or whoever it is. And in a city like Toronto which is so multicultural of course, you get a real sense of all the different oral backgrounds that people have… It’s all the storm fool thing, you know, go out. Find your listeners. (Frankie, personal communication, Φ)
Chapter 5: Panning for Gold with Rumpelstiltskin: Conclusions

The bread and cheese are on the shelf
If you want any more you've got to do it yourself.
(Linus, Ω5)

LIS professionals, be they academics or academic librarians, are trained and often skilled in the art of searching for information. If someone wrote it down somewhere we will find it. There are however answers that cannot yet be found in any literature, and as such require other means of discovery. When this study first began two questions were posed that required me to look beyond the various literatures that sit on numerous shelves and do it myself, namely:

1. Does electronic mediation affect oral narrative story co-creation and information transfer? If yes,

2. How are oral narrative story co-creation and information transfer affected when so mediated?

After three years and 38 storytelling sessions (at various venues; 14 live and in-person; 14 live and virtual; and five each of fixed video and or audio) during which 112 storytellers shared several hundred stories, and wherein the telling
and listening behaviours of 227 participants were noted (15 of whom were subsequently interviewed), requiring over 52 hours of observation (fixed sessions were observed more than once), the answer to the first question is an emphatic yes. Borne out is Bryant’s assertion that there are in fact differences “between telling and reading” (1905, p. xvi) stories, in that a teller, unlike a reader, is not bound to the text on the page, and as such, stories told are more spontaneous than those read. However, her further assertion that “the story-teller is bound by nothing; [s/]he stands or sits, free to watch [the] audience, free to follow or lead every changing mood, free to use [their] body, eyes, voice, as aids in expression. Even [their] mind is unbound” (Bryant, 1905, p. xvi) is incorrect. All tellers, however mediated, are bound, bound by their own physicality (i.e. by their mobility and kinesic options while telling), bound by the participants (i.e. what they believe they can tell to their implied listeners), and bound by the environ they inhabit (i.e. the spaces the participants occupy). While the types of mediation employed during storytellings impact both the degrees and types of effects that they cause, mediation does affect the information being shared between participants and subsequently the stories then co-created. The answers to the second question and their potential consequences for the utilization of a variety of mediating technologies in relation to teaching best practices will be addressed in subsequent sections as they relate to kinesics, reciprocity, and space.
Andragogic Implications

That how one teaches has implications for the perception, comprehension and retention of the information that one teaches takes no great stretch of the imagination to perceive. From anthropology through zoology, a large portion of the instruction that students receive is done via the sharing of oral narratives. As such, and inasmuch as said narratives utilize a large and diverse quantity of visual information (McWilliams, 1997), both visible and visualized, the answers to the second question posed at the outset of this study will be not only be organized in relation to kinesics, reciprocity, and space, but also shared in relation to suggested best practices when teaching via technologically mediated oral narratives.

Kinesic awareness.

The already numerous variety of oral narrative gesture *types* (see Appendix D) that are frequently undertaken during the sharing of oral narratives expands exponentially when one considers the countless possible composites,\(^ {15} \) those

\(^ {15} \) Such as the oppositional motion/speed/directional gestures that illustrated the accidental meeting of a young snake quickly slithering eastward and young frog joyfully hopping westward across the same sundrenched field (Leonard, 65).
undertaken simultaneously,\textsuperscript{16} in various multiples,\textsuperscript{17} and or with positive and negative connotations.\textsuperscript{18} Whether the gestures serve to address a single attribute of whatever is being talked about (e.g., shape or scale) or multiple attributes (e.g., shape \textit{and} scale, multiple shapes, or an element with either positive or negative connotations such as a pile of gold or a pile of excrement), observed gestures increase the quantity of information available to the storythinker for their co-creation of the story. While the degrees of intentionality and spontaneity of gestures undertaken by the FL storytellers in this study varied widely, as experienced storytellers and listeners the participants interviewed were very aware of the gestures that they themselves and that the other storytellers were making. This awareness appears to be developed through exposure to formalized oral narratives as there is anecdotal evidence that newer tellers may be unaware of this particular information channel. Additionally onset of awareness in this regard has for some contributed to a heightened awareness and self-consciousness of the same.

\textsuperscript{16} As were the re-enactment and object gestures made when Rita told how she ate pasta “with my hands from the pot like an animal” (The Moth, 2011, April 28).

\textsuperscript{17} As with the numerous elements presented in multiples of three during Christine’s telling of \textit{The girl who took a snake for a husband} (Ω2).

\textsuperscript{18} As highlighted with Rita’s +↑ good days and -↓ bad days culminating in her declining an invitation to the casting couch (The Moth, 2011, April 28).
The gestures made during this study by the 1001 and Moth participants were primarily related to the words being spoken and thereby adding informational value to the same (e.g., Earl describing the elderly John’s bedroom, while with his hands illustrating the narrowness of the space beside the bed), although gestures can be and were made that were informative yet independent from any verbal context (e.g., Fantine being comforted by a ghostly hand). Said gestures were primarily made utilizing the tellers’ hands and arms (e.g., Marcie raising an imaginary hatchet over her/a paranoid gold miner’s head before killing his partner, with all the intensity of a Miss Piggy karate chop, and claiming all of the lost Lemon Mine). However, they were also undertaken with heads, faces, and most notably via storytellers’ eyes (e.g., Yusuf and one small bird looking up at the same stars), although gestures can include a teller’s whole body (e.g., Earl’s striptease to Porgy and Bess). The types and quantities of gestures varied by both the teller and by the story being told, with evidence pointing to the conclusion that the degree and types of gestures made are more related to the story being told than to the teller (e.g., compare Marcie’s subtle telling of “Mama gone” (Φ6) to her hatchet wielding telling of The lost Lemon Mine, Φ4)) although comfort and style of a teller are also contributing factors (e.g., from Yusuf’s “it’s almost like I’m dancing” (Φ) to Moira’s decision to try and sit on her hands (Φ).

Observations regarding upward (↑) and downward (↓) facing hand gestures in relation to perceptions of positivity (+) and negativity (-), respectively, by the FL tellers in this study (1001 and Moth), regardless of amateur or professional
status, use of technologies, styles of telling, and or choices of narratives, were extremely consistent (except for Selma). While at present there is no evidence to suggest that these actions are in any way intentional on the part of the storytellers or that they are consciously noted by any of the listeners, the consistency with which they are utilized leads one to speculate that on some level storylisteners are noting the differences and on a scope far exceeding formal storytelling groups such as 1001 and The Moth.

Ultimately, storytellers feed and respond to informational contributions however given and in whatever degree, be it in person or virtually. Conversely listeners as individuals can and do notice all of the channels of information shared by the tellers, be they oral, visual, paralinguistic, stylistic, thematic, and or sub textual. Although for SL and AO participants the kinesic information channel is limited (at present SL has no means of replicating the vivid immediacy of FL oral narrative gestures) to non-existent, there is more to storytelling than the gestures undertaken by the storyteller. When the gaze is turned to the broader implications of participant interaction during the narrative process, we find that the story of oral narratives becomes even more interesting.

**Reciprocity awareness.**

The exchange of information that occurs during the sharing of oral narratives goes beyond the words spoken by the storyteller. Oral narratives are both recognized and often discussed by the participants in relation to the visual
attributes, components, and actions undertaken by both storytellers and storylisteners. These elements are to differing degrees influenced by the various technologies that can both connect and distance a teller from their listener(s), listener(s) from a teller, and also the listeners from each other (see Figure 15). What has become abundantly clear, over the course of this study, is that storytellers and listeners will actively use whatever information channels are available to attempt to achieve a sense of presence during these shared experiences.

For FL participants the range of visual information exchanged during oral narratives includes gestural, communal, and spatial elements, elements which can only at present be approximated in SL. Equally significant, however, for all oral narratives participants, are the utilization of each participant’s own memories and experiences: contributions which do not depend on the physical presence of a storyteller. Such contributions to co-created stories are unique to each
participant and internally visualized. The impact of a participant’s background, experiences (personal and cultural), current environ, their perceived sense of community and presence, and their relationship with a given narrative, each in turn influences the reciprocity that each participant then shares with others present, be it physically or virtually. As the personal visualizations of the participants were beyond the scope of this study, a combination of my own...
responses in conjunction with interview insights and O’Neill’s narrative framework (1996) have been utilized to address the complexities of this reciprocal process, both in the development of several suggested best practices and to identify areas in need of further study.

The various levels of familiarity between a given real narrator and their implied listener(s), and conversely between a real listener and an implied narrator will also influence the reciprocity between participants. As such, regular participants at the 1001 sessions will have heard the regular tellers share a variety of different stories on numerous occasions. Consequently, such participants will have certain expectations regarding the types of stories and quality of tellings they will hear from these tellers. Conversely, where a new teller might assume a listener with their eyes closed was either bored or perhaps had even fallen asleep, regular tellers at 1001 know that for specific 1001 listeners that is just how they best engage with oral narratives. Such familiarity can, on occasion, unintentionally cause or be utilized by a teller to create the circumvention of expectations. As such, when an elderly long time participant shared a humorous personal anecdote that innocently included him soaping up in the shower, although in no way graphic, the surprise resulted in unintentional visualizations, and the response by those present, myself included, was highly memorable (Jean, Φ). A successful intentional breaking of expectations is illustrated by television actor Betty White cursing like a sailor in the giant alligator comedy/horror movie Lake
Placid (1999), which is really only memorable because of its juxtaposition against White’s history as Golden girls’ (1985-1992) naïve Rose Nylund.

Personal stories such as those shared by A^R/N^R/Cs Fantine, Rita, and Selma, even though they are told by narrators of whom their listeners will likely know very little if anything, still bring with them certain reciprocal expectations; you will tell me the truth and I will believe you. The exception to such expectations of honesty in personal narratives are fishing and hunting stories where some embellishment and exaggeration, if not bold-faced lying, is expected (Bauman, 1996). While there is a certain level of trust shown by storytellers of their listener(s), especially when sharing personal narratives (A^R/N^R/C), not all reciprocity is positive. Stand-up comics have hecklers, SL has griefers, and for all presenters there are the distracted, the fidgeters, and the multitaskers. Conversely, during narratives where a narrator’s reliability is in question or with fictional stories, such as with Morag (N^I/C) reading Doyle (A^I), Marcie (N^I/C) sharing Yolen (A^I), or Yusuf (N^I/C) telling ‘Aṭṭār (A^I), there is no expectation of truth by the real listeners, and real narrators expect no belief.

For oral narratives fiction and non-fiction are not mutually exclusive bodies of narratives. Muddying these waters are the matters of authority, cultural awareness, and cultural appropriation. How a listener responds to a given story will vary based on who each real listener believes the story’s teller (N^I) to be. As such, perceptions of Marcie’s tellings of a story that is “Chinese in origin” (θ1), Mama gone (Φ6; with permission from Jane Yolen (2010)), and The lost Lemon
Mine (Φ4), would be different were her family believed to be from China, Appalachia, or Alberta. Additionally, does a listener think that Marcie learned these stories at her grandmother’s knee or from a library book? Has she ever rescued an animal, lost a parent, or worked a claim? There is an assumption of authority when listening to a storyteller tell stories from what a listener believes to be said teller’s heritage and history. In actuality my Scottish, German, and English ancestry guarantees no authority of cultural awareness when retelling versions of tales from Scotland, Germany, or England, such as those of the tricksters Puck, Reynard the Fox, and Jack, to name but a few. Moreover, I am no more knowledgeable of the Celtic trickster Lugh than I am of Wisakedjak (Cree), Nanabozho (Ojibwa), Loki (Norse), or Anansi (West African). Moreover, while I could learn their stories from any number of published folktale collections, “out of their cultural contexts” (Toelken, 1996, p. 53) my tellings would be weakened imitations of what they could be, if not even unintentional misrepresentations.¹⁹ To be clear, this is not meant in any way to be an argument

¹⁹ The now controversial writings of the purportedly progressive white journalist Joel Chandler Harris, and which serve as the while not actually a primary resource for those who choose to share the trickster Br’er Rabbit stories, are a case in point (Moonlit Road, 2015). By utilizing the oral narratives that he remembered hearing as a child from plantation slaves in Georgia and publishing them within his own overarching fiction of the happy and compliant slave Uncle Remus (e.g., “The old darkey closed his eyes and chuckled. ‘You sho is axin’ sump’n now, honey.’ [sic]” (Harris, 1907, para. 10)), these versions of said oral narratives are at least thrice
for only telling stories from one’s own ancestry and history, but rather as recognition of the significance and impact of cultural context and of authority on the reciprocity that occurs between teller(s) and listener(s) during the co-creation stories via oral narratives.

Although the depth of reciprocity between teller(s) and listener(s) is no doubt enhanced by perceptions of authority and familiarity, reciprocity during storytelling does not require participants to be in the same space or even in the same time. While the etiquette for listener behaviour may differ for listening to stories via YouTube or SL, the active participants remain the same, real and implied narrators, and real and implied listeners. That Moth, AO, and SL tellers cannot see my face does not stop me from engaging with the story. That Moth and AO tellers cannot see my reciprocity to their tellings does not negate the fact that it is given. Could these physically disparate tellers see my face they would see the same thing as the 1001 storytellers, an implied listener based on a persona of my creation. I wear a beard, generally dress in greens and earth tones, sit comfortably in my own company, and introduce myself as an academic librarian, even between contracts. These are some of the things I choose to represent me. As for the avatars in SL, while they are more obviously personas, they now seem very similar to this understanding of implied listeners, as their

removed from the context (people, place, and time) in which they were told (Lester, 1987; Moonlit Road, 2015).
features, clothing, and how they are introduced are all chosen elements. While Gnutt and I would never be mistaken for twins, and Gnutt’s wardrobe is somewhat more adventurous, he is just another layer of a constructed persona from which other participants can build their implied listener impression of me. That the distinction between real and implied authors, narrators, and listeners, was never explicitly discussed by this study’s participants is not surprising.

Barring an active interest in narrative theory the participants are unlikely to even be aware of said distinction or of its implications on reciprocity in storytelling. Ultimately, the degrees of familiarity that exist between individuals, regarding each other’s backgrounds, how, where, and what participants like to tell and hear, known session behaviours, and experience, can only mitigate the distance between a given real and implied participant. Conversely each layer of persona will increase said distance, and reduce the depth of reciprocity available.

The reciprocity between participants can also affected by the types and quantity of technologies utilized, participants’ experience and comfort levels with said technologies, multitasking, and by any turn-around time required (e.g., A types while B waits, B reads then types while A waits, and repeat). Considering the variety and quantity of technologies now commonly being used during both distance and in-person andragogic instruction (e.g., microphones, live and fixed video-streaming, and presentation software such as PowerPoint and Prezi) and the increasing use of technologies during storytelling (e.g., microphones, mixing-boards, audio and video capture), the conclusions drawn from this research
regarding the use of technology on listener engagement and reciprocity will be presented as a series of suggested best practices for both entertainment and instructional storytelling.

By definition the primary channel for the sharing oral narrative information will be via linguistics but the importance and value from being able to see a teller’s face, when possible, cannot be overemphasized. To that end every effort should be made to not obstruct listeners’ views to this information channel. In f2f and video mediated tellings simple considerations, such as optimized microphone placement (see Figure 16) and not standing directly behind a lectern, remove visual interference for listeners. If notes are required one should not keep them in hand but set them to one side where they can be reviewed if and when needed.

This simple decision not only leaves a teller’s hands free for imparting added kinesic information to the narrative, but also removes a physical barrier between the teller and their listener(s), as well as removing the temptation to read. Each of these choices will allow for greater reciprocity between a teller and listener(s), and increase the likelihood of listener engagement and retention. Setting one’s notes to the side also affords the opportunity for continuous eye contact with the listeners, observing their facial and body cues, as well as their interactions with

Figure 16: Advised fixed microphone placement.
each other. In contrast, when holding one’s notes the up and down eye motion (assuming one looks up) repeatedly breaks the reciprocity between teller and listener(s) as the teller instead engages directly with the object between said participants.

While adding technologies between tellers and listeners is always noticeable (as a membrane between participants that can lead to either modified or diminished reciprocities), and can result in technical issues (e.g., feedback, volume fluctuations, hiss, popping, lag), the unseen benefits of using optional technologies in certain situations can make them highly advisable. In that a major factor in my interest in storytelling was my perception of an absence of the influence of, or need for, technology, I am still somewhat surprised to find myself now advocating for the use of microphones in situations where technically it is possible to do without. However, what became increasingly apparent during this study was the amount of effort that listening can require. Comparable to eyestrain from reading pixelated fonts on early computer screens, where our eyes bridged the countless gaps within each letter, the work required to fill in audible blanks (not only missed words, but subtle variations) caused by various factors, such as ambient noises, unfamiliar or strong accents, and volume levels, is literally tiring. This is energy that could be more productively spent elsewhere, such as in engaging with the narrative.

Another easily fixable distraction from narrative engagement is due to volume fluctuations caused by changes in the proximity of a teller’s mouth to their
microphone. Even with clip-on microphones something seemingly as inconsequential as turning one’s head can noticeably alter a teller’s projected volume level. As such utilization of headset microphones is preferable to free standing, lectern mounted, or even clip-on microphones. In contrast to the current norm of microphones being assigned to rooms to then be utilized by any and all instructors so inclined, for reasons of hygiene and technological familiarity I would advise tellers and instructors to have their own microphones which they would then take with them from venue to venue. If a free standing microphone is the only option, holding it in hand is advised, remembering to keep the microphone geosynchronous to one’s mouth (see Figure 17). Even though this will limit a teller to one handed kinesic gestures, this is less detrimental to oral narrative reciprocity than a teller turning their head from side to side with a stationary microphone and continually changing their amplified volume level. While seemingly a minor point and not always at distinguishable levels, consider the jarring volume fluctuations between television programming and commercial volume levels. Whenever a listener’s focus shifts to the volume, it is side-tracked from the content, from the narrative.
While the focus thus far has been primarily applicable to FL oral narrative situations and seemingly on FL reciprocities, be they live or fixed, it is important to keep in mind that listeners in audio only situations can pick up on subtle cues and variations. As such, based on my observations and interviews with storytellers, when recording an audio only narrative or when telling live in an audio only format (on this occasion I include SL in said category), I would advise that tellers tell as if their listener(s) can see them. As saccharine as it may sound, you can hear a smile. Moreover, kinesic gestures can be informative to tellers as well as listeners, influencing a variety of narrative elements, including a teller’s audible emphasis and pacing. Consequently, the temptation to read from one’s notes or even a script should be resisted as even across time and space a rustle of paper or an obvious re-reading to correct a slipped passage can disrupt a listener’s narrative engagement, and distance them from the teller in that they are no longer talking to the listener but rather talking to the paper. Extending this logic further, if a teller is reading from their notes then they are not reading the audience. Likewise, if listeners are reading a teller’s slides then they are not really listening to the teller. While degrees and types of multitasking are inevitable in all situations, regardless of any attempts to ban laptops and cellphones from performance venues (I include lecture halls in

Figure 18: Keep your presentation focused, as listener engagement is easily compromised.
this category), focusing one’s presentation (see Figure 18) will aid in focusing one’s listeners. If there is text that they should read, be it an outline for a lecture, a quote, or a set of bullet points, then let them read, in silence; silence is a fundamental tool for storytellers. Subsequently, said text should be removed when a teller resumes telling, as focus is crucial to engagement and reciprocity, and we are all too easily distracted.

**Space and place awareness.**

While reciprocities available can and do change because of the technologies utilized when sharing oral narratives, they can also be affected by the venues in which said oral narratives are shared. Virtual world venues being the exception, with their handpicked (see Figures 12 & 13) and purpose-built (see Figures 10 & 11) venues, there is generally very little that can be done to modify the physical spaces in which we tell except moving the occasional piece of furniture (see Figure 9). Yet an awareness of our surroundings can still play a positive role in our sharing of oral narratives. While the impact of space will not play such an obvious role in every lecture as one would were *A Midsummer’s Night Dream* taught in the “shadows of an old oak forest” (Ripley, 2011, 10) or in a course on virtual worlds taught in virtual worlds, considerations of space and place can be made in all venues. Again the distinction being made here is that spaces are the physical environs we occupy while places are spaces that hold subjective values for individuals. Beyond having a sufficient capacity and the necessary technology
to accommodate a given course, the impact of the space itself may seem limited to practicalities - do the windows open, and is it too bright to see the projector screen? Consider though the differences in giving an information literacy lecture at a respected university and then how it could be perceived differently, by the same listeners, if held at a branch of the public library, or, to take the point to an implausible extreme, were the lecture held in a shopping mall food court. In each instance both the attributes and physical characteristics of these places will alter the participant’s experiences. If the food court example seems farfetched then consider two sections of the same undergraduate information literacy core course (MIT1700) taught at The University of Western Ontario. During my time at Western I have worked as a Teaching Assistant for this course four times, in four very different spaces, including the retrofitted, somewhat grand, Conron Hall (UC224), and the purpose-built, yet non-descript, amphitheatre of Somerville 3345 (see Figure 19). While each space has comparable capacity and technology, the physicality of these spaces are very different. Conron Hall is narrow, deep, two tiered, and ornate, while the Somerville room is shallow, wide, and devoid of any natural light. These seemingly irrelevant physical
characteristics necessitate different presentation styles if all of the participants are to remain engaged and an informative reciprocity between the participants is to be maintained.

Considering that the information shared during oral narratives is transmitted via not only the words spoken but by kinesic gestures and expressions of the speaker, and the increased sense of engagement that accompanies seeing the words spoken, a case can be made not only for the amplification of the instructor's voice, but for a live projection of the instructor (see Figure 20). While this may seem at first an unwanted intrusion and or even an unnecessary endeavor consider the information being lost to all those not in the first eight rows or so, and who otherwise and increasingly see nothing more than a vaguely humanoid shape while listening to a disembodied voice emanating from overhead speakers.

Now returning to the Conron Hall/Somerville example, expand the scenario to consider a solitary student observing the lectures on their laptop from their dorm room, and then another in a truck stop in northern Saskatchewan? How would

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20 Assuming that any course requiring larger venues would also require Teaching Assistants, the issue of staffing such an endeavour could be borne there.
their experiences of the same information differ from those gathered together in a shared space? To be clear, this is in no way meant as an indictment of distance education, but rather to put forward that the kinesic information available, the reciprocities that can occur, and the spaces and places that both the telling and (if different) that the listening occur in all play active roles in the co-created stories and learning experiences of the participants. There is a balancing act that must be walked between encouraging that sense of presence (by including the space and those physically present) or favouring greater engagement with the narrative by focusing the camera on the lecturer in either a Medium of Close-up shot (see Figure 21). While editing a lecture video to include a variety of shots is possible, the added value when compared to time and effort required is debatable. When deciding which shot to use consideration of both the teller’s style and the material being presented is advisable. If a teller uses their hands when speaking a Medium shot is advised, always making sure that the shot is wide enough not to cut off their hands. For a more stationary speaker observations from this study suggest that a Close-up shot would be more affective. It would also be advised when trying to elicit an emotive response from

Figure 21: Medium and Close-up shots respectively.
your listeners as they are more likely to personally engage in the narrative being shared.

The venues that we physically, or in the case of SL virtually, occupy as listeners during the sharing of oral narratives are not the only spaces and places important with regard to the sharing of oral narratives. From Rita’s “farshtunken apartment” in New York City (Ψ3), to the sweeping ridges of ancient Persia’s Khorasān Mountains (‘Aṭṭār, 1177/1984; Yusuf, θ1), from a fictional baker’s house (Christine, Φ6 & Ω2), to 221B Baker Street (Doyle, 1953; Morag, Δ1), these too are spaces and place that we experience as part of storytelling. In part they may be described to us, as with Fantine’s stone staircase “the colour of honey or freshly baked bread” (The Moth, 2013, July 19), or the desolate “plains of cooled lava rock” on Hawai i’s Big Island, where “there’s this one little liko” (bud) of a lehua tree that has sprung forth from the black rocks, and which over time will cover “the land with beautiful soft green leaves and brilliant puffs of red fluffy blossoms” (Kaleo, personal communication, Δ6). Other spaces and places, such as the awkward confines of an elderly john’s bedroom (Earl, Ψ2), the desperate expanse of a rebel occupied Zimbabwean border (Selma, Ψ3), and the dizzying heights of a magical pumpkin vine reaching towards a full moon (Marcie, θ1), were shared with storylisteners, either in whole or in part, via storytellers’ kinesic gestures.

Although visualized storyworlds can be highly evocative they are by their very nature personal, internal, and ephemeral, and while they can always be revisited
they will never be entirely the same. Even were it possible to somehow record visualizations, subsequent viewings would find both the observer and the newly co-created experience different. Once beloved stories, over time, can become painful to read and watch. While the documents themselves remain fixed, we as contributing participants and our relationships to these documents have changed, due to a combination of foreknowledge, events, and by experience. Moreover, documenting the ephemeral changes its nature (Cruickshank, 1998). Even so, a better understanding the co-creation of visualizations via oral narratives could ultimately prove highly beneficial for improving both the accuracy and uniformity of visualized information.

**Final thoughts on limitations to the study**

The conclusions derived from this study must in part be qualified, as previously discussed, due to the various elements not addressed in this study (see Limitations of the study), as well as due to the methodological limitations of both observation (e.g., observer effect, focus on external behaviour, limited focus), and of interviews (e.g., distortion, recall error, reactivity, volunteer bias). They must also be qualified in that even though there were over two hundred noted participants in this study, said participants generally seemed to be a somewhat homogenous group. This observation is made in regard to not only their geographic proximity (which for the 1001 group was essential), but also in
socio-economic, cultural, and demographic characteristics, even when their styles of telling and or the narratives being told were culturally diverse.

Epilogue

Marcie’s story (Session 01, July 8, 2011): the first of 14 FL sessions, in which 75 tellers told more than 200 stories over 28 hours.

On a mild summer’s evening, in a small university coffee shop, in the middle of Toronto, a mildly spoken woman tells a group of primarily retirees a story about a bird. She tells them how it was nursed back to health by a poor man, and subsequently of how it repaid that kindness with a single seed that grew into a great pumpkin filled with gold. No details were given describing the setting of the tale or of the bird itself, save that the story was “Chinese in origin,” and later that the bird in question could fly. Every listener in that room heard Marcie tell the same story, and yet every listener’s experience of that story, and visualization of said bird, was unique. Maybe they imagined a specific type of bird, such as a robin or a blue jay. Perhaps it was something generic the size of a finch. It may have been photorealistic or cartoonish, resplendent with colour or silhouetted as if in shadow. All of these elements are the listeners’ unsolicited contributions to the story Marcie shared. Residing in a Toronto high-rise a listener’s first thought of bird might be a pigeon. Perhaps another listener grew up on a farm and imagined a chicken or a duck. What if instead of a warm summer’s evening it had been a foul winter’s night? What if the coffee shop was not in Toronto but rather in the mountains or by the sea? What if a listener or for that matter Marcie were
from Australia? Would they have imagined a kookaburra or an emu instead?

Maybe, as it followed Yusuf’s *The conference of the birds* someone imagined that very same hoopoe. And yet how do we visualize things outwith our own knowledge and experience? What exactly does a hoopoe bird even look like, and how would one imagine a bird “colour-of-time” (Frankie, Ω1)? In Marcie’s mind what did this bird look like? While labouring this point is not my intention, making it is essential. While the specific characteristics of this particular bird were not essential to the story being shared, if listeners can justifiably imagine any of these possibilities or permutations when asked to imagine something as simple as a bird, imagine the profusion of visualizations that must occur when teaching concepts such as libraries, instructional strategies, catalogs, or technology.

What has been presented here is only the beginning, the freshly made bread and cheese (Linus, Ω5), and yet there is still much more to discover. In undertaking this research I set out to inform both the FL and virtual world storytelling communities regarding the various technologies they may choose to utilize, and to inform the LIS knowledge-base as to the unique nature and importance of oral documents. I intended to inform our andragogic knowledge in regard to the effects of electronic mediation for instructional practices in academic and workplace environs, and to expose potential hidden costs in distance education and in the conducting of business (both commercial and academic) via tele and videoconferences. What I discovered was that embedded within our oral narratives are bountiful streams of visual information travelling in
all directions, and emanating from our hands, our faces, and the spaces and places where we tell and listen to our stories. I discovered that these visual streams can and do still flow when our oral narratives are mediated by technologies, although depending on the media traversed they sometimes must find and take different routes. I discovered that oral narratives, even when seemingly "petrified" (Cruickshank, 1987), be they fixed in text, audio, or video, require reciprocity in their co-creation, and that each participant will help create and then experience a story differently depending on their own set of personal experiences, relationship to the narrative, and even location. Most surprisingly though, I discovered that technologies while definitely a membrane between the tellers and listeners are not a barrier, and can in actuality markedly improve the sharing of oral narratives.

Ultimately the research presented here is only the first leg of a much longer journey, and from this vantage point I can now envisage a variety of potential research to explore, including:

- To what degree is kinesic information actually being received by the observers versus acting as visual noise?
- What roles do group dynamics and or listener proximity play during oral narratives, if any, in regard to information retention and knowledge creation?
- What do people visualize during oral narratives, and why?
• What can be done to improve visualization accuracy and uniformity across listeners?

• How do cultural differences in kinesics and reciprocity impact cross-cultural oral narrative exchanges?

• What, if any, are the implications for pedagogic versus andragogic instruction via oral narrative?

In the meantime, the following insights, gleaned over decades by the interview participants, as practicing storytellers, are offered here as breadcrumbs to guide other tellers, wherever, and to whomever, they might tell:

• watch the listeners (Moira, Φ),

• tell to them, not yourself, and react to what they give you (Marley, Φ),

• keep yourself focused to keep them focused (Alice, Φ),

• remember that your voice is your primary means of sharing information so make sure they can hear you (Frankie, Φ), and finally

• do not read, tell (Alice, Φ; Betty, Φ; Diana, Φ; Frankie, Φ; Jack, Φ; Jean, Φ; Marley, Φ; Moira, Φ; Morag, Δ; Sally, Φ).

While LIS research and instruction have recognized and seemingly embraced an exponential increase in electronically-mediated communication, the foundational method for information transfer, oral narrative, has been all but overlooked. Considering that oral narratives comprise such a significant portion of our information sharing, adapting, surviving, and even flourishing via new technologies, only increases their importance as a means of information sharing,
both now and arguably in the future. *Once upon a time* may be a now somewhat stereotypical introduction to countless children’s stories and faerie tales, but it affords a distance and perspective to the events within any given narrative. It is here and now though that storytelling, storylistening, and oral narrative story co-creation, in all their complexities, as means of information transfer and knowledge creation must be explored if LIS is to take the vanguard in storytelling research and instruction “beyond the children’s room” (S. Getchell, personal communication, September, 2009).

*And they researched fruitfully ever after.*
Appendix A: Participant nomenclature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session Designation</th>
<th>e.g., (Pseudonym, session)</th>
<th>Unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>θ (Theta)</td>
<td>(Frankie, θ1)</td>
<td>1001 pilot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>β (Beta)</td>
<td>(Morag, β3)</td>
<td>SL pilot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Φ (Phi)</td>
<td>(Frankie, Φ9)</td>
<td>1001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Δ (Delta)</td>
<td>(Georgia, Δ3)</td>
<td>SL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ω (Omega)</td>
<td>(Frankie, Ω1)</td>
<td>AO (audio only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ψ (Psi)</td>
<td>(Fantine, Ψ5)</td>
<td>The Moth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviews list the participant and whether they were FL (1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling) or SL but no relation to order in which they occurred; e.g., (Yusuf, Φ) or (Georgia, Δ), respectively.
Appendix B: First Life interview schedule

Research Questions

1. Does electronic mediation affect oral narrative story co-creation and information transfer? If yes,

2. How are oral narrative story co-creation and information transfer affected when so mediated?

Tell me the story of how you became a storyteller?

- Demographic information, and to get them talking.
- Their origin story, and background on and relationship to the hosting group (including SL history if relevant).
- Roles adopted (listener & teller or listener only).
- Frequency of attendance.
- If a SL teller/listener do you also tell/listen in FL?
- Gender and/or chosen gender in SL.
- Solo or group activity (attend and/or see as).
- Professional or amateur?
- What and why do you tell, and to whom?
- Why do you listen?
- Do you use props (talking stick, felt, string, book, microphone)?
The mike is fairly new at 1001, how is that going?

- Their opinions and interactions with technology in storytelling, both as a teller and listener.
- The decision to introduce microphone to 1001.
- Interested in any experiences, observations, and any stories involving technology.

Do you attend other storytelling events, what type(s) do you attend?

- Looking for differences in FL telling and listening.

I'm interested in your experiences of story listening.

- What do you do when listening: just listen, close your eyes, sit quietly?

Last session recollections: What can you remember, see, and hear?

- (The order they remember to relate).
- Tell me about the group (tellers/listeners).
- Why did you choose this particular event?
- Tell me about the storytellers and the listeners: do their numbers affect your experience.
- What did you like about this event?
- What, if any, problems or issues did you have with this event?
- How did you hear about this event?
- What did you hear, do the number of other listeners, the time of day affect your experience?
o What do you recall about the story or stories?

Final question: What, if any, do you believe are the effects of electronic mediation on oral narrative story co-creation and information transfer?

o Insights.
Appendix C: Second Life interview schedule

Research Questions

1. Does electronic mediation affect oral narrative story co-creation and information transfer? If yes,

2. How are oral narrative story co-creation and information transfer affected when so mediated?

Tell me the story of how you became a storyteller?

- Demographic information, and to get them talking.
- Their origin story, and background on and relationship to the hosting group (including SL history if relevant).
- Roles adopted (listener & teller or listener only).
- Frequency of attendance and or noob status.
- If a SL teller/listener do you also tell/listen in FL?
- Gender and/or chosen gender in SL.
- Solo or group activity (attend and/or see as).
- Professional or amateur?
- What and why do you tell, and to whom?
- Why do you listen?
- Do you use props (talking stick, felt, string, book, microphone)?
Do you attend other storytelling events, what type(s) do you attend (FL and/or SL)?
  
  o Looking for differences in SL to FL telling and listening.
  
  o If a SL teller do you also tell in FL?

Voice is fairly new in SL, although other forms of virtual telling have been around for a while. I am interested in your experiences of telling in SL? Specifically, while I can see your avatar telling a story, I am interested in the practice of storytelling that is taking place where you are, and how you deal with being physically removed from the listeners. (not just cats walking across keyboards and hearing motorcycles through open windows).
  
  o Their opinions and interactions with technology in storytelling, both as a teller and listener.
  
  o The decision to create, attend and tell stories in SL.
  
  o Interested in any experiences, observations, and any stories involving technology
  
  o Can you feed and respond
I'm interested in your experiences of storytelling and listening in SL and of how they compare to FL experiences.

- What do you do when listening: just listen, close your eyes, sit quietly, move about, multitask (e.g., make a cup of tea, eat, do the dishes), pan the camera, IM other listener, IM other friends?
- Did you set the environment to a specific time of day (why)?
- Environment questions: did and if so how did, the venue Screen size, focal point, and face size of teller on screen (i.e. crowd, full, ¾).
- In SL do you use first-person perspective or third-person perspective (over-the-shoulder)? Why? And do you alter this view for sessions?

**Last session recollections: What can you remember, see, and hear?**

- (The order they remember to relate).
- Tell me about the group (tellers/listeners).
- Why did you choose this particular event?
- Tell me about the storytellers, does their appearance, species (SL only), clothing, numbers affect your experience.
- Tell me about the listeners: does their appearance, species (SL only), clothing, numbers affect your experience.
- What did you like about this event?
- What, if any, problems or issues did you have with this event?
How did you hear about this event?

What did you hear, do the number of other listeners, the time of day affect your experience?

What do you recall about the story or stories?

Final question: What, if any, do you believe are the effects of electronic mediation on oral narrative story co-creation and information transfer?

Insights.
### Appendix D: Oral narrative kinesic gestures

**Appendix E: Christine’s *Baker’s daughter* (visualizations per minute)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oral Narrative Gesture Types</th>
<th>Possible Composites</th>
<th>General Kinesic Gesture Types</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Re-enactment</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Illustrators or ideational gestures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Shape</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Related to semantic content of concurrent speech (illustrating or indicating it), include iconic gestures (reproducing forms or movements of the object being spoken about, which the gesture refers to);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Scale</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Metaphoric Gestures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Distance</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Their form is metaphor of the abstract concept which they refer to and deictic gestures (pointing);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Speed</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Conversational Gestures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Motion</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>(e.g., cohesive and beats), accompanying speech without relation to the semantic content (relating to the internal structure of linguistic emissions as well as controlling synchronisation);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Force</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Adaptors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Intensity</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Hand movements of touching and manipulation, which include self-address, object-address or person-addressed hand movements. (Maricchiolo et al, 2011, p. 756)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Emotion</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Geographic</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Spatial</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Ordinal</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Text independent</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Pointing</td>
<td>IM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Motionless</td>
<td>IM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Time</td>
<td>IM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Comparisons</td>
<td>IM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Grouping</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Nominal</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Abstract</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>21. + -</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
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<td>22. Self-calm</td>
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<td>23. Text specific</td>
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<td>24. Repetition</td>
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<td>25. Tempo</td>
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<td>26. Phrasing</td>
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<td>27. Emphatic</td>
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<td>28. Opposites</td>
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<td>29. NSMF</td>
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<td>30. Self-reference</td>
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<td>31. Object manipulation</td>
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1. Baker, two daughters, twins, day/night, good/kind/sweet, 
   mean/selfish/cross, wind swept through streets, old crone, rapped on door 
   with cane, warm by fire, nice daughter, sit by fire, little bit of bread, heat it 
   in the oven, dough in oven, went to look.

2. Open the oven door, loaf twice as big as it should have been, old crone 
   stood up, black cape fell away, shimmering fairy, touched by wand, pies, 
   cakes, bread (why do some things elicit visualizations and others not?), 
   oven, selfish daughter, old crone, rapped on door.

3. Sit by fire, father, beggars, little bit of bread, little bit of dough in oven, 
   twice as big as it should have been, set aside, smaller piece of dough in 
   oven, old woman, bread, opened oven, great loaf of bread,

4. Set aside, little piece of dough/no bigger than a fingernail, oven, old 
   woman, opened oven, loaf filled oven/shiny with sugar on top and raisins, 
   old woman, burnt up bread, girl/laugh.

5. Old woman stood up, black cape fell away, shimmering fairy, girl/laughing, 
   touched girl with wand, girl/laughed, girl flew up the chimney, became owl.

Appendix F: Mother mouse versions
As remembered by Edith, 25-30 years after reading it in her dentist's office:

“A mother mouse was walking down the road with her little ones around her, and suddenly an enormous Cat appeared. The little mice screamed and tried to hide behind their mother. But the mother turned around bravely, and she faced that Cat, and she said to it, "BOW WOW!" And, as the Cat ran away, she looked at her children and she told them, "Let that be a lesson to you. Never underestimate the value of a second language."

As Frankie recalls it being told by Edith at a 1001 session some years earlier:

“A mother mouse took her children with her when she went for food. She warned them to be very quiet and very careful. A fierce cat was roaming the neighbourhood, and they young mice had to follow their mother without making a peep. They found a piece of cheese in the alleyway and were just about to pick it up when suddenly the cat sprang in front of them. The cat looked at the mother mouse’s children and licked its lips. Just before it pounced, the mother mouse drew herself up to her full height (which wasn't much) and barked; BOW WOW! GRRRR! WOOF! The cat ran away, terrified. They took the cheese home and as they ate, the mother mouse said, "My children, you have learned an important lesson today. You must always know how to speak a second language."

A transcription of how Frankie told it on his radio programme:
“There was once a mother mouse, she had several children. One day she called all of the children around, and she said “Now kids, we have to go out, and find some food. But it’s very dangerous out there, because there is a huge cat that prowls the alleyways. So follow me, be careful, don’t make any noise.” And she lead them all outside, down the alley, and there was a nice piece of cheese down by the garbage can, but when they rushed up to get that piece of cheese a cat jumped in front of it! And that cat had burning yellow eyes, and one ear up and one ear down, stuck its claws out, and the cat was just about to pounce upon the family when the mother mouse drew herself up to her full height, looked straight at that cat, and said “ROO, ROO, ROOF!” The cat was terrified, the cat took off. And the mother mouse turned to the children and said, “Now my children, do you understand how important it is to know a second language?” (57 seconds)

Appendix G: The fairy shoemaker by William Allingham [modified by Edith]
Little Cowboy, what have you heard,  
Up on the lonely rath's green mound?
Only the plaintive yellow bird  
Sighing in sultry fields around,
Chary, chary, chary, chee-ee! -
Only the grasshopper and the bee? -
Tick-a-tack-too!

Scarlet leather, sewn together,  
This will make a shoe.
Left, right, pull it tight; 
Summer days are warm; 
Underground in winter,
Laughing at the storm!'
Lay your ear close to the hill. 
Do you not catch the tiny clamour, 
Busy click of an elfin hammer. 
Voice of the Leprechaun singing shrill 
As he merrily plies his trade? 
He's a span and a quarter in height, 
Get him in sight, hold him tight, 
And you're a made Man! 
You watch your cattle [on a summer's day] 
Sup on potatoes, sleep in the hay; 
how would you like to roll in your carriage,
Look for a duchess's daughter in marriage?

Seize the shoemaker - then you may! 
'Big boots a -hunting, 
Sandals in the hall, 
White for a wedding feast, 
Pink for a ball.

This way, that way,  
So we make a shoe; 
Getting rich every stitch,
Tick-a-tack too!' 
Nine and ninety treasure croucks 
This keen miser fairy hath, 
Hid in the mountains, [dens] and rocks, 
Ruin and round-tow'r, cave and rath, 
And where [cormorant builds] 
From times of old 
Guarded by him; 
Each of them fill'd 
Full to the brim with gold! 
I caught him at work one day, myself, 
In the castle ditch where [the] foxglove grows 
A wrinkled, wizen'd [ ] bearded Elf 
Spectacles stuck on his pointed nose, 
Silver buckles to his hose, 
Leather apron - shoe in his lap - 
[tip-tap, rip-rap] 
Tick-tack-too! 
A grasshopper [flew] on my cap 
Away the moth flew! 
Buskins for a fairy prince, 
Brogues for his son - 
Pay me well, pay me well, 
When the job is done!'
The rogue was mine, beyond a doubt. 
I stared at him, he stared at me; 
[Your] servant sir! 
And pull'd a snuff-box out. 
He took a long pinch, look'd better pleased, 
[That] queer little Leprechaun;
Offer'd [his] box with a whimsical grace -

Pouf! He [threw] the dust in my face,
And while I sneezed,
Was gone! (1905, p. 14-16; Ω3)
Appendix H: Frankie’s *Ali the Persian’s bag* (potential images by minute)

1. Long ago/city of Baghdad, Caliph, night, storyteller.

2. Shop/shook, man from Kurdistan, shelf, bag, made to leave,
   followed/street, bag, shop, belt, shop, fight, judge, bag, silver jar eye
   shadow, two makeup brushes.

3. Candlesticks, two lemonade glasses with gilded rims, water pot, two
   ladles, small carpet/two matching cushions, pregnant cat, two sacks of
   wheat, jar of rice, bedroom suite, racing camel, female bear, green
   canopy, kitchen with two doors, company of Kurds, stepped up to judge,
   bag, school for adolescent delinquents.

4. Dog kennel, four men playing chess, squadron of soldiers, city of Basra,
   city of Baghdad, palace, shepherds crook, fishing net, smithy’s forge, five
   handsome boys, twelve lovely girls, 1000 leaders of caravans, Kurd/tears,
   judge, bag, one stone fort/14 towers, 32 alchemical powers, three kings
   from the east, two courtesans, comedian, roaring lion, lance, stallion,
   mare, newborn foal.

5. Four other chess players, two Rabbis, Cantor, Priest/two Deacons,
   Mullah/two servants, honest man/two liars, judge/two witnesses, bag,
   judge, bag, lotions, potions, filters, enchantments, miracles, wonders,
   ghosts, phantoms, garden/figs/apples/grapes/vines, murmurs, sighs,
   nibbles, giggles, two lovers/rising from bed, scent of their love, blast from
   behind, two quiet Sufis, rahat lokum, baba ghanoush, [inaudible], green
eggs and ham, toasted pita, plank, nail, silver dinar, man playing the clarinet.

6. Bag, all land from Cairo to Damascus to [inaudible] to Winnipeg, people driving down the road listening to great stories, children laughing in the back seat/sharing their toys, fiddlers, storytellers, people from around the world, bag, coffin, razor/beard, bag, judge, you two, bag, deep as abyss, Day of Judgement, open bag, peered inside.

7. Emptied contents onto desk, two olive pits, dry crust of bread, shrivelled up old orange rind, two men looked at each other and laughed, shook heads, walked away, Caliph laughed.
Glossary A: Selected terms from Second Life


Actual world: a place of human culture not realized by computer programs through the Internet.

Allocation: the total amount of land a resident/account/group can own or otherwise hold. δ

*Alt: alternative avatar.

Animation: a series of customizable avatar movements saved in a Resident’s inventory or poseball. ζ

Attachment: a virtual object that can be attached to an avatar (for example, a hat, a gun, or a ring). δ

Augmented reality (AR): virtual information superimposed on a physical landscape. ε

Avatar: a graphical representation of a virtual world resident. ‡

*Av, *Avi: See avatar

Bebop reality: a universe in which the fundamental laws of physics and identity are open to constant improvisation by its inhabitants. ζ
Befriending: the act of initiating or accepting a technologically mediated virtual friend. See friend.

Build: to make something out of prims. δ

Chat: see Local chat

*CMC: computer-mediated communication.

Covenant: a set of rules and regulations governing a particular estate. δ

Cyberdiscursivity: the creation, manipulation, and distribution of computer-mediated communication. †

Cyberworld: See virtual world

Deep-think: when a physical interaction with a sim is taking a very long time to compute. Can be caused by a large number of colliding physical objects, when a physical object is stuck in an awkward position, or when advanced shapes are interacting in some weird way. Symptoms of a deep-think are slow avatar movement, continuing to move after an avatar should have stopped, or logging off issues. In some cases chat will still operate normally while moving and other physical movements are imparted. δ

*DLE: digital learning environment

Dwell: See traffic

Emoticon: typographical characters used to represent emotion, like :) for a smiling face (turned on its side). ‡

*F2F: face-to-face

First world: See actual world.

*FL: first life
Friend: a virtual relationship based on believed common interests, that facilitates the sharing of personal information.

Gesture: a mix of avatar animation, sound, and sometimes special effects activated by a typed command or keyboard shortcut. δ

Grid: the Second Life virtual world (or the platform that undergrids Second Life).

‡

Griefing: to bother or harass another resident through offensive actions. δ

Home: the landmark a resident sets as the center of an avatars SL existence.

*IM: See instant message.

Immersion: the visual, audio, and social cues that create the illusion of being in an alternative world, interacting with avatars who are distinct from their users. ζ

Impression society: a social hierarchy in which residents are most valued and respected to the degree they make cultural, economic, or social contributions with organic creative flair, distinction, and sustained effect. ζ

Instant message: typed text that can be read only by the resident or residents to whom it is addressed, and that is not limited by the proximity of the addressee’s avatar. ‡

Inventory: the collection of clothing, objects, textures, etc. that your avatar possesses in-world. δ

In-world: 1) anything that takes place within a given virtual environment, 2) the state of being logged into a virtual world. δ

*IRL: in real life.

*L$: see lindens.
Lag: an experienced slowdown in time inside a virtual world. ‡

Landmark: a beacon marking a specific location in-world, and the teleport shortcut to that location stored in a SL avatars inventory. δ

Lindens: (1) Second Life’s inworld currency. (2) as “the lindens,” Linden Lab staff.

‡

Local Chat: typed text in a virtual world that can be read by those within 30m of one’s avatar. ‡

Machinima: short edited video sequences recorded in-world. ω

Mirror neurons: neurons that make up a “neural mirror system that demonstrates an internal correlation between the representations of perceptual and motor functionalities,” indicating that while observing an action [or hearing a narrative], certain parts of the brain are activated in the same way that they would be if the observer were performing the action. π

Mirrored flourishing: the belief that positive contributions to Second Life can and should have a positive impact on residents in their real lives – and vice versa. ζ

MMOG: massively multiplayer online game.

MMORPE: massively multiplayer online role-playing environment.

MMORPG: massively multiplayer online role-playing game.

MMORT: massively multiplayer online real-time strategy.

MMOW (massively multiplayer online world): See virtual world.

MOO: MUD Object Oriented.

Mouselook: first-person camera view. δ
MUCK: multi-user chat kingdom

MUD (multi-user domain/dimension/dungeon): See virtual world.

MUSH: multi-user shared habitat.

MUVE: multi-user virtual environment.

Newbie, Noobie, Noob: a newcomer to SL, someone not familiar or comfortable with SL’s nuances. δ

Notecard: an in-world text document, such as the instructions attached to an object. δ

Object: anything that exists in the virtual world and is built of one or more prims. δ

Permissions: rules and regulations that define what an object’s owner can do with it (for example, copy or modify). δ

Poseball: a small scripted object that, when sat on, launches a pre-set animation on your avatar. It’s the key technology underlying nightclub dancing, sexual intercourse, and other social activities. ζ

Prim: short for “primitive” – a virtual solid of any shape, used as a building block in the SL world. δ

Primary: one’s actual-world self; more rarely, one’s default avatar. ‡

Profile: a viewer window listing Residents’ name, creation date, and other self-selected details (interests, real-life identity, etc.). ζ

Real-play: involves residents whose avatars names are comparable to their own, and are generally a faithful visual representation of the resident. ω

Resident: a person who uses Second Life. δ
Rez: 1) to bring an object into 3D space, usually by dragging it from your avatar's inventory. δ 2) to appear on a resident's screen, because the information has downloaded over the Internet. ¶

Role-play: in which residents adopt some degree of persona via their avatar. Ω

Ruthed: a temporary loss of individual avatar characteristics. Regressing to default female [sic] form, caused by server error. ζ

Sandbox: a public area where SL residents are allowed to create or rez new objects. ∆

Scripted gesture: a set of instructions in Linden Script Language that enable residents to add functions and program behavior such as motion or interactivity into their creations. ζ

*SL: Second Life.

Second Life (SL): a virtual world, owned by the company Linden Lab. ¶

*Sim: See simulator.

Simulator: a region of land in Second Life, contained on server in the actual world. ¶

Skin: what you see when you strip your avatar naked (may include body shape and features such as eyes and tattoos), 2) often used to denote a custom-made avatar skin of superior appearance. δ

Snapshot: an in-world photo. δ

Teleport: to move instantaneously from one location to another within Second Life. ¶

Texture: an image or graphic applied to an object or avatar. δ
Theory of mind: the theory that we naturally and unconsciously understand other people’s behaviour in terms of intentions that we attribute to them due to bodily cues, and the idea that we understand fictional characters in the same way. π

Tier: the amount of land a resident can own in Second Life. ‡

*TOS: Terms of Service.

*TP: See teleport.

Traffic: a measure of the amount of time avatars are present on a piece of property. ‡

Virtual reality (VR): involves full sensory immersion, through either head-mounted displays or surrounding participants with surfaces for active projections. ε

Virtual world (VW): a place of human culture realized by a computer program through the Internet. ‡
Glossary B: Selected terms from narratology


Actant: a fundamental role at the level at the level of narrative. φ

Analepsis: flashback

Au’orality: a unified theory of the attributes of spoken communication that incorporates both that which is spoken (oral) and that which is heard (aural).

Aurality: attributes of communication pertaining to that which is heard.

Character (C): an anthropomorphic actor or existent [within a narrative]. θ

Characterization: the arrangement of personality traits, transforming named characters into multifaceted characters. ψ

Chronologization: the arrangement of time, transforming action into plot. ψ

Countermemory: lost or hidden cultural practices (memories, narratives) λ

Diegesis: the space (or fictional world) in which narrated events occur. θ

Discourse: the set of narrated events and situations as they are presented to the listener(s). θ

Discourse time: the passage of time as experienced by the real narrator and real listener(s).

Ellipsis: a temporal break in the narrative sequence. θ
Extratextual communication: communication between participants regarding a narrative (e.g., between a real narrator and real listener(s)). See intratextual communication.

Fabula: the sequence of a narrative's events in chronological order. λ

Focalization: (1) the current focus of a given narrative. (2) the arrangement of narrative perspective. ψ

Heterodiegetic narrator: although the teller of the events is not a participant within the story being told.

Historical present: the narration of past events and experiences in the present tense. λ

Homodiegetic narrator: the narrator is a participant within the story being told.

Implied author (\.\A\i\): the author's persona as reconstructed from the [story]. θ

Implied listener (\.\L\i\): the audience presupposed by [the narrative] or the persona of a [listener] imposed by the norms and values of a narrative. θ

Implied narrator (\.\N\i\): the presupposed speaker of the story being told.

Intersemiotic manifestations: the same narrative presented via a different media

Intertextuality: the relationship between versions of a single narrative.

Intratextual communication: communication between participants within a narrative (e.g., between a narrator and narratee(s)). See extratextual communication.

Kernel: necessary plot events, as opposed to satellites. θ

Kinesics: the study of the actions and positions of body, head, and limbs, and by which non-verbal visual information is exchanged. ζ
Localization: the arrangement of space, transforming place into setting. \( \psi \)

Metalepsis: a changing level of awareness within a narrative.

Narratee (N\(^{i}\)): one who is narrated to as [told] in the [story]. \( \theta \)

Narrative: the recounting of one or more real or fictitious events communicated by one or more narrators, to one or more narratees. \( \phi \)

Narrative empathy: a vicarious, spontaneous sharing of affect with a fictional character, which may be brought about or enhanced by one or more features of the narrative, including character identification and narrative situation. \( \pi \)

Narrator (N): the one who narrates as [told] in the [story]. \( \theta \)

Narrator/character (N/C): See homodiegetic narrator.

Omnipresent: has the ability to be in several places simultaneously. \( \theta \)

Omniscient: knows (or seems to know) everything that is going on in the narrative. \( \theta \)

Orality: attributes of communication pertaining to that which is spoken.

Primary: untechnologically mediated oral communication by individuals with no knowledge of the existence of writing/text/fixed language.

Secondary: (1) technologically mediated oral communication and comprehension made possible by textual understanding. (2) untechnologically mediated oral communication by individuals with knowledge of fixed language.

Paralinguistics: non-verbal auditory means of information exchange.

Prolepasis: flash-forward; the temporal counterpoint to analepsis. \( \lambda \)
Proxemics: the perception and structure of interpersonal and environmental spaces, and their influence on social interaction and communication. 

Raiders syndrome: black clothing increases aggression levels. 

Real author (A): the producer of a narrative. 

Real listener (L): the actual individual(s) hearing a narrative, as opposed to the persona of listener who hears within the narrative. 

Real narrator (N^R): the actual individual telling a narrative, as opposed to the persona of narrator who speak within the narrative. 

Reliable narrator: provides an accurate account of narrated events. 

Rule of Three: narrative structure device common in western narratives that utilizes and promises resolution using elements in threes (e.g., three sons, three choices, three gifts). 

Satellite: a minor plot event not essential to the narrative, as opposed to kernels. 

Semantic memory: shared cultural knowledge that we obtain from our cultural environment, and which we tend not to doubt. 

Source tags: indicators of who is speaking, that allows readers [listeners] to differentiate the various voices in a text [story]. 

Story: the sequence of events and situations as they would occur in chronological order. 

Story time: the passage of time as experienced by the characters of a narrative. 

Subnarratable: that which, according to a given narrative, need not be told, because it is so “normal” as to go without saying.
Supranarratable: that which, according to a given narrative, cannot be told, because it is ineffable or inexpressible. λ

Talking stick: a symbolic object used by storytellers that identifies the holder as the person who should be listened to, in a practice borrowed from various First Nations.

Textuality: a multilevel understanding of narrative, that encompasses not only the what of a narrative (story), but also the how (discourse), and the who (voice).

Unreliable narrator: a narrator whose trustworthiness is undermined by events as deduced from the narrative. θ

Voice: (1) who speaks in the narrative. θ (2) the way in which choices of diction and syntax convey values and thus a sense of the speaker. λ
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