

MIT4: THE WORK OF STORIES

Media in Transition (Cambridge)

Date: May 6-8, 2005.

Location: MIT campus,
Cambridge/MA, USA.

Deadline for submission: January 1,
2005.

Early submissions are encouraged.
Abstracts should be no longer than
250 words, should be submitted as
Word attachments or in the body of
an email, and sent to Brad Seawell
at seawell@mit.edu.

Please put MIT4 in the subject line,
and please include a brief biographi-
cal statement of no more than 100
words.

Alternatively, abstracts and bios can
be mailed to:

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Forum, 14N-430, MIT,
Cambridge/MA, US 02139.

Some say storytelling is at the heart of social life and personal identity. It is common today to speak of political candidates' »competing narratives«, or of a group or culture's need to invent »a new narrative« for changing times. Stories are embedded in our commercials and our newscasts. Ancient narratives of humiliation and revenge are said to drive the lives of millions. New and emerging technologies have given global reach to stories old and new.

This fourth *Media in Transition* conference will explore storytelling as a cultural practice, a social and political activity as well as an art form.

We want to talk about why some stories last, how they migrate across media forms within their own societies as well as other cultures and historical eras. We hope to encourage speculation about the ways in which stories are deployed in periods of media in transition, and about the way some stories easily inhabit different media simultaneously while other stories seem less adaptable.

We aim to stimulate a conversation among scholars, journalists and media professionals who may often speak only to their own tribal groups.

We are also especially eager to encourage conversations among scholars of narrative in print and oral cultures with those whose work has centered on modern and contemporary story-forms. Contributions from anthropologists, folklorists, historians and classicists as well as scholars of film and popular culture are especially encouraged.

We seek papers that speak accessibly, across disciplines and specialities; that try to distill core principles about storytelling and audiences; and that attend responsibly to the specific technologies and political and cultural contexts that shape the process of storytelling in every society.

Possible topics:

- The nature and function of storytelling practices in specific cultural contexts.
- How the skills of storytelling are transmitted within a folk culture or a creative industry.
- The historic evolution of genres.
- The migration of specific stories, characters, or themes across different media systems.
- Why certain stories persist against social, cultural, political, economic, or technological changes.
- Do new or distinctive forms of story-telling emerge at moments of media in transition?
- War narratives and their delivery systems?
- Theories of story-telling and contemporary media.
- Television stories.
- Narrative uses for emerging technologies.
- The ways specific media – print, orality, cinema, television, digital platforms – alter the nature of stories.
- The aesthetics and practices of transmedia storytelling.
- The potential of augmented reality as a form of spatial storytelling.
- The role of narrative in documentary and in fictional works.
- What values or assumptions shape the kinds of stories we tell our children?
- Stories as pedagogy and ideology: from the parables of the Bible to educational computing.
- Cognitive processing and the »reading« of stories.
- Storytelling as a participatory and grassroots practice.
- The globalization of storytelling – what happens when stories move across cultures?
- Narrative and political power.