

Introduction	5
Chapter One - Philosophy	
Introduction	6
Are you a transmedia solo artist, rock band or what?	7
Word of mouth – an essential ingredient	11
It’s the new style – producing in a multiplatform and	13
Talking transmedia	15
The Endangered Author – a species under threat, for	18
On Transmedia	21
Interview - Christy Dena	24
Interview - Jeff Gomez	26
Chapter Two - Practice	
Introduction	30
Mobile, transmedia and timing	31
Transmedia – the Green House Effect	33
Interview - Andrea Phillips	36
Interview - Michael Monello	38
Interview - Maya Zuckerman	40
Chapter Three - Business	
Introduction	42
Thriving on piracy – a transmedia producer’s best friend?	43
I just read a great post by James Carter over on ArtsFWD	44
Branded content – one way forward	46
Interview - Robert Pratten	48
Interview - Dorothea Martin	50
Chapter Four - The Audience	
Introduction	52
Spreading a story	53
Audience participation – the changing role of the Author	55
Audience engagement – three approaches	57
Interview - Lance Weiler	60
Interview - Nuno Bernardo	62
Chapter Five - Projects	
Introduction	63
Loud and clear – “Authentic in All Caps”	64
Five transmedia projects – February 2013	67

Defiance – defying the odds.....	69
Five transmedia projects – autumn 2013.....	71
Interview - Christian Fønnesbech.....	74
Interview - Nick DeMartino.....	77
Interview - Alison Norrington.....	80
Chapter Six - Events	
Introduction.....	82
Entertainment Master Class – television on the move.....	83
MIPFormats and MIPTV – is it on?.....	84
MIPFormats Day One.....	85
MIPTV and MIPCube 2013 – a brief review.....	86
Nordic Transmedia Meetup and Nordic Game 2013.....	88
MIPCOM 2013 – thoughts and reflections.....	89
Interview - Liz Rosenthal.....	90
Interview - Mike Dicks.....	92
Chapter Seven - MIP Blogs	
Introduction.....	94
So, that deadline is creeping nearer. You know, the.....	95
A couple of weeks ago David Petrarca, the freelance.....	97
The Creative Fan: Friend or Foe.....	100
Five way to stay in the loop this summer.....	103
Is the Author an Endangered Species?.....	105
Where is television heading? The million-dollar question.....	107
What can TV learn from online producers.....	109
Chapter Eight - In a State of Flux	
Introduction.....	111
Torrents in exchange for personal data, collaboration.....	112
How to disrupt television – six tips to start you off.....	114
Interview - Carrie Cuthforth-Young.....	116
Interview - Brian Clark.....	118
Interview - Louisa Heinrich.....	120
Chapter Nine - Future	
Introduction.....	122
It’s the new style – producing in a multiplatform and.....	123
Interview - Gary Hayes.....	125
Interview - Angela Natividad.....	128

Interview - Ian Ginn	130
Epilogue	132

Introduction

A very good day to you, reader, and thanks for downloading this publication. This is starting to feel like an annual tradition already. And with "this" I mean the very thing you're reading right now: "One Year in Now Media 2013 Edition". Just like last year, it's a curation of my blog posts from the past twelve months, from my own blog over at simonstaffans.com as well as the posts I've written for ReedMIDEM's [MIPBlog](#). It's a lot to do with multiplatform, transmedia, cross media, marketing, television, social media, audience engagement and so on. The posts go under different chapters, all prefaced by separate introductions.

Also included are interviews with many brilliant people in the field (or in fields touching on the field of multi platform and transmedia storytelling). I can't thank them all enough - Christy, Jeff, Andrea, Michael, Maya, Rob, Lance, Nuno, Christian, Nick, Liz, Mike, Carrie, Brian, Louise, Gary, Dorothea, Alison and Ian - for giving me some of their precious time to answer some questions. Without their voices this publication would be all the poorer. While thanking, a final thank you goes to [MediaCity Finland](#), for whom I work as a content developer. It's a great environment to explore new paths in media.

Writing this, we're about to turn the page to the year 2014. While money is still relatively scarce to come by, I'm seeing other areas than financing that are picking up a bit of the slack and are helping projects get made. New technologies as well as a lot of best-practices that producers can do research into and get inspiration from have given content creators new possibilities when it comes to making great and engaging content in a more affordable way.

This makes its mark on content as a whole as well; while it's harder than ever to break into mainstream media, it's easier than ever to have a great idea, produce it in high-quality and reach a multi-million headed global audience within days, if not hours. And the people doing this do not differentiate between television, YouTube, Netflix, gifs on Tumblr, what have you. As I see it, we're moving closer and closer to the point where there will be no need for terms like the much-contested "transmedia" to exist and be debated about; everything will simply be as transmedia as it has to be in order to fulfil its full potential.

While we're waiting for that to happen, this publication talks about where we are right now and where we are heading. I hope it is of use to you, and I very much look forward to hearing your thoughts on the ideas it contains!

Vasa, Finland, 19th December 2013

Simon Staffans

CHAPTER ONE - PHILOSOPHY

When we're developing and producing for more than one media, while at the same time trying to get all the different parts working together in the best possible way, we're still often fumbling in the dark. There are best practices to look at in some cases. But at the same time, the audience is moving so quickly from one service to another, from one pattern of habit to another, that it's hard to keep up. One strategy that worked last year might be totally outdated this year, and so on.

This is where this chapter enters the picture, the chapter where we talk about aspects of the philosophy of transmedia and multiplatform. These are the thoughts that are the meta thoughts of the development processes, the thoughts that exist to juggle other thoughts and get them moving in new directions. They are the thoughts that get you out of your trot and and make you see things in a new light, finding new paths for yourself along the way.

As the saying goes - "it doesn't matter if you're on the right track, you will get run over if you just sit there".

Are you a transmedia solo artist, rock band or what?

[26/02/2013](#)

A couple of years ago [I wrote a post on transmedia](#), examining a comparison that Jeff Gomez often sports; the one of likening transmedia to a symphony orchestra, where you have a great number of different instruments – or media platforms – that need to be conducted in precisely the right way in order for them to create the harmonies that will make people sit up, take notice and flock to the content.

I've often returned to the post, in which I took an article with advice on how to write a real, musical symphony and re-hashed it for transmedia purposes. During the time since then, and based on some of the projects I've worked on or familiarised myself with, I've come to the conclusion that a symphony orchestra is not always the best comparison for every project. For the purpose of juggling our minds and helping us examine our projects in new lights and from new angles – something that can only help while developing content – here are five other musical ensembles I've identified among transmedia projects. Do you know where your fits in, or is your project something completely different?

The singer/songwriter

We've all been here, or know people who've been here. One-woman or one-man projects that come straight from the heart... or guts, or mind, or some other creative place. For me personally, these projects are long-running, often very flexible, suddenly changing shape and form and direction without any heads-up; much like a singer-songwriter trying out his/her material on small crowds in bars. And just like that singer-songwriter, sometimes it needs someone else, someone with influence or connections or resources, to come along and help draw up directions and bring the content to a bigger audience, while sometimes the artist manages to do it all on her/his own.

A few examples: "[Felicity](#)" by Andrea Phillips, "[Snow Town](#)" by Jan Libby, "[We Dream Of Nothing](#)" by Paul Burke, and many many more. My own? The most advanced one is called "Awakening", and that's all I'm going to say about that!

The DJ

It takes a certain kind of skill to take stuff that others have created and re-use it in a new context that make the experience of listening or participating a totally fresh one. It is about taking a long good look at what is, and seeing what, with a couple of twists and turns, could be. In a transmedia setting the DJ is the person (or persons) drafted in to shake things up, give a new twist to things and make a project all that much better. Just as the best DJ:s play to crowds of thousands, if not tens of thousands, so the best transmedia DJ:s can captivate huge audiences with the result of their craft.

A great DJ team that comes immediately to mind is [Starlight Runner Entertainment](#);

crafting brilliant immersive stuff from a combination of original IP, creativity and skill.

The rock band

They might go for all-out full frontal heavy metal, or they might be the next boyband out of the wheelings and dealings of the music industry, or anything in between. What they are is a rock band. They're great at what they are doing, in their own niche. And they need no more instruments or bling than what they already have. Many are open to experimenting with new setups and new influences, but at their core they know what they are; a rock band. In a transmedia setting, these are the players that work in mid-sized teams, each with their own speciality – be it ARGs or online video or social media strategies or something else. They happily collaborate if needed or if it makes sense, but they are pretty solid in and of themselves. Just as with rock bands though, one project that's below par and their relevance will start to drop. And just as with rock bands, for every successful one, there are a dozen waiting to make that big break.

These are legio, but a couple of examples could be [4th Wall Studios](#) with their Rides-engine or perhaps [The Company P](#) with their often quite huge ARG-like settings (Truth about Marika, Conspiracy For Good, The Spiral etc).

The acapella choir

These will very seldom reach the major limelight or create the biggest buzz or the largest-fonted headlines. But on their own, and if they're good, they're able to create beautiful harmonies that will enrich the lives of anyone touched by them. It might be they are able to make a living out of what they do – and some, a select few, a very good living – but a major part of their creativity stems from the love of the craft. In a transmedia setting, these are the projects that get crowdfunded, since they most often don't have the necessary funding in place, but the creators have more than enough clout as creators to pull in the funds through crowdfunding.

Again, these are legio, but [Clockwork Watch](#) comes to mind, as does [Balance of Powers](#), to name a couple.

I'm sure there are other analogies to draw as well, so do let me know what comes to mind. I find myself racing between these categories; not so much because of what I actually do, as of what company I do it in. So – where do you fit in?

COMMENTS

henmoos says:

Hey Simon – glad to find a semi soulmate on this! ;-D

You just pushed my red button with all that music analogy, since I, as a former professional musician and singer, have had this music analogy talk hundreds of times in various non music related industries and contexts. I am still trying to figure out why everybody else (but musicians) tend to use music metaphors for so many of life's experiences – and often, in my opinion, completely missing the point, since so many

nuances and down sides of these music industry dynamics are not considered! Sorry....

I'll start by supplementing your rant with a few more that I've encountered many times:

'Leadership is like directing a symphony orchestra' (Sorry - wouldn't want to work in that company, and I don't know many professional creatives outside the classical music circles that would! - too much management, not enough freedom).

'Creativity is like jazz - it's all about improvising on top of a learned skill set and expressing yourself by juggling and twisting thousands of elements in new ways' (Could be true on a lucky night - especially free jazz - but most of the time, many jazzmusicians are reproducing already developed solos, melodies, licks and forms - so basically just a lot of very small incremental innovations - and most of the time just barely qualifying to actually being innovative in any way).

'Creative collaboration is like a beautiful harmony - all of the different notes falls into place and has it function and none of them could be spared' (Maybe - I wouldn't know - all of my most rewarding and innovative collaboration experiences counted endless struggles, discussions and some times great conflict between team members in order to move forward in any interesting way).

I could go on, but no point, really. Still the tendency to put everything into music intrigues me and I know I'm the minority, since every one else seems to dig these metaphors. So let me use another metaphor to explain my point of view:

'Music is sometimes like an old hore that you end up with if nothing else works out for you metaphorically!'

Have a great day and keep sharing your thoughts - I'm a grateful reader;-D

Henriette

- [Simon Staffans](#) says:

Hi Henriette, and thanks for taking the time to write that comment! I wouldn't call myself professional musician in any way, shape or form, but I've been in music most of my life, be it DJ:ing, singing in choirs, messing around in bands or whatever. I absolutely agree with you re: the tendency to use music for metaphors. On the other hand, that's what metaphors are for, right? There are of course nuances and facets and what have you that are definitely not covered by metaphorical comparisons. I doubt, however, that anyone would want to read that 12.000+ word post 😊

And the jazz metaphor you mentioned above explains many a creative process I've been involved in in media-land (especially the TV industry), far better than I could've done myself! To paraphrase: "...most of the time, many content developers are reproducing already developed ideas, game mechanics, scripts and characters - so basically just a lot of very small incremental innovations - and most of the time just barely qualifying to actually being innovative in any way"

Yup, sounds about right 😊 ... the innovation then lies more in seeing new ways to utilize these things, ways that give them a better chance of reaching the audience and affecting them in some way.
Thanks again, glad you like the blog!

[whydontgetgirls](#) says:

Hi Simon,

Thanks for this.

My young adult story Kiss Kill, published by Australia's first Digital Only Publisher, Really Blue Books (CEO Sarah Bailey), is definitely at the singer-songwriter level, with a small acapella choir supporting it – YouTube made by young actors (Australian Theatre for Young People, Adam Marks) and young director (Danny Lim of Crane Films), 2 different itunes from some singers (Phil Bowley, Adam Fitzgerald) all of whom volunteered their time/skills/efforts because of their belief in the project.

They have enriched the project tremendously.

And thanks to the character Mat, from <http://www.whydontgetgirls.com/>

- [Simon Staffans](#) says:

Yeah, I've kept tabs on Kiss Kill. Good project. Thanks for stopping by, and glad you liked the post.

Word of mouth – an essential ingredient

[05/04/2013](#)

An essential issue for transmedia projects is word-of-mouth. It is of course essential for any other project as well, but especially for transmedia projects as their eventual **success is often quite dependent on audience engagement and interaction**. With regards to this, there are few things as effective as word-of-mouth marketing to foster audience engagement.

To quote [Mike Arauz](#) – “I tell my friends about your brand, not because I like your brand but because I like my friends.” This is where you want your transmedia project to fit in. It should be something **so good that people feel they are doing their friends a service by sharing it with them**. This again all goes back to the content, the story and the execution.

My wife has returned to university to study digital media, marketing etc. This has led to me reading and discussing issues important for my work as well over dinner or breakfast. [One study I stumbled upon](#) was quite interesting. It’s a study about word-of-mouth marketing from last year from Search Engine Land and the article is by Corey Eridon.

One interesting note, for instance, is the type of businesses that are likely to be recommended through word of mouth. It turned out cafés and restaurants are more than doubly certain to be word-of-mouth:ed than for instance car hire firms or wedding shops. Why? Simply because they get visited a lot more frequently. What to take from this as a producer? **NEVER GO DARK**. Always have something new or semi-new available for your audience to experience and share onwards.

The three highest scoring variables when looking at why people would recommend a business were “friendly & welcoming”, “reliable & professional” and “cheap at the price.” Granted, this is for companies and brands, and not media content and media projects. What I as a producer can take from this is **the need to do proper UX research**. I must not confuse the user. I must not alienate the audience. I must not charge for something that everyone assumes will be for free.

Lastly, adding an incentive for the user to share your project onwards will increase the likelihood they will do so. While “asking them to share onwards” had only a 16% impact on word of mouth activity, **a whopping 75% stated yes or maybe to promoting a business if there was a personal incentive**. What I’m taking from this is a leaf out of the crowdfunding book – have one level where the first 100 or 500 or 10000 to recommend your project will receive something. An exclusive download, a badge, perhaps even something physical.

There are, of course, a great number of articles and studies on word-of-mouth-marketing out there. I would strongly suggest any producer in the cross media, transmedia or interactive field would acquaint themselves with some of the studies

and the case studies. It can only help whatever project you find yourself working on.

COMMENTS

RhysMT says:

I completely agree Simon, I remember as a kid going to events and I'd be covered in stickers from companies, with bags full of free pens – and maybe even a branded balloon or two – I was a walking advertising board! As you say, it's the same thing in creating a buzz for a transmedia / multiplatform project – give people something for free and they'll more than likely become advertising boards for your content! Great post as always mate ;)

[Simon Staffans](#) says:

Thanks Rhys. Yeah, provide something meaningful for people – an incentive, that also preferably plays a part in your story – and you should see traction!

It's the new style – producing in a multiplatform and interactive world

[23/04/2013](#)

This spring is proving to be an interesting one, if you're a storyteller focusing on multiplatform storytelling, online storytelling, interactive storytelling or just about any kind of storytelling that expands on more traditional forms of the same.

I've already talked quite enough about "[Defiance](#)", for instance [here](#), but it will be extremely interesting to see how it all plays out over the course of a full season. The hype has been quite considerable, the game has gotten mixed reviews, the TV series seems well-liked and had pretty neat ratings for the premiere... Will it all keep up? I hope so; so far "Defiance" is proving to be a pretty great case to point to when I want to explain and talk about transmedia storytelling and the principles behind it.

Another great project is "[The Lizzie Bennet Diaries](#)", which just got close to half a million US\$ through [their Kickstarter campaign](#). Goes to show that a) **great stories – such as "Pride and Prejudice", which LBD is based on – never go out of style**, that b) for-online content can be as compelling and professionally produced as any fiction series on TV, developers and producers just need to be aware of the style, possibilities and limitations of the medium, that c) crowdfunding is a viable way forward, as the campaign money will also help pay for the next production, "[Welcome to Sanditon](#)" and finally d) **planning for interaction, collaboration and interactivity heightens the experience for the audience – if integrated into the concept from the beginning and executed according to plan.**

Myself, I've been partly developing TV shows – how they all play out, I'll be sure to inform here as soon as we hear back from our distributors – and immersing myself in "[The Energy Ambassador](#)". TEA is **a project fusing more than ten global companies from the energy industry to a major storytelling and marketing venture that launched a little over a week ago.** My role is that of the storyteller, and I can't help but rejoice at the chance of getting to use transmedia storytelling techniques for something so "real" as the need for sustainable renewable energy solutions globally – and finding that the techniques work a treat. It's basically using what I've practiced doing for decades in a new setting. Exciting!

All in all, it seems like we've turned some kind of corner with regards to telling stories over different kind of media. What we have now is not a Utopia, which was what some envisioned some years back as the term "transmedia storytelling" started to take root. We are not living in a world where stories are automatically better than before, where storytellers are naturally using multiple platforms in unique ways compared to before or where commissioners and buyers are eager to pay more for multiplatform content.

What we have instead is a world where practitioners and audiences are finding each other in a more natural, logically connected and, yes, human way. **It's a world where the word "transmedia" will soon be redundant, as everything produced will be as transmedia as it needs to be, as a natural part of the essence of the product.** It's a

world where the user experience is starting to take precedent, and it's a world where new financial possibilities will allow more content to flourish in new ways.

All in all, it's a pretty neat world, for a storyteller. And I have a feeling it will only get better.

Talking transmedia

[10/05/2013](#)

Transmedia. It's like that word that you know should fit perfectly to describe what you're trying to convey, and you know what letter it starts with, but there's just no way that you can remember it right now. So you let it slide, confident that *"it'll come back to you"* at some point. Right now, it's come back to at least parts of the transmedia community.

This past week, Andrea Phillips has [argued that a taxonomy of transmedia forms would be necessary](#). Instead of transmedia – which still could be valuable as an umbrella term – we should talk about Web Series++, Expanded Documentaries or Franchise Storyworlds and so on. In this way, we can more precisely talk about what we actually want to talk about, get funding for what we want to get funding for and produce what we want to produce, without any misunderstandings or valuable time spent discussing terminology.

Brooke Thompson, on the other hand, [sees a term that has done what it came to do](#). It has given a set of people something to rally around, when there was a need for something to rally around. We've "broadened our horizons and narrowed our focus". She would rather see us talk straight about what we are doing – a web narrative with e-book elements and a web series spanning over a 6 months experience – than name it "a transmedia project". At the same time she acknowledges that there are meetups and companies and organizations and projects that have adapted the term as an integral part of themselves, which means it's not going away anytime soon.

I wrote [a post for MIPBlog earlier this week](#). Working a lot in the more-or-less traditional TV industry (yes, it's very much moving in the direction of multiplatform, second screen and social TV, but "transmedia" is still a term regarded with a certain amount of scepticism, since very few feel they have a firm grasp if its' meaning) I ended up writing the post in an effort to highlight some possibilities applying transmedia storytelling methods can bring to any TV production. The post [caused some arguments](#) in discussions on Facebook, chiefly about my final approach being non-journalistic and cherry-picking sentiments that supported my own train of thought. I've worked as a journalist for a number of years and know most things there is to know about getting different opinions in, letting them bash against each other and providing the audience with an objective analysis. Regarding this post, such an approach wasn't really an option, but then again I didn't view it as a journalistic piece of content but more something akin to an opinion piece. As I wrote in the discussion on Facebook:

I've been giving the issue a lot of thought lately. I believe we are heading into territories where the term "transmedia" increasingly will take on different meanings for different people. That's already a fact, as transmedia incorporates so many professions and fields of interest that the diversity amongst practitioners is greater than in any other media field I can think of. This means – as we have seen in this and other discussions – that transmedia will mean one thing to you and a slightly – or vastly – other thing to me.

I stand by my initial position, and why I started writing the article in the first place; that

transmedia is becoming redundant for a lot of people, especially those that have not been involved in creating transmedia projects. If you're only looking at it from the outside, but you're still embedded in the media industry and might FEEL you're looking at it from the inside, then you'll probably feel a great feeling of "meh", and an even greater feeling of "so what, everything is already multiplatform, right?". That's where I came from in the article at MIPBlog, as I came to the conclusion that even though the feeling might be that it is redundant, in practice this is not the case. I agree with Jeff that the art of creating what we, for lack of better terms, call transmedia content is one that requires certain skills and a certain mindset, and that art will not be furthered by declaring it redundant.

At the same time, if you look at it from the OUTSIDE, this might very well be the case. This is "outside" as in viewer, or funder, or user, or buyer, but also "outside" as in "working in media but not in a creative position directly working with transmedia". For such persons, I can absolutely believe that "transmedia" as a term feels like yesterday's news, and viewing it from this angle, I understand why there was a lot less talk about transmedia at MIPTV this year.

So, to conclude, that was what the article in the end turned out as. I wanted to put the PRACTICE of transmedia back on the table for an industry that – in their own minds – have "moved on" to pastures new.

What I've personally experienced though, as I've worked with everything from music artists to global companies to TV formats to personal branding over the past years, is that applying transmedia storytelling METHODS while developing, writing and producing content will help you no end when it comes to creating great content that will move seamlessly and logically over different media.

Jim Stewartson of 4th Wall Studios, finally, wrote [a post about transmedia from his point of view](#). His view is that we need to finally define transmedia as a term, since not doing so will impair everyone's chances of making a decent living from it. We must attract investment, we must go mainstream and we must create something that is recognizable and repeatable, in order to achieve scale and ultimately profits. While I agree with a lot of what he's saying, there are other things I disagree on. For instance, he dismisses the notion of blurring the lines between fiction and reality, whereas I in my work with corporate storytelling or the music industry have found this to be not only valuable but actually profitable – with regards to quality – as well.

So, differing opinions, as always when we talk transmedia. I have no doubt this discussion will be held a number of times in the future as well, and I will admit I've all but given up looking for the Holy Grail – the one project that will be the shining beacon that everyone in the media world can point to and say "THAT, my friends, THAT is a great transmedia project", and that can be shown to everyone else as well and instantly make them "get" transmedia.

Do I agree with the opinions I've related to above? Yes, I do, as I'm usually the kind of person who sees the world not in black and white but in a lot of shades of grey. If you want to make serious money from transmedia, as Jim Stewartson advocates, and you insist on "transmedia" being an integral part of that profit-bringing exercise, you will

have to define it thoroughly. Else no one will know what to pay you for!

Do I think transmedia has done what it came to do? Yes, I believe that as well. It has brought a loose-knitted community together, it has given food for many thoughts and it has resulted both in funding possibilities as well as a number of inspiring projects. Do we need the term now? In my line of work, not necessarily.

Do I think we would benefit from naming the different practices now existing under the transmedia umbrella in greater detail, as Andrea suggests? Absolutely, especially when it comes to pitching projects or talking to external possible partners, or other creators and producers in the transmedia community.

In conclusion, I think transmedia – as Brooke put it – will continue to exist as a term to gather a lot of projects under, much as it works today. For me, it will always be a term that puts my creative mind in a certain gear – a gear I won't need when developing a new quiz show for television, but a gear that can be useful in a lot of other projects. I unfortunately don't believe that there will arise a consensus for either Andrea's or Jim's suggestions; the definite definition of transmedia will not see the light as there are just too many different voices and minds already invested in the term on their own premises (and note that I haven't even touched on territorial differences yet, where European transmedia projects often are quite different from US transmedia projects, not to talk about projects from Asia or Africa).

I hope we would move in the direction of Andrea's suggestions, with clearly defined sub-categories that everyone can feel at home in. Somehow, though, it feels that you'd need a globally recognized authority to put such categories in place, and I don't think the UN is inclined to get involved in something as thorny as this.

Bottom line – transmedia storytelling and the application of transmedia storytelling methods is a wonderful practice that has helped me a lot professionally. I'll cling to it, as it often helps me create better content. I feel I'll be using it less and less though, especially since a lot of my work is geared towards the TV industry, sometimes in quite a traditional way. I'll still consider myself a proud member of the transmedia tribe though, and will hope for more discussions that take the community and the practice onwards.

PS. As some might've noticed, I've changed the title of the blog. It used to be "Transmedia Development". Now it's "Developing Media", as I feel that reflects my standpoint better. DS.

The Endangered Author – a species under threat, for good and for bad

[30/09/2013](#)

Keynote, X Media Lab 2013, Lausanne, Switzerland.

I've spent a significant part of my life in the media industry in radio. Dealing with the audience, what we learnt was that if the content we provided was good enough, and if we managed to give clear enough instructions that at the same time were enticing enough, the audience wanted to interact. It could've been just to comment, it could've been to add to the narrative in one way or another, but interact they would. And the better we'd planned for that interaction, the better the end result would eventually be heading in a desired direction.

This all still holds true, but nowadays it's so much more than that.

In 1968 already, Roland Barthes declared the "Death of the Author". His point being that there was a totally unnecessary focus on the author, a focus that only interfered with the text the audience should take part of. There was, according to Barthes, "no need to look at any of the attributes of an author when reading a text, since that only imposed limits on that text".

Today, we're looking at not so much the death of the author as at the possible extinction of the author. And it's all the fault of the audience!

But to be fair, this is something that perhaps not is new. Instead, it might be that the audience is going back to be what the audience was originally intended to be – an active part of any narrative, at times as important to the story as any of the characters.

In medieval times, the theater was a highly interactive affair. In Shakesporean theaters the audience very much interacted with everything that happened – they were cheering their favorite actors on while booing the ones they didn't like, sometimes they would even be throwing food at the people on stage. Instant feedback, I believe is the term we use nowadays.

Gradually though, the Authorship began to assert itself. The notion that one person – the creator – had a unique right to his or her work was probably not down to the writers themselves, but rather their publishers, wanting to make money out of owning copyright. They needed authors, so that the publishers could have credible claim that the ideas one person had thought up couldn't possibly have been thought up by anyone else.

By introducing the notion of "style", i.e. that it's not really the ideas that matter but *the way in which they are expressed*, lawyers were able to establish authors and thereby copyright – leading to what we've been brought up with all our lives, in literature, TV, movies, you name it.

There have of course been instances where the audience have remained interactive and engaged. The Japanese kabuki-theater is one example, where the audience shouts out to the actors, who in turn can step out of their roles to talk to the audience and even comment on the performances of other actors.

By and large though, the Author has reigned supreme.

But the world right now is a crazy place.

One minute I'm watching a video of someone riding a yak in Tibet, the next I'm discussing the virtues of Ben Affleck as Batman on a Reddit board. The same goes for everyone else on the Internet, wherever they come from. And with this active role when it comes to accessing content, there comes also a feeling of entitlement. "I CAN take this and do whatever I want with it, so why shouldn't I?"

As an example of what happens when you have something that people care about, let's take a look at some figures Zach James on AdWeek dug up this summer regarding fans, brands and YouTube content. What he found was that fans beat brands hands down when it comes to online content – look at make-up brand "Cover Girl" for example. They sport over 251 million views on their videos, but out of those, 249 million, or 99,2%, are views on videos made by fans of the brand! The same goes for a number of other brands – 92% of all Oreo's videos and 99% of all of Revlon's views are views of fan content. A company called "Swiffer" made some short commercials about their main product, a mop. If you look at one of their 30 second spots, it's probably not the greatest 30 second spot of your lives, but the community started doing their own spoofs of the Swiffer Dance. YouTube have quite a view of them.

Again, perhaps not the most artistic in the world, but as AdWeek reports, 225,000 people viewed the original videos by the brand. More than 10 million people viewed the different fan created videos. I.e. it makes sense to create content that people care about, in one way or another, but for Swiffer it would have made even more sense to plan for how to harness that affection in the long run.

In order to cut through this clutter of content and information, we need to make our content stand out. This can be done in different ways. We can throw heaps of money at the problem and thus raise awareness, but the quality of the content still needs to stand up to scrutiny in the long run. And if we make good enough content – engaging enough, exciting enough, immersive enough – the audience will take it, they will chew it over and they will hand you back something you could not have imagined in your wildest dreams. Again, it makes a lot more sense to plan for this interaction, to give the audience a reason and a direction to create and interact, and the necessary tools to do so.

One of the best examples I've seen during the past years comes from a tourist board in Australia. You might remember it – the best job in the world. Search for it on YouTube and you should have no problem finding a case study or two.

Looking at that campaign it feels pretty clear – if we can create our own content – be it drama, documentaries, entertainment formats, e-books, recruitment campaigns, whatever – with as compelling reasons to interact as possible, as clear instructions and as well planned and executed ways of following up that interaction as possible, we will

see a positive end result.

Thanks to Carrie from Toronto I stumbled upon a great talk with Orson Welles from the late seventies, from the Dinah Shore Show. In the short clip he talks, among other things, about the endangered audience, not the endangered author, but his description of the audience is still pretty much spot on. It's up on YouTube as well.

So, in a world where the Author no longer can count on his or her sovereign rule over content, here are three tips for tackling that many-headed beast, the audience:

Plan for research

You will need to know a lot more about your audience than before. This means not only who they are and what they like, but on deeper levels such as their needs and wants and on more superficial levels such as language and mannerisms. And you need to know where they are – not only physically, but virtually as well. Is Snapchat or Pinterest the only places where you can reach your target audience? Then you'd better get studying those apps pretty quickly!

Plan for pitfalls

Never has the saying "fail fast and fail often and fail forward" been as true as when dealing with an interactive audience. Be prepared to hit a brick wall on what might feel as a way too regular basis. Shrug it off, draw conclusions and go at it again.

Plan for success

If you've done great content, you will see success. And it can rapidly become an overwhelming success as well, stretching your resources to their limits. Trying to play catch-up with an eager, engaged audience is not a good place to be in; decisions become hasty, mistakes become legion. Even if you don't have the funds to actually create everything you'd need to keep the fire of your content burning in the long run, at least plan for it, what it should be and why!

Finally, I must say that these are glorious times to be a storyteller. Storytelling is in demand on all levels, while the possibilities to reach a global audience in weeks, if not days, is on a level previously unheard of. In conclusion – what we are seeing is what I would say is a form of Darwinism taking place, where authors who can adapt to a new – or, as it were, old – world, and old ways of storytelling will be in a much better position to have their ideas and stories procreate and populate the world.

On Transmedia

[12/11/2013](#)

Last week I participated (for a brief while, due to not-very-compatible time zones) in a Transmedia Coalition Think Tank hosted by some very capable people in the field. The purpose of the Think Tank was *"to have a frank but constructive dialog about the term 'transmedia.'"* When I had to drop off, we've only just gotten past the introductions and touched on some definitions, but I had already found myself forced to re-examine my relation with "transmedia". I will admit, it has changed over the past months.

Transmedia has never been the easiest of terms to throw around. It's a concept trying to embrace so many different genres and so many different practices, it's almost guaranteed to give rise to disagreements. This is not least apparent as almost every industry field that is supposed to churn out some form of content – from marketing to dance companies and everyone in between – are proclaiming their intent to create transmedia experiences from now on.

There's nothing wrong with that, of course. I'm one of those people in one of those fields of industry who is churning out some of that content. And I'm definitely striving for transmedia experiences. And that's the crux. I'm definitely working within transmedia (or at least according to my own definition of the term) and utilizing transmedia methods when developing and producing. I just don't use the term all that much, as of late.

As I pointed out during the Think Tank – if I talk to TV acquisition executives and pitch some of our shows, I will have used transmedia storytelling methods to create the flow of content over different media, to make sure all the different parts are rooted in the same world and make sense, logically, to the viewer, and to come up with immersive and enticing ways for the audience to interact and engage and thereby gain a fuller experience of the content. But to the acquisition executive, I won't mention "transmedia"; I'll probably talk about "second screen integration" or whatever else is the buzzword du jour at the latest MIP and reflects my content the best.

If I talk to a company regarding an assignment in the field of corporate storytelling, I will have utilized transmedia methods to ensure that I've used all necessary media platforms to their fullest, within the limits of what's comfortable for the company, to let different fragments of stories build on each other to make sense and tell the intended stories and to lay the groundwork for future campaigns for the same company or brand. But I will probably not talk about transmedia when I do it, but rather discuss our "social media strategies" and so on.

Talking about "transmedia" in cases such as these increases the risk of misunderstanding or simply non-understanding. And such feelings seldom beget commissioning.

In brief – or tl:dr – I still love transmedia. I love the practice, I love the promises it holds,

I love the way it hones my creative work. But I talk less about it.

Edit: There is one more thing I gladly use the term “transmedia” for. That is to connect to the growing number of brilliant people around the globe that working within the term has allowed me to get in touch with. Simple as that.

COMMENTS:

[Lisa W England](#) says:

The challenge I always face is when different media are contained in one site. For a long time, I thought some of my projects weren’t transmedia because they all “lived” in one place. But the participants each marshaled multiple kinds of media to tell their part of the story, and aggregated it in one place online. What are your thoughts on that? Or is more just about adapting to whatever term your audience will understand?

[Simon Staffans](#) says:

If I understand correctly, you have – for instance – one website, where the story unfolds. The characters use audio, text and video on the site to tell their different parts of the story?

I’ve seen the same approach being proudly talked about as “transmedia”. I’ve also seen similar approaches being dismissed as “definitely not transmedia”. For me and my own definition, I use the word “media” in the “media platform” sense. I.e., I’d like to use more than one platform to tell the story or stories, for me to call it “transmedia”.

Adapting my choice of words when pitching for commissioning does not diminish the “transmedia-ness” of the project. I will say, I’m looking forward to the day when everything by default is as transmedia as it has to be, in order to offer the best possible experience to the audience. Guess we’ll have to find some new term to define then 😊

[Lisa W England](#) says:

You’re partially correct about the project. Yes — the final product did use audio, text and video. But Google Hangout, Google docs, Glossi.com, and other outside sites were used to craft

those products. I guess if it’s a matter of delivery — versus production — then it would not be transmedia by most people’s definitions. Although, parts of the story did live in other places.

But on that note, people also commented frequently that if parts of the story actually lived on other sites entirely, it would just get confusing. Which is also a complaint I’ve heard from

audiences of other more “authentically” transmedia projects: the question of how to consume scattered content in an organized, meaningful fashion.

[Lisa W England](#) says:

PS — I get asked to speak a lot on transmedia because of my project. In those instances, I think the person is equating the term “Transmedia” with digital storytelling in general. Or as an umbrella term for “interactive cloud-based storytelling.” They don’t generally mean transmedia in the strict textbook sense. (As if there was even a standard definition across textbooks!) 😊

Interview - Christy Dena

Christy is a writer-designer-director of playful stories about robots, death and spies, with the web, apps and installations. Follow her on [@christydena](#).

Last year you were looking forward to “Authentic in All Caps” - did the year go according to plan?

The year didn't go according to plan! But I definitely worked on AUTHENTIC IN ALL CAPS...and finished it! It took longer than I expect to complete everything (of course), but I kept at it and got it done. I'm very happy to have it released now, along with the “Creator's Log” (making of book) and soundtrack (<http://www.authenticinallcaps.com>).

You received Australia's first Digital Writing Residency at The Cube, care to tell us a bit about “The Robot University”?

Yes! This was a wonderful surprise. I was awarded a grant from the Australian Literature Board and QUT to create the project I pitched for the venue. It is a unique space we are working with: 12 multi-touch screens and a long projector space on top, surround sound, and virtually unlimited computing power behind it. We also had Kinects installed so we could do gesture interactions too. It is a science and technology center with installations for the general public. My project is about robot rights, aiming to facilitate discussions about robot rights. I have been sharing some for the journey on the development blog (<http://www.robotuniproject.com>).

As you've attended a fair number of conferences, meetups etc – from your point of view, how is multiplatform storytelling and/or transmedia evolving? What are the new forces to be taken into consideration, if any?

I see new people coming into the area and taking on the role of educator and evangelist. I see a variety in the nature of projects being undertaken by those who worked in transmedia. Those projects are heavily influenced by the early days of transmedia, but are transforming by a few adjustments such as replayability, pay-to-play, click-to-play, and so on. I do see attempts to alter the dominant financial models of the past (brand commission and marketing budgets), to funding, crowdfunding, licensing, pay-to-play and so on.

You said, in the last wrap-up, that you hoped for less debate and more action, how did that work out?

Haha! There will always be some people who want to debate. I was interested in these discussions when I started in the area. But burned myself out with my PhD. There is hardly a question I didn't consider and research then, so I haven't felt the need to be involved with the debates. I think when we (some of us) say “less talk more action” we're talking to each other. In other words: I would much rather experience your creative work than debate with you. I personally went crazy working on many creative projects and have had a ball. I did have a moment of epiphany though about the nature of transmedia, and wrote an article about what may be happening (<http://www.yousuckattransmedia.com/you-suck-at-seeing-transmedia-change/>). What I'm hoping is that it has got to the point where no hands are needed: transmedia happens

without us.

What about 2014 - what are you looking forward to the most?

For me? I have another three creative projects lined up to launch next year - some my own and some working on other peoples' projects. I'm looking forward to running some very fun education events for peers: an "Interactive Narrative Writers' Room" here in Australia and "Forward/Story" in NYC (<http://www.forwardslashstory.com/>). I'm looking forward to travelling overseas again too. I have put off a lot of travel this past year and so I'm looking forward to catching up with wonderful colleagues.

Interview - Jeff Gomez

Jeff Gomez is the CEO of Starlightrunner Entertainment and a true global evangelist of transmedia. Follow him on Twitter on [@Jeff Gomez](#).

This past summer was tough on Hollywood blockbusters, and we know that big movie studios are major clients of Starlight Runner's transmedia development work. How have you fared?

Well, the good news from the Starlight Runner standpoint is that we are brought onto these big movie projects much earlier in the development process these days, sometimes even at script phase. So the work we've been doing over the past year has been on films coming out next year or the year after. We didn't have a horse in the summer 2013 race. Next year is a different story, as we've been working on Sony's *Amazing Spider-Man* franchise. The studio is truly taking story world expansion to heart, and their plans, some of which they recently announced, are quite exciting.

What do you think is happening? Why aren't more of these huge movies becoming runaway blockbusters? Does a lack of good transmedia have anything to do with it?

I've spoken with several of the movie industry's top producers this fall, and they're all telling me the same thing: something is broken in the script development process. It seems that if there's any belt-tightening happening at the studios, the first thing to go is development money. After all, that ought to be the job of third party producers, right? Well, not so right.

Years ago, script was king, and studio execs were far more cognizant (and in control of) truly good writing. Now there are enormous corporate pressures to get movies out on highly targeted dates. Everything is jammed in favor of getting to that shoot. Today's favored director is going to concentrate on the visuals. Today's favored actor is going to futz with the script to favor himself. Even if the script was really good in the first place, it's been banged up into the loosely structured and sometimes soulless thrill rides we're getting. They're fun, but they don't capture our hearts. They don't make us yearn to return to their worlds.

As for a lack of good transmedia, let's take a look at the various films targeted at the young adult market this past year. The one thing Summit Entertainment and Lionsgate did with *Hunger Games* that none of the other studios did with their adaptations was that they didn't rely on the book's core readership to drive box office. Instead they used provocative, immersive, engaging, gender-neutral transmedia to reveal the world to a mass audience across multiple touchpoints months and months before the picture's release. Instead of kissy-kissy he's so dreamy, they played up the nobility, prowess and determination of Katniss Everdeen, making her awesome not just to girls but to anyone. Did any other studio do this for their YA effort? Not so much, and it showed in their first weekend box office—before anyone had a chance to tell their friends whether the movie sucked—which proves my point.

The producers of *Pacific Rim* need not have given away a single plot point of the movie in order to electrify potential fans by establishing the details and emotional depths of the movie's backstory in other media. I think doing so starting a year or more before the release would have contributed to building the *Pacific Rim* brand. Good transmedia would have put early Jaegers and Kaiju into our hands, allowing us to tell our own stories, firing our imaginations about the mysteries of the movie itself. As it stands, some of the audience didn't go see the picture, because they mistook it for kiddy Power Ranger fare.

Those of us who did go see *Pacific Rim*, we got the tail end of a super-cool story, but would love to have engaged with its beginning. After being immersed in this sophisticated war story, and gotten hip to the clever social commentary of the property, we would have become apostles, promoting *PacRim* through social media, turning our friends onto something cool that was unfolding and leading somewhere.

As J.J. Abrams recently admitted about the handling of disclosure around *Star Trek Into Darkness*, absolute secrecy is a bit overrated.

You've been everywhere in 2013. What news from the world of multiplatform and transmedia?

I hadn't meant to do a lot of traveling this year, but the international demand for information about transmedia technique was too hard to resist. Attendance at my classes was in the dozens, sometimes in the hundreds and once there were over 1000 people in the audience! I taught in Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, New Zealand, Australia, Greece, Italy, Switzerland, and Malta; Canada a few times. I found curiosity, and when they made the connections as I spoke, I found passion.

More countries are setting up or refining media funds to account for from-scratch multiplatform or transmedia productions. On the big media front, Globo television network in Brazil and both Univision and Televisa in Brazil have initiated transmedia endeavors for their telenovelas and for the integration of brands and storytelling. I sat down with some of the top execs at Australia's ABC network and fielded dozens of questions about new platform-extension models under consideration for their properties.

I got to tour Weta Workshop, the practical effects and production house co-owned by Peter Jackson in New Zealand. These guys are as uber-geeky as you could possibly hope, and they're firm believers in the efficacy of transmedia, particularly on the production end. Like me, they are advocates of integrated planning and production, meaning that huge swathes of time and money can be saved by producing the ancillary content in tandem with your movie or television show production, and working out methods for multiple divisions, licensees and other stakeholders to share and mutually benefit from the digital assets of the story world. We've seen this to a degree with the *Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* films. I'm hoping it becomes even more evident with the new *Avatar* movies, and that this eventually becomes common practice in Hollywood.

Your work in Colombia shows a more serious side of the craft. Do you believe

transmedia is maturing, finally?

It is maturing, but more slowly than I'd like. Sadly, most of our new client negotiations are taking just as long or longer than they used to. I mean, we're talking twelve and eighteen months in a few cases. Some of this is because our scopes of work are expanding, but mostly it's because we are educating business development executives and attorneys who still don't have a clue about transmedia production or multi-divisional deals or multi-platform equity partnerships.

I guess part of this is the frustration that comes along with introducing new concepts and models to risk-averse parties. If we'd stayed in movies or video games, it might have gotten easier for us over time. But that's not our style, so we have to take the bad with the good, especially because the good is awesome. That's where projects like what we hope to do in Colombia come into play.

There are people in the world, men and women who hold positions of power, that have come to understand that education, open channels of communication, and deep media capability can only benefit their societies. My company is drawn to those people, and to our amazement, they are starting to come to us. That's what's happening in Colombia, and it happened in Mexico and Italy.

I wish I could talk in more depth about these projects, but they're either active right now or are about to begin. All I can say is that they all have population activation in common, and that transmedia techniques are being used to educate and empower people, promoting self-expression, peace, tenacity and resilience in the face of corruption and extremism. It is the most remarkable work of my life, and Caitlin Burns and our team here at Starlight Runner cannot be more honored to be a part of it.

You were looking forward to a great many things for 2013 — credit where credit is due, the derivation of brand essence for the purpose of transmedia spreadability and so on. Looking back, how has the year been?

Again, the boat is moving a bit more slowly than I'd like, but a lot of good things have happened. Transmedia Producer and Transmedia Consultant credits have been given to a number of U.S. and Canadian productions, everything from *Transformers: Dark of the Moon*, to *Betty Page Reveals All*, to *Hero Dogs of 9/11*. The Tribeca Film Festival created a transmedia category in 2013, and the most transmedia entry "Sandy Stories" won the prize.

The Marvel Cinematic Universe is engaging in transmedia on a cosmic level, integrating movies, network TV, and now streaming with this amazing Netflix deal, all of which serves not just to sell, but to expand their story world. Next I'd love for Marvel to improve its interactive and fan participative offerings. There aren't enough ways for fans to express themselves to the storytellers or tell stories of their own around the MCU.

I love it that Ignition broke the transmedia wall at 20th Century Fox a second time (after *Prometheus*) and did that fun "Bent Bullet" campaign for the new *X-Men* movie. Campfire's work on Chrysler Infiniti "Deja View" was awesome. "Body/Mind/Change,"

the David Cronenberg project done by Lance Weiler was creepy cool. The *Almost Human* transmedia has been in some ways more compelling than the actual show so far! Special note: it turns out J.C. Hutchins was a writer on all of these projects. Keep an eye on him! Christy Dena's AUTHENTIC IN ALL CAPS got under way this year and has been fascinating. These are robust productions of all shapes and sizes, and I've barely scratched the surface.

Finally, Starlight Runner scored two major firsts in 2013. The deal we made with Factory Made Ventures and AAA Lucha Libre is unprecedented, because we're helping to redevelop a fully realized heroic universe (premiering on the El Rey cable network in 2014), and will be credited as Transmedia Producers franchise-wide. The deal offers us cash, equity and back-end royalties for our creative work. From a business standpoint it's everything we could have dreamed. It's also a model that other transmedia practitioners will be able to emulate.

Secondly, on the corporate and brand essence front, Starlight Runner formed a strategic alliance this year with Raptor, a large financial venture company. It's another type of deal that has never been done before. We're providing brand essence analysis, corporate and brand narrative work, and transmedia services to some of the start-ups and young firms under their umbrella. We're also exploring how we can collaborate with Raptor to generate new products born of our transmedia development process.

What do you anticipate for 2014?

Well, from small things bigger things come. I want to see book publishing announce more from-scratch transmedia partnerships with their authors. And I don't mean in-house constructs that compensate authors as freelancers, though that's fine. I'm an *Infinity Ring* fan. I really want to see far-reaching equity partnerships, where authors, transmedia producers and publishers work in tandem to launch story worlds, and significant investments are made into innovative transmedia. I think that's coming, and Starlight Runner is working hard on those front lines.

Also, smart creators and producers are coming to understand that you don't have to risk or give away the farm by taking a new intellectual property straight into big movie or video game production. More than ever before, pervasive media makes it possible to strike partnerships and build brands modestly. When you generate a book, an app, a comic, you are adding "points" to the viability of your property in big media. If those products do well and earn fan bases, more points! A script over the transom is ethereal; a small array of products that establish a connection with paying fans is far more valuable. I think we're going to see new models, which leverage transmedia techniques that make us stronger players and reward us with bigger slices of the pie.

Finally, I'm hoping to see the launch of an overt transmedia implementation for social good that impacts people or institutions at a national level in 2014. These projects are making a profound difference, and we're eager for more case studies to come to the fore, so that we all can learn from them and emulate them.

CHAPTER TWO - PRACTICE

It's all well and good to have theories about how to develop and produce stuff, but unless you actually DO them, those theories will never be put to the test. The one term I heard a lot this year was "Fail Fast Forward", as numerous speakers and practitioners encouraged producers to basically just do it and worry about the consequences later. There is a lot of truth to the term; there are so many possibilities right now that by insisting on making one thing and one thing only for years and years will lead any creative person to miss out on an untold number of possibilities, not only to produce other content but also to work on skill and self development.

I admire the persons that are able to knuckle down and do the one thing they want to do, exclusively, not worrying about any other aspect or possibility. I couldn't do it - there are just too many unexplored routes to take, too many challenges to face and learn from.

This chapter then is dedicated to the practice of transmedia and the practice of multi platform storytelling. Hands on or not, hopefully you'll get something out of the following pages.

Mobile, transmedia and timing

[05/06/2013](#)

Rob Pratten had a [brief but excellent post](#) up on Transmedia Coalition the other day, entitled "The 5Rs of Mobile in Transmedia Storytelling". To recapitalize briefly, the gist of the post were that – as inspiration and guidance when including mobile in a transmedia project – the "5 Rs" should be considered. These were, in order, Read, Reveal, Record, Receive and React, each highlighting a different use of a mobile device in the context of a transmedia project.

Rob also mentions other aspects that needs considering when thinking mobile – implementation, usability, motivation and so on. I want to add an aspect that I've read about with great interest a couple of weeks ago – timing.

One key factor of mobile usage is comfortability. A smart phone is easy to take with you, it's easy to fish out of a pocket and look at, it's an immediate connection to the world around you and beyond. A tablet, while nearly as convenient, still for instance requires the use of a bag of some sort to carry it along, and most often requires the use of both hands to scroll, write, navigate etc.

The Guardian and Financial Times [released some quite interesting figures](#) on how people access their content. Spikes at lunch breaks are to be expected, but the fact that their web sites was the prime point of access during day time, while their respective apps were in use during breakfast, commute and before bed time, is interesting. Another find – which should come as no surprise either – is that tablets are in use over the weekends, when longer texts, for instance those on entertainment news and arts are accessed.

How to approach this as a creator? Well, for instance, if you know the time zones your users live in, time your content accordingly. During the weekdays, release short-form content to keep the fire burning (or "Never Go Dark", one of my favorite phrases). During the weekends, release longer strands of narrative – be it video form, text form, graphic novel chapters or whatever. Take the narrative forward in leaps over the weekend, in steps during the week. And aim correctly – [a PEW study](#) shows that less than 30% of smartphone users read longer texts, whereas the figure is 80% for tablet users.

Even more interesting is to go into people's use of their mobile devices during the day. [A study from April](#) shows that 62% of 18-44 year olds check their mobile phones the first thing they do when they wake up in the morning. 79% check their phones within 15 minutes of waking up. Again, if you know the time zones these people live in; time new content so that personalized versions – short form, remember? – are the first things that the people encounter in the morning; getting their heads tuned in to your narrative from the very start of the new day.

All in all, there are a myriad ways to go wrong when designing, producing and distributing a transmedia project with mobile included as a major variable in the equation. On the other hand, there are many ways to go right as well. The upside is, if you get it right, chances are you'll have an engaged audience with immediate feedback

possibilities within the reach of the press of a "publish" button. That's pretty interesting indeed.

Transmedia – the Green House Effect

[23/07/2013](#)

Anyone who has read this blog knows that I'm a sucker for analogies. I find it easier to think better and more creative thoughts if I think outside the box... or if I decide the box actually does not exist to start with. This habit led to a train of thought, which led to a frantic Google search, which led to this post!

With that in mind – why would transmedia be like a green house? Eh? And even if that's the case, what good does it do us?

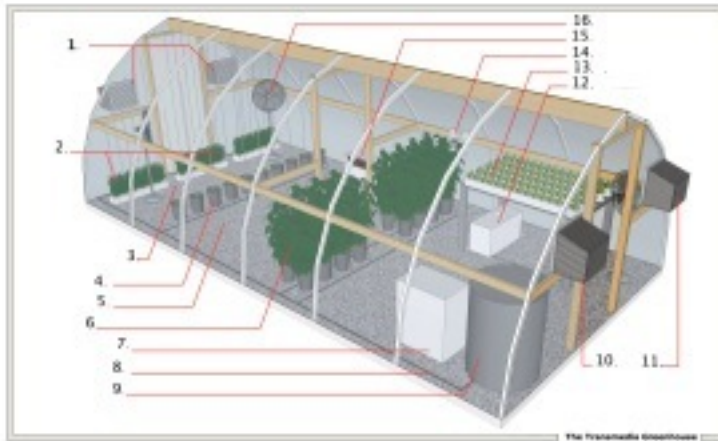
Below I'll do my best to show why I think transmedia and green houses have more in common than you'd think. But first, as to "what good does this do us?"... well, anything that can get a creative mind to see projects and obstacles in a new light is a much needed thing and should be included and supported as much as possible. In this case, keeping this picture of a green house in my mind, while battling the many obstacles a transmedia – or even just media – project entails is something I feel could help me to figure out new ways to tackle issues and challenges. Perhaps the same goes for someone else?

The green house effect

Now, a green house has a purpose. It is a structure built to house things that should be nurtured and grow. These are delicate things, that if left exposed for too long would probably wither and die. But in the setting of a green house, these things can be cared for, nurtured and supported, until they've become what they were intended to become all along.

A green house owner has a lot of different options. What are the things that should grow in the green house? What kind of green house would the owner go for in the first place? Is this a green house where the general public can apply to be let in, given tools and space and start growing something themselves? When it's time to harvest, does the owner sell all his or her crops to a major distributor, or is it a case of servicing the general public by, for a fee, allowing them in to harvest a set amount of crops themselves?

In my mind, the green house is the transmedia project, and more specifically the story world that everything bases itself in. It's the structure that gives the ramifications, it's the roof and the walls that protects the other different elements from harsh conditions and even harsher weather. And it's a lot of other things. Here's the Transmedia Green House!



The original blueprint was taken from <http://urbangardenmagazine.com/2010/04/how-to-feed-four-families-with-a-hydroponic-greenhouse/>

The following parts – as marked on the blueprint – can be considered essential:

1. + 10. + 11. = “*Ventilation units*”. Crucial parts that prevent stagnation. They let in new ideas, new funding possibilities, new practices, new partners etc.

2. “*Tomato plants*”. Essentially the third story element of a transmedia project. Can be an ARG, can be webisodes; whatever makes sense and fits the best.

3. “*Ropes to support vertical growth*”. A typical example of the need to provide the right tools and the right expertise to different parts of the transmedia project. Not everyone need ropes, but the ones that do will grow all the better with them.

4. “*Cucumber plants*”. This could represent the second story arch of a transmedia project. Perhaps a book?

5. “*Gravel flooring*”. This is the basis of the story world. It must be even, so things don’t fall over. It must be well packed, so things don’t sink into it. And it must be able to support more people and projects than originally intended, if it turns out to be more successful than anticipated.

6. “*Pepper plants*”. The first story arch within the story world. Perhaps a TV series or a movie?

7. “*Evaporative Cooler*”. For documentation, for story bibles, for consistency and most of all for keeping people sane when trying to keep track of all the different parts of the project. Chill!

8. “*Irrigation hose*”. Or as I like to call it – the “never-go-dark-hose”. Keep it flowing at all times to make sure all the different parts of the story world stay irrigated and thriving and growing and interesting.

9. “*Nutrient reservoir*”. The closed off holder for unused ideas. When developing, make habit of documenting EVERYTHING, and what you don’t use, put it in the reservoir. For

future brain storming sessions etc.

12. *"Nutrient reservoir"*. This one is different. It's the place where you store the tools for people visiting, tools that they can use to help grow stuff themselves.

13. *"Lettuce"*. The playground for the audience, or the "sandbox" or whatever term you feel like using. This is the place where the audience can get their hands dirty and create within the boundaries of the story world.

14. *"Outlets"*. Don't be afraid of new technologies. Stay abreast of innovations, also in the technical areas, and be prepared to include tech that makes sense in the context of your project.

15. *"Propane heater"*. Make sure you have contingency plans in place; if the story world or the stories don't take off as intended, turn on the heater. Approach niche interest groups. Hold sweepstakes. Try to grow something else, if one or more of the crops refuse to grow.

16. *"Oscillating fan"*. Make sure your story world never goes stale. Innovate, churn around, find new influences and new paths.

Interview - Andrea Phillips

Andrea is is a world-class and award-winning transmedia writer, game designer and author, specializing in creating interactive and highly engaging stories that span multiple platforms. Follow her on [@andrhia](#).

In 2013 you were active on many levels. Aside from client work you had the Kickstarter that led to "Lucy Smokeheart", you launched "Letting Myself Go" as well as the Cultures podcast... is there anything you haven't done this past year? How did you choose these projects?

Hah, it's funny that I looked busy to the outsider, because I didn't do a ton of my bread-and-butter paying client work this year! One notable exception is The Walk, an new iOS fitness game I wrote for this year, which just launched this week.

In a quiet year, the industrious turn to making it rain on their own. That's where Lucy Smokeheart came from – she's my fledgling progress toward making a revenue stream and an audience using only duct tape and my razor-sharp wits.

The Cultures, on the other hand, was something that Naomi Alderman, Adrian Hon and I had been joking about for years – we have a group Skype chat we hang out in, and The Cultures is the same sort of stuff we always talk about... just in front of an audience, because we thought it was all very interesting, and so we thought other people might find it interesting, too! Letting Myself Go, too, is something I've been meaning to do for a few years now, and only just found the time.

As a freelancer, do you find your position a clearer one to clients? I.e., do clients understand what you do as a transmedia producer better than before? How do you go about explaining what you do to someone you're approaching for a commission?

I'd say no – but that's because I've always been in a fairly luxurious position where nobody comes to me without already having a pretty solid grasp on what I can do for them. And I don't really do any pitching or pursuing commissions; if I'm making my own work, I prefer to do it under my own steam and on my own timeline... like Lucy.

I have a very skeptical view of the commissioning and investment processes at this point, and I feel like committing to organic growth from the resources you control to begin with is absolutely the best path.

What projects during 2013 would you have liked the most to work on? Why?

I am desperately jealous of the Lizzie Bennet Diaries and wish I could have made some small contribution to that project. It was just so beautifully conceived and executed, and I really love working with people who are committed to doing great work. If Bernie Su wanted to call me to help out with Emma Approved, I'd be there in a second!

I also wish I'd gone even further than just Lucy with my independent work. I have three or four really huge projects I want to get into production at this point! But it's scary to commit a huge chunk of time to making something and putting it out there. And Candy Crush is so much less scary... so it's easy to waste a lot of time without meaning to.

Finally - what are you looking forward to the most in 2014, professionally? Any particular fears and hopes?

I'm actually a bit worried that the lull in client work will continue - it's not clear yet if this is just the downswing of a recurring business cycle or the new normal.

But either way, I'm planning to double down on making and releasing my own stuff. More Lucy - I'm scheming a Lucy tie-in on another platform, details to come later. I'm drafting a full manuscript of Felicity, my YA transmedia project, too. And that's just the tip of the iceberg - I have so many plans right now, so many pots bubbling, that there just aren't enough hours in the day to do them all.

So I guess what I'm saying is, I wish I had a time machine so I could freeze the world for a couple of months! But until that happens, working my tail off will have to do. So that's what I'm hoping for in 2014.

Interview - Michael Monello

Michael is COO and partner at Campfire, which is responsible for some of the most intriguing campaigns of the past few years. Follow him on [@mikemonello](#).

How was 2013 at Campfire? What were the positive things and what were the challenges?

2013 was a year of refinement for Campfire, and it seems the industry in general. We set out to refine our approach and simplify the overall experience for people, while still immersing them in stories and experiences in unexpected ways.

The positives are that we continued to collaborate with forward thinking clients and produce work that we are proud of, and that we have stayed true to our roots while adapting to changes in the industry. The biggest challenge continues to be the economy, and the downward pressure on budgets.

You're at the hub of integrating brands of different kinds with multiplatform and transmedia storytelling; do you see that brands' approaches and attitudes have changed, and if so, how?

Yes, this year brought about big changes in brands' approaches. Most brands are comfortable with the idea of "content" but the industry is pushing a vision of "content newsrooms" where brands must spew "content" quickly and cheaply. This is a strategy that is mostly about gaming the social platforms, and they are going to find these newsrooms less and less successful as the social platforms tweak their algorithms to devalue low-quality content.

Too many brands still want the "viral" hit over long-term wins, but the brands we'll all be admiring next year are already executing on more sophisticated strategies, particularly in social, so it will be interesting to see where that goes.

Transmedia is still a word we don't use with clients!

You have decades of experience creating and producing; what do you reckon are the most important things for fledgling producers to look at mastering today?

Young producers MUST be curious about people, and they must become adept at producing experiences where stories emerge within the audience or participants, rather than creating media objects that tell stories.

Producers have to stay on top of the tech landscape and they have to be very creative about leveraging existing technology over wanting to build it all from scratch.

The most important skill for a producer, however, is the ability to identify great talent. If you can identify, recruit, and inspire great talent then you are 75% on the way to a successful project, the rest is numbers, money, and tenacity.

What shortcuts are there that weren't available back in the days?

I don't think there are any shortcuts, only different ways of doing. The only thing that makes you faster, better, and more efficient is experience, and there's no shortcut for that.

Finally, what are your hopes for 2014?

My hope for 2014 is that some indie creators have some significant financial successes. Winning awards and acclaim is fun, but I'd like to see some independent creators come along and scare the hell out of traditional media companies by having a huge success going straight to audiences.

What are you looking forward to especially, and what challenges do you see on the horizon?

I think 2014 will be a significant year for Campfire, and I'm bullish on the opportunities already on deck for us. The biggest challenge I see will be getting clients to recognize that paid media and earned media are not mutually exclusive and should not be treated as such.

Interview - Maya Zuckerman

Maya is a transmedia producer and emerging technology aficionado. She brings a wealth of experience from different media silos: visual effects, film, production, gaming, startups, product management and brand narratives. Follow her on [@maya_z00](#).

You co-founded Transmedia SF and have been running meetups and gatherings there for a couple of years already – how has the scene evolved?

We started in January 2012 and have just had our final event for 2013 - with our Jan-March 2014 events already in the works. From the beginning we decided to use “Transmedia” as a great word to start from but have really fostered the whole ecosystem of the convergence culture. We’ve seen a huge leap in connected toys, wearables and robotics in the past year, along with the emerging markets and awareness around big data and the internet of things. We know that this is only the beginning of new ways of engaging your audience and telling stories. We’ve seen the gaming world go through huge changes and seen how the word in SF really encompasses many disciplines.

How do you feel people view transmedia and multiplatform storytelling today? Is it totally different depending on what field you approach it from?

Yes - totally different - and that is ok. For marketing people its one approach, for connected toy people its another, and the gaming world sees it differently as well. We really use the term it to describe the ecosystem of story, technology, products and thus create a holistic approach to the business of entertainment. Thus, in our events, we bring together different disciplines, approaches and industries. In our last event of 2013 we had a panel of a UX designer, Robot creator and wearable tech CEO in one panel. Then we also had two startups: one platform for creating your storyworld in the cloud and another one for 3d touchless gestural interaction - we marveled at the potential of storytelling and connectivity all of these might have in the future.

Do you see the transmedia producer as being the hub of these kinds of collaboration projects?

I see the Transmedia Producer very much like what Gary Hayes called them: <http://www.personalizemedia.com/what-makes-the-perfect-transmedia-producer/>. So yes - the master collaborator, the grand general contractor that sees that a complex system of products and projects emerging from one storyworld works and is executed. But he/she also needs to have their hands in understanding, at least in a minimum level, all aspects of the project: narrative, video, tech, development, marketing.

SF is one of the major start-up and technological hubs in the known universe; from that point of view, do you see more acknowledgement for storytelling to accompany the tech? Or is it a given already?

Storytelling is really what differentiates a succesful company - and we see how corporations in SF are definitely queuing into good storytelling and giving focus to the audience and customer story more and more. But we do see a lot of startups that are

completely struggling with telling a good story for the product - and this where we know the storyteller can help a lot. There are a lot of jobs for good storyteller in Silicon Valley - if they focus on what the area has to offer - tech and tech-media industries.

What do you look forward to the most for 2014?

There has been a lot of exciting developments in the connected toys, robotics, AR and 3d printing that we have had personal connections to. We are excited to get to the point this year that the creatives can start interacting with these technologies and creating new and amazing storyworlds for us to play with.

CHAPTER THREE - BUSINESS

I like business. Not in the sense that I believe I would be able to sit back, take a look at the stock market and be able to make a fortune with the wink of an eye. No, I like what a business aspect brings to a project - a clear focus, a stability and hopefully some revenue.

I have greatly enjoyed many transmedia projects on the arty side of the field. For myself, I try to focus on projects that show financial sustainability; basically, I know that if I can show that a project of mine is financially sound, chances are that I get to make more of it or get interest in the next project. Now, financially sound doesn't necessarily mean €€ or \$\$ flowing in in a steady stream - it can also mean that other goals have been met, such as impact on social media, successful recruitment campaigns etc.

So, this is what this chapter is about. Not recruitment campaigns no, but different aspects of what business means for the content industry - either a juicy carrot or a big and thorny stick, depending on your viewpoint.

Thriving on piracy – a transmedia producer's best friend?

[27/02/2013](#)

I was quite amazed and fairly impressed by [the quotes from Game of Throne's director David Petrarca](#) at the Perth Writers' Festival regarding the effects piracy have had on the tv series. Game of Thrones is by far the most pirated show on Earth at the moment, but David shrugs it off, since **the show thrives on "cultural buzz"**.

I'm not looking to get into a debate with anyone about the good and the bad sides of piracy. Trying to be realistic though, I can't see piracy going away anytime soon. And **if it would actually go away, it would be the result of new regulation and laws so draconian we would all long for the days of old.**

Instead, why not look at piracy in a positive light? If there is a torrent up with the show or the film or the documentary you just made, and it has had 300.000 downloads – **that's 300k people who have made an ACTIVE choice** to take part of what you've made. Now, in my book, that should be worth a lot more than, say, the classic Nielsen's ratings, that basically measure whether eyeballs have been looking at a screen when your content has been on that same screen. As far as I'm concerned, **one download of your show should be worth five viewers**, if they're counted according to classic Nielsen.

For a transmedia producer this is potentially even more interesting. Not only can you directly see how many are REALLY interested in your content, you also know that they are on the end of a probably pretty fast online connection and that they are not averse to go get what they want on the Internet. **In a world where what we all as producers and creators strive for is loyalty, immersion and engagement – the people torrenting your content are absolutely potential collaborators, co-creators, evangelists and messengers.** It's all down to how you approach them!

Say, as an example, that you run a tv series and you know your next episode will be up on Pirate Bay or EZTV within a day. Why not edit a special cut and distribute it over The Pirate Bay? With an included Easter Egg or riddle that would lead the downloaders to some place where you can make use of their skills – perhaps in a co-creative environment, or for something that will turn out as viral marketing, or for something that will use their skills to – in the future – "trap" more possible collaborators.

"I wouldn't steal a car, but I'd download it if I could!" is a quote often heard in piracy-debates. From my point of view, it's more like **"I wouldn't want anyone to steal my content, but I'd happily give it away in exchange for other things I need!"**

Organizations and transmedia – it all makes sense

[19/03/2013](#)

I just read [a great post by James Carter](#) over on ArtsFWD, where he very correctly identified the benefits for arts organizations when it comes to using transmedia storytelling methods to find new ways to market their projects, interact with audiences and "never be dark" (i.e. constantly provide relevant output in different forms).

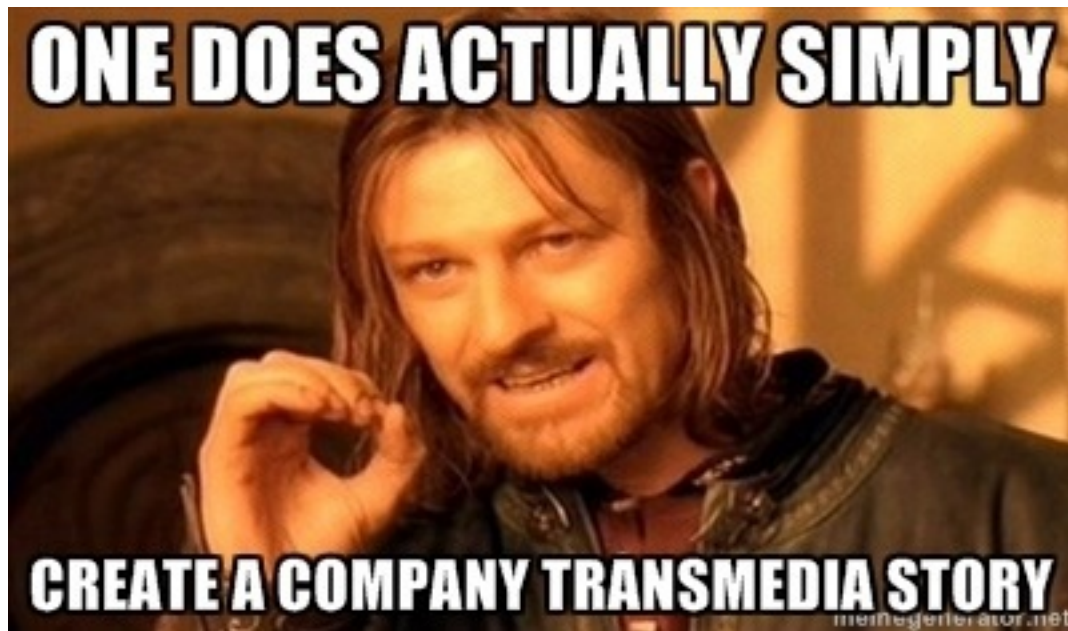
I've been fortunate to be able to work quite a bit with corporate storytelling over the past few months. Fortunate especially in the sense that I feel **this is an area that has a lot of potential**, and a lot of touchpoints with the real world, points that can be used and exploited in ways that make definitive sense for anyone taking part of them. I absolutely can testify to the benefits for anyone involved in telling the story of a company or a product to use transmedia storytelling methods when developing and writing these stories.

By building the story world as accurately as possible from the company's point of view **you will be able to represent them in the best possible way**. You will give voice to stories with aspects and facets that **resonate with the audience and "fit" the image of the company**. Often, these aspects and facets are variables that the companies themselves have not identified, or at least not identified as important enough to be included in the narrative.

By populating that world with the characters the company wants to represent it you give **a human and approachable angle to the company's presence**. As you are basing these on the world you've created, **the characters speak with the same voice, the same tone and feel, as the overall feeling of the company**. This keeps everything working in sync and supporting each other. This will also give you an array of characters (who, naturally, often are real persons working for the company) to **use in future narratives** the company wants to give voice to.

By incorporating into the narrative different products or services and tying them to the story world or characters in the story world, you will be able to **give them their natural place in the story of the company**. Thereby you will be able to take support from all of the narratives you've already given voice to to further the knowledge about any particular product or service. Everything keeps in sync, everything supports each other.

And, finally, when you have built all of this, **the choice of media platforms to use is up to you** (or the company in question, of course). But basing it all on a carefully crafted campaign, as outlined above, will give you **clear pointers as to which platforms would be most suitable** for the narratives you need to distribute.



Cheesy meme ahoy! No, really, it is actually quite simple. And the beautiful thing is that every little bit helps – a full-fledged transmedia campaign is of course preferable, but every thought you think and every word you write along the transmedia storytelling lines will help you tell better stories in the end.

Branded content – one way forward

[17/04/2013](#)

One of the areas I find extremely interesting when it comes to multiplatform and transmedia storytelling is that of branded entertainment (or not even necessarily "entertainment", but rather just "content").

At [MIPTV](#) last week [Ogilvy](#) hosted a session where they presented [the case study of "Love in the end"](#), a movie branded to Greek chocolate manufacturer Lacta. The idea of the project was that chocolate and sad love stories are perfectly matched. For the movie, Greeks were invited to submit their unfulfilled love stories, three of which were picked up for the movie and resolved in a fictional drama setting. The movie outperformed all other movies on the opening night – so **not only did Lacta and the production company get great advertisement, they also made some money out of it!**

This is the way the powerhouse [Red Bull](#) functions as well. I believe they are the only marketing division of a brand that regularly turns a profit. This simply by sponsoring crazy sport events, producing content – TV series – out of them and selling these series to broadcasters around the world.

Now, **the best branded content is where no one reacts to the brand, as the brand is a very natural and even essential part of the narrative.** If there is a TV series about a clock maker, no one will react to there being Casio watches present. If there is a film about an airline pilot, he will, naturally, be flying an airplane, which could be an MD-83, or a Dreamliner, or something else. These are crude examples, but you get my drift.

This is where transmedia storytelling methods enter the picture. Just like the newly-premiered series "Defiance" (which I talk a bit more about [here](#)) **every IP needs to be stripped down to the very basics**, so that the creators and developers can build the foundation, the story world, in a very solid way. Looking at this foundation, it is easier to see what brands – or types of brands – that can and should be approached, brands that will fit the context of the content and vice versa.

I'm not only talking about fiction/drama in this case either. The way I see it, documentaries, traditional advertisement as well as other entertainment genres not connected to television such as e-publishing have need of better integration of brands into stories. As can be seen with the Lacta-example above, such integration – brands connected naturally to a great story – can even bring revenue back to the creators and the brand.

I moderated a session at MIPCube last Wednesday entitled "Producers: Take Back Your Monetization Power". Jadis Tillery talked about harnessing social media strengths in production, working with celebrities for example. According to Jadis, the best way to go about working with a brand, from a producers point of view, is to look at the needs of a brand. **What are the needs, wants and goals of any given brand, based on their profile, history and target groups, and how can these fit into content in a natural way?**

On the other hand, she added, if you already do have brilliant content, it is quite possible to go the other way around. Analyze your content and reach out to brands that fit the tone, the feeling and the message your content conveys.

In this, I still believe there is place for indie storytellers telling alternative stories and more "anarchist" or "artistic" visions. **There will always be brands trying to reach niche audiences, and as long as the artists feel they can cooperate with such brands without compromising their integrity or the integrity of their content, it's a way forward.** In my book, there's nothing wrong with making money out of what you do. It'll only enhance your chances of getting to make more of what you do.

Interview - Robert Pratten

Robert is the creator of Conducttr, the multiplatform interactive storytelling tool, and CEO of Transmedia Storyteller Ltd, the technology and consulting company that provides Conducttr as a managed service. Follow him on [@robpratten](#).

You've come in touch with a lot of people more or less proficient in multiplatform and transmedia storytelling; how do you view the industry as of 2013? Is there even one or is it merging with other industries?

I don't think transmedia storytelling is an "industry" as such, at least not yet, – it's a technique applied to existing industries. Even if there are disagreements in some quarters about what transmedia storytelling actually is, there's certainly evidence of all industries trying to understand what it means to build interactive experiences around an audience rather than expecting the audience to come to them.

What are your hopes and wishes for 2014? What do you see as the greatest possibilities, as well as the greatest challenges?

2014 is going to be a great year for us. We've been working hard to really "industrialize" ARGs or should I say ARG-lites – to deliver technology for massively playable experiences that doesn't require anyone to be a member of MENSA to take part or to operate. We signed agreements at the end of 2013 to deliver Conducttr for several ground-breaking projects that will take transmedia storytelling to new heights and new audiences so that's very exciting.

The greatest challenge is trying to explain what an ARG is to someone that's never seen one!

The second biggest challenge is to get agencies to spend the lion's share of the budget on the experience and not on the advertising of the experience – too much is held back from production because they want to hedge their bets. What they need are bold clients who want to shift money from advertising and into customer relationship management which is where transmedia storytelling can be the most effective, I believe. There's a creative role for the agency in designing persistent social experiences but the chain of command keeps favouring quick wins above long term innovation so what keeps being regurgitated is another app – mobile or Facebook - that'll be popular one month and gone the next.

The same applies to TV industry. They need to completely give up the obsession with getting people to tune in at a certain time and design apps that reward loyalty wherever and whenever it occurs, not just at the live screening time. Then, recognizing that audience behaviours have changed and with engaging transmedia experiences that use storytelling and interactivity to attract big audiences, then discuss with the advertiser how best to insert them into the conversation. Not say this is our advertising model how do we break the audience to make them do what we want?

We're seeing more and more people and fields like marketing, publishing etc

move into multi platform and transmedia. What advice would you give a fledgling transmedia producer? What to do and what not to do?

To fledgling transmedia producers I would say get experience in the trenches. It's great to read all you can and study case studies but it's no substitute for actually doing something. And don't wait for a massive budget – do something with the resources you have. Small is beautiful when compared to doing nothing.

Transmedia storytelling is ultimately about user experiences and like filmmaking you have to see your movie or short film play to an audience to really make the connection between the creative and commercial decisions you made and how the audience is reacting in front of you. Just observing someone else's game or franchise isn't enough – very few film critics are also good directors so you need to make stuff, see the reaction and then reflect on what you learned.

Interview - Dorothea Martin

Dorothea Martin loves good stories, games, theater and literature. She co-founded transmedia project Das wilde Dutzend and transmedia marketing agency imaginary friends. Follow her on [@doromartin](#).

A lot of the transmedia and multi platform news we hear are from the UK and the US; at the same time, Germany is a thriving market as well. What news from your neck of the woods? What has been happening there in 2013?

Actually, a lot of people are into transmedia at the moment although and there are cool things going on over here! My favorite project in 2013 was „[Zeit der Helden](#)“, a TV-series by SWR and ARTE with a transmedia part developed by soma-labs. On 5 following days the story of a family was developed in two TV-slots each night. During daytime you had interactive parts on social media and their website. Very clever – and a good story, too. Gebrueder beetz tv production firm released an app for their documentary on the composer Richard Wagner. The [Wagnerwahn-App](#) is an animated graphic novel with interactive elements and with music and very well done. A native transmedia project was developed by crime and thriller author Andreas Winkelmann for publishing house Rowohlt. Each episode of the [Deathbook](#) series could be activated via a website and readers/players received phonecalls and letters – from the killer? From someone else? The author, who is also the main character in the ebooks, used facebook to find the killer. The first season is complete – but there is a strange Facebook message hinting on a new crime... It's really a great idea! Oh, and not really transmedia but really big, interactive and interesting for transmedians world-wide is the Story MOOC by a team here in Potsdam/Berlin: great content, a large international community already and the participants create a lot of knowledge and user-generated content.

Looking outside of Germany, what projects have impressed you the most under 2013? Which ones would you have wished to work on?

I liked „[The Spiral](#)“, the big european co-production that combined live-events, online-game and tv-series. Impressing me right now is [Fort McMoney](#), the interactive documentary game about a canadian boomtown Fort McMurray and the oil industry. I'm working on a lot of great projects at the moment – Wunderland Festival 2014, our next book and storyworld – so it would be great to find more partners for these projects; more looking-forward than „it would have been nice to“

Do you feel that the media industry on the whole is starting to “get” transmedia storytelling? Or is it industries other than media that you're focusing on? If they're NOT “getting” it, do you feel they ever will?

Frankly: I don't know. I'm working a lot for publishers now which is very interesting because of the switch to ebooks and the struggle to rebuild the companies from inside – new workflows, new structures, new people, new teams. Similar to the adaptation of transmedia. Often it's still used as marketing method instead of being integrated in the story. It changes slowly but projects like Death Book or Zeit der Helden are proof of the fascinating possibilities.

Finally - what are you looking forward to for 2014? Any special challenges or possibilities?

New technologies tend to attract budgets and funding – often storytelling is forgotten. So I hope, that this will get into balance in 2014. And audience behaviour is still neglected way too often. What's the use of state of the art technology-driven stories when no one is participating? I'm getting more and more interested in the possibilities for transmedia in the educational sector, so how can you use transmedia in learning and activating people. When I see projects like Upworthy or Fort Mc Money, I think what gets me is their meaningfulness. So more good stories with a proper cause (and this cause can l'art pour l'art, don't get me wrong), less money-burning super-budget buzzword-driven marketing...

CHAPTER FOUR - THE AUDIENCE

In everything we do, there's an audience to take into consideration. This has always been the case, but today the audience is so much more active than ever before. Not only that, they also - *gasp* - talk to each other, influence each other, give each other recommendations and warn each other of crap content.

This all means that we need to pay much more attention to the audience, even more than before. These prosumers - producers and consumers - can make or break whatever it is that we try to create. And as we ourselves well know from our experiences as audience members - we can smell dirty tricks and dishonest communication from miles away.

This chapter is dedicated to how to deal with this demanding, yet extremely fascinating variable of the content creation and distribution puzzle - the audience.

Spreading a story

[06/03/2013](#)

TL;DR – A brief scribble about reaching the audience, prompted by a talk from last week.

The other day I watched the talk that Starlight Runner's Caitlin Burns held at Emerge 2013 in Arizona last week. Speaking from experience, Caitlin talks about several important issues; the power of stories, the involvement of storytelling etc. One thing that stuck in my mind was the part about getting a story to spread.

I've been hanging out on Reddit more than I should be, but the website (branding itself as "the frontpage of the Internet") gives some valuable insights into how stories spread, what kind of core they need to have in order for there to be something to ignite, and how they keep from fading out as quickly as they come.

Caitlin quite rightly states in her talk that "your story must reach out to others", and that's what we're all striving for (I hope!) – creating stories that resonate with the intended target audience and encourages interaction, engagement and immersion.

Her "secret sauce" consists of four points – "Be Interesting", "Describe it in a way that provokes the imagination", "Give people something to talk about" and "Find ways to keep the conversation going", and it's hard not to agree with these, so I won't try.

But let's take a brief look at one example from Reddit, the case of the Mall Cop Hero. It all started [with a post on Reddit](#), pointing to a video where one guy, a mall cop in Atlanta, was running drug dealers off the premises of the mall he was guarding. Other videos emerged as it turned out the mall cop was filming his interactions himself, for future possible evidence in court etc.

The most shared one was of a woman getting tased by the Mall Cop after spitting on him and hitting him in front of her children, after having been warned to get off the premises for close to ten minutes. The video was widely commented on as one showing what's wrong with (parts of) the US today, with most people getting behind the Mall Cop's decision to use a Taser.

This story had all the ingredients needed; one man against many, good vs evil, in surroundings most are familiar with, either from personal experience or TV series. Plus, there were some obvious interaction routes to take. Who was this cop? Someone went there, met Darien the Mall Cop [and talked to him](#).

It didn't end there though. Noticing the abject state of Darien's equipment, Redditor RyuKenya quickly set up a donation site, which [quickly raised 18.000\\$](#) to be handed over directly to the Darien Long, the Mall Cop Hero.

What do we learn from this, apart from the fact that truth often trumps fiction? Well – Create something relevant for your target group. Give them something to discover along the way. Make it possible and easy for them to rally around your story, sharing it and

collaborating around it and comment on it. And finally, make it possible for them to influence the story in one way or another, through easily-made choices, in a way that makes them feel part of something bigger than themselves – a community, if only a temporary and fleeting one – you’ll have something viral and brilliant on your hands.

Audience participation – the changing role of the Author

[14/06/2013](#)

I'm really pleased to have had the opportunity this week to attend the [Torino Film Lab](#) and their Writer's Room workshop here in Vaasa, Finland. The workshop – focusing on two transmedia projects – bring together the two creators, three experts and three people representing the TFL itself, for some quite intensive workshopping around the two ideas. This week we – i.e. the company I work for, [MediaCity Finland](#) – act as hosts for the workshop.

Yesterday we held a [MindClub](#) (a quarterly conference and networking event for the media, marketing and IT industries in the region), this time featuring TFL and focusing on multiplatform storytelling and transmedia. It was thoroughly interesting and gave a lot of food for thought. One discussion that I was especially intrigued about was brought up by one of the attendants at the MindClub, Euan Scott, trade commissioner at the Canadian Embassy in Stockholm.

[Adam Sigel](#) had been talking about audience engagement in a multiplatform setting, exemplifying with [Hitchcock's campaign](#) around and before the release of "Psycho". Euan's point was that audience engagement is absolutely nothing new. In fact, in the middle ages, audience interaction was vital to any sort of theater performance. It was only with the birth of the Author that audience engagement became less and less wanted and needed.

This, to me, feels like where we are at right now. The TV and the movie industries (and why not the publishing industry as well) have been focused on the Author (or the Director) for decades, telling the stories in the fashion they have decided, to a more or less passive and consuming audience. But with the rise of the Internet, of smart phones, of gigabyte connections, of tools on the level of professionals in the hands of anyone, of direct connections to a global audience on the press of a button... with all of this has come change.

The Author is no longer in control. No matter if audience interaction and participation is planned for or not, if the content is great enough and make people relate to it enough, people will start to engage and co-create .

I've been looking into theater for a while, since so many [interesting things](#) are happening within that art form. In theatre, audience participation is in some cases a part of the experience (the [Japanese kabuki-theater](#) for example) and in other cases used to in a sense rebel against "traditional" theater. One conclusion that rings true for me, which was mentioned in the publication "[Meeting Theatre's Challenges](#)", is that "unlike film audiences, theatre audiences choose their focus".

This is very much true for the active and interactive audience we encounter and work with today. Over on Adweek yesterday, Zach James had [done some digging](#) on fans, brands and YouTube content, and found some astonishing figures. Fans beat brands

hands down when it comes to online content. Take make-up brand [Cover Girl](#) for example – out of 251 million YouTube views, 249 million come from fan-created videos. The same goes for a long list of brands, and just goes to show that if you have something people can relate to and be engaged by, the only way forward is to give them the tools to create good stuff and reasons to do so and to share their creations.

COMMENTS:

RhysMT says:

I completely agree with you about Theatre and the role of audience in that discipline. As someone who's come from the Theatre first, I've always been driven to create multi-focal points for the audience to discover whilst watching you on stage
In another interesting point, I was talking with a load of app experts the other day (think people with over 11 million downloads) – and they said practically the same thing – it's the audience that has the power in the digital world, not the author – only through finding out what they'd want would you then be able to create something that has a chance at being successful. So know your audience!!!

[Simon Staffans](#) says:

I definitely think media people could learn a lot from app and game makers (and the other way around as well, of course). The focal points you talk about can, in my mind, easily be compared to different narratives on different media. All need to fit together in the same narrative network, while still retaining their own individual value.

RhysMT says:

[14/06/2013 at 13:08 \(Edit\)](#)

I agree – as long as 1. The overall narrative is strong enough & 2. That when that narrative is played out on a different platform – there's a reason for it (and not just let's build an app / game / ebook and so on because we were told that's what we should do...) each platform has its own nuance, that can add another layer to the audience's experience / immersion (but only if used correctly!)

Audience engagement – three approaches

[20/10/2013](#)

A quick note on a topic we've been addressing in several projects of late – that of audience engagement (I've written about it before, [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#) amongst other posts). These might be obvious points to people, but I wanted to share them as they've come to the fore time and again on projects we're working on. For instance, a couple of years ago we produced the music series "The Mill Sessions", where one part of the setup was an experiment in, namely, audience engagement. More precisely, is it possible to build an audience from scratch, and if so, how long does it take? Short answer – yes, and longer than expected.

Since then we've had other assignments where the engagement of the audience has been a very desired part of the projects. There are as many different approaches as there are projects, but here are three major lines of approach:

1. Use money to get the audience engaged. This is perhaps the most traditional (and still quite effective) way of engaging an audience. Put money into promotional campaigns to get the attention of the audience. Put more money into the production of campaign material to get those viral videos (hopefully) going. Put even more money into prizes and rewards for the audience for sharing and engaging. The pro:s are apparent – you will with high probability see a sharp increase in engagement, sharing and audience size. The con:s are even more apparent – when your money run out, unless your content is engaging in the extreme, you'll not keep the audience interested for very long. They've grown accustomed to a certain level of "service", and if that's no longer on the menu, the impression – conscious or subconscious – will be that of a "lesser" campaign than before.

2. Use the influence of major influencers in one way or another. Use the people with 3 million Twitter followers, with gigantic Instagram or Facebook following, with high engagement numbers etc, as your ambassadors. They'll be able to reach a lot of people with your message and your content immediately and spark conversations and engagement. The pro:s are, again, quite clear – you will have a figurehead (or –heads) for your campaign, you will have someone the audience would want to be associated with, and if you have the luxury of choosing whom to work with, you can reach the exact target audience you want to reach. The con:s are also pretty clear – unless it is an influencer who chooses to engage with your project for personal reasons, you cannot expect them to tag along for the long run. And when they leave your project for the next one, chances are many of their recruits will also. Unless you've managed to create something appealing enough for people to want to stay, of course. Depending on the type of engagement the influencer has, you might also need to budget a fair amount for the use of their service.

This approach was the one we aimed for with The Mill Sessions; as we featured some of the best artists in Finland (and their record companies) on the show, we wanted to use their following to gain awareness of the project on a grand scale in a short period of time. Even though we had comprehensive guidelines for everyone involved regarding desired social media and blog activity, in reality it all came down to the artists

themselves and their representatives and how they used different media channels. This again is a clear indication of another lesson we learned – carefully analyze all the different forces involved and mould strategies so they support and are supported by the inherent characteristics and behavioral patterns of these forces. Basically, don't try to force stuff to happen that couldn't logically happen otherwise. So what we in the end concentrated on was...

3. Aim for awareness and engagement in the long run. This requires a number of things – a longevity of the project that will allow for people to find it and engage with it (which includes the need for a story arch that will support such a longevity), a certain amount of patience on the part of the stakeholders in the project and an agile approach that will let the creators latch on to different spontaneous events and occurrences that will increase the exposure and engagement-worthiness of the project. Here, patience (and funding) might be the variables most difficult to attain. Also, while there exists a definite need to be prepared to go along with spontaneous incidents, there must also be a strict discipline when it comes to the tone and feel of the story and the storyworld, so that new content and new interactions do not conflict with the general story world and story arch.

Naturally, the more partners you have involved in a project, the more difficult it is to keep everything in line with the original strategy. What is important is to have guideposts in place with indentifiable – and realistic – goals, so that everyone can see if things are going according to plan or not; also have contingency plans in place in case things are not going according to plan, contingecy plans that everyone involved have signed off on, so that there is a consensus regarding what is to be done, when and by whom.

COMMENTS:

[samanthajulie](#) says:

Interesting article, Simon.

How would you select who to engage as an ambassador? How do you find the people with the largest reach/audience? How do entice them to get involved?

[Simon Staffans](#) says:

Hi Samantha, thanks. It all, again, depends on your project. Sometimes – as with our The Mill Sessions – the ambassadors are a natural part of the narrative, i.e. the artists on the show. Sometimes you just have to take what you can get. And sometimes – especially true for projects in the (very) long run – you build your own ambassadors. Ideally, of course, whomever you approach should have a connection to the issue you're approaching, the underlying theme or the basic need your project is addressing. In this way it is more likely you can engage them as ambassadors in a longer run.

How to entice them? In a way it's not much different from trying to get an

audience to engage. These ambassadors also have needs – albeit different or on a different scale. The need to feel wanted. The need to be seen as a leading figure, as someone “on top of things”. The need to feel good about themselves by engaging in a worthy cause. What you’ve got to do is respond to these needs, and back that response up with great content.

[Mike Vogel \(@mikev\)](#) says:

I’ve just started to try to incorporate audience participation into a project, so this was a timely post for me. I’m trying the first approach by giving away prizes for fan-contributed content. I’m glad you mentioned taking a long-term view because it’s hard to convince people to contribute to a project initially. Thanks.

[Simon Staffans](#) says:

Hi Mike, glad you found this useful. Yeah, even for projects WITH a lot of money to invest, long term thinking might be necessity at times.

Interview - Lance Weiler

*Lance is a storyteller working in film, tv and games - an all around culture hacker.
Follow him on [@lanceweiler](#).*

You're talking all over the world and you're engaging a lot of people on different levels in your projects. What's the multiplatform storytelling or transmedia world like today, from your vantage point?

From my perspective there were some interesting developments in 2013. First off, there is more appetite for immersive storytelling projects. Over the last 12 months my conversations, projects, and work touched into the art world, gaming industry, politics, brands, corporations, funding bodies as well as traditional entertainment. I've found more people willing to experiment in an effort to push at the edges of what storytelling can be. A number of companies are using storytelling as a way to lead innovation across their operations. I also took part in conversations with funding bodies that are attempting to improve their funds to be more agile and reflective of the times. From the practitioner side of things I found more creators getting beyond the technology and concentrating on how to evolve the storytelling itself. The more interesting projects I heard about or saw were exploring ways to make the audience feel something. They attempted to create a sense of empathy through technology as opposed to just using technology as a creation or distribution path. But I think what stuck with me the most was that I had to spend less time explaining what I wanted to do and more time actually making the work. To me that was an indicator that people are moving beyond the talking phase and into an action one.

Your projects focus a lot on the audience; what's your approach when it comes to engaging and dealing with them?

When we start projects we run immersive labs with all the stakeholders. The goal is get as many perspectives as possible. I'll often bring in members of the "audience." Over the years I've discovered that the audience can be a wonderful collaborator. So at the core of the work I'm looking to adapt a human centered design. We call it a designing with and for approach. I want to make sure I'm not designing and building in a vacuum. We'll build and test locally. Get the work in front of an audience as early as possible and actually play and paper test often. I'm a big fan of building locally and then expanding globally once you can figure out the best ways to scale. For me the audience is an excellent R&D partner and I respect the audience and I'm always trying to figure out a way to bring a greater value to the relationship.

Did 2013 turn out as you expected? What were the major positive surprises and the most difficult challenges, either that you encountered or that you've observed?

2013 was an amazing year. Working on the Body/Mind/Change (<http://bodymindchange.ca>) project with David Cronenberg, TIFF and the CFC was a major highlight for me. It was a wonderful collaborative environment and a unique opportunity to do a project that will travel the world for the next four years. The

challenges for me across the work continues to be finding ways to operationalize the efforts. I explored a number of collaborative design processes in an effort to discover better and more efficient ways to work with dispersed teams. Some of the efforts worked and others failed. We detail a lot of the efforts at <http://learndoshare.net> and my twitter book experiment entitled Building Storyworlds: the art, craft and biz of storytelling in 21c (<http://buildingstoryworlds.com>) based on my class at Columbia University touches on it as well.

What would you wish for, for 2014? Do you see any clear paths along which media will continue to evolve?

My one wish for 2014 is for creators to design and build storyworlds that enable audiences to feel and experience amazing storytelling. That the work continues to evolve in ways that make the technology itself invisible to the experience. That the work becomes seamless and as a result more emotionally impactful. In 2014, I hope that we can see work that creates a sense of empathy for fictional characters and real world people. That the work evolves to a place where it becomes more purposeful.

In an effort to try to help advance this cause Christy Dena and I are doing an immersive residential lab for 20 storytellers in spring 2014. The goal to explore the challenges of storytelling with peers from various industries. No talks, no presentations just peers sharing and pushing each other to make better work. Applications are available at <http://forwardslashstory.com> the deadline to apply is January 6th.

Interview - Nuno Bernardo

Nuno Bernardo is an award-winning and two-time Emmy-nominated writer and producer, creator of Sofia's Diary, Flatmates, Beat Generation and Final Punishment, cross-media series produced and adapted around the globe. Follow him on [@nmfbernardo](#).

You've had a busy 2013. What have been the best things that have happened?

This year was very busy at beActive with the international launch of Collider and Beat Girl, our newest transmedia properties. For the first time, we included Cinema as part of our medias and both projects had a Feature Film screened in Cinemas as part of their transmedia approach. We also have been producing a Transmedia Doc called Road to Revolution that will premiere early 2014 in Europe. Other highlights of 2013, beside our own projects, I would mention the digital campaign around Defiance, Halo (The Web series) and Quantum Break.

You're not afraid of experimenting - as with Beat Girl on Pinterest etc - yet you always have a sound financial foundation. How do you achieve this combination?

At beActive, we are always looking for new media and new ways to tell our stories and engage with our target audience, wherever they are and whatever their daily routine is. So we need to always explore the new possibilities that technology, nowadays, provide to storytellers. That being said, in the end it's all about the audience: finding them, engaging with them and in the end try to sell something to them and generate revenues that keep our investors happy and allow us to keep producing content the way we do.

What do you view as the most crucial ingredients when it comes to building an audience, and how do you use those ingredients?

The key elements are to find them and engage them. Our approach is always to partner with Web sites, blogs, portals and services that already have the audience that we are looking for. And then, try to have a catchy message that will try to grab this existing audience and make them experience our content. After the initial contact, it's also important to have a push strategy. How to make them coming back again and again and experiment new episodes, blogs, photos or games.

What are you looking forward to for 2014? What would you view as the greatest possibilities and the greatest challenges?

One of the great possibilities of 2014 is the recovery of the advertising market. I hope that we can go back to the state of 2007 and 2008, where brands were actively experimenting on-line projects to engage with their customers. With the economical recovery, I hope to see a new wave of ad-funded transmedia projects in the market. The challenges are still related to funding: our industry real needs to shift from platform funding (funding only for one specific platform) to a more multi-platform funding approach, where they are funding is the Intellectual Property and not just the derivation of that I.P. in one platform.

CHAPTER FIVE - PROJECTS

A couple of years ago I remember I was preparing a talk and was rueing the fact that there weren't all that many good examples of people creating content for several platforms, with interconnected story lines and a clear path for the audience to follow and clear points for them to interact with the story world.

Fast forward a couple of years and this particular multi-platformed part of the media industry is booming right and left. Projects spring up everywhere, more or less challenging for the producers as well as for the audience. Aiding the boom in projects very much is the fact that the majority of the people that content creators want to reach already are multi-platformed and second screened - making content to suit this reality simply makes sense, which a lot of people have acknowledged, not least of the past twelve months.

This chapter is dedicated to all - or at least some of - the projects that astonished and intrigued over the past year.

Loud and clear – “Authentic in All Caps”

[18/02/2013](#)

My background is partly in radio. That’s where I started out, aeons ago, working for youth stations, gradually becoming better and better at what I was doing (and interspersing with work at newspapers, tv etc).

Working with audio has always been a penchant of mine. I remember vividly the many hours spent creating a Monty Python-inspired epos, which essentially was a satirical and bizarre version of Vilhem Moberg’s epic “Utvandrarna”. We weren’t yet fully digital back then so we worked with those big-ass tape recorders, doing the dialogue first, editing it (by actually CUTTING tape), proceeding to put on layer after layer of manually crafted soundeffects onto the tapes. No room for mistakes there. Brilliant fun though!

So, when I saw that [Christy Dena](#) launched “[AUTHENTIC IN ALL CAPS](#)” I was thrilled. An iPad-based audio adventure to take you around the Internet... I want to see that happen – or, well, *hear* that happen, I guess. So, seeing the crowdfunding campaign pop up, I immediately became a backer.

But in this day and age, where audio has taken a definitive backseat to visuals in many cases – can a project like this actually make itself heard (pun intended)? Brilliant as it looks, I thought I’d like to know some more. Here, for your perusal as well, a brief interview I did with Christy Dena the other day:

How come you chose to go with audio as the main platform? Coming from radio I know the power of audio, but what were your main reasoning behind it? How about visually impaired people, can they take part?

The spark of interest came when I did the Da Vinci Code audio tour of The Louvre. It was a high-production and immensely rewarding experience (<http://www.soundwalk.com/#/TOURS/davincicode/>). At the time I had been working on, playing, and researching alternate reality games and transmedia in general. I found there was a design issue involved with guiding your audience from one media touch-point to the next. People were used to things beginning and ending in one place. As creators, we all know the difficulty in encouraging that sort of activity in a single session. So as I was guided around the space of the museum through this compelling narrative, I was struck by just how powerful audio can be as a tool to encourage action (go here, do this) and to communicate a whole world through an economical media. I immediately thought – why not create audio tours of the web?! That is where the spark of inspiration came from.

It has developed now into a radio drama meets web navigation – where players/users are guided to specially-created fictional websites through this radio drama layer. It is a mix, therefore, of both aural and visual modes. The challenge has been getting the sweet spot of this combination: making the audio channel the main communication mode but still providing visual information and aesthetic delight. With the rise of audio tours, audio games, and street experiences that use audio, I can see just how beneficial the use of audio is to encouraging action and providing a narrative layer over the *actual world*.

Because of the mix of visual and audio it won't work if you're vision-impaired.

You've said you've gone for satirical and humor rather than intense drama; do you believe humor reaches people easier?

Yes. The inspiration for the story came from my mother's sudden death. She wasn't ill, and so I had a lot of questions not just about why it happened physically, but also why philosophically. When I arrived at her home, I looked through all her notes – the last emails she sent, the last phone calls she had, the last song she listened to in the car, where her bookmark was in the novel on her sidetable. I searched through them all to find some understanding about what had happened. I wanted to write about this, but I found straight drama was too...black. And because I'm also weaving in themes of authenticity and identity, I need to find a way to talk about things that didn't bring up people's personal walls. Humour is the best way to do this, and it is a lot more fun to write and record! 😊

There are quite a few audio wizards out there – are you at all opening up for audience co-creation?

In the beginning, I had grand plans to make the project highly reactive, constantly evolving and growing, and many other things. But of course I found during development and playtesting that this all takes so much time and money. It all changes the nature of the project, and requires a lot of technical and time resources to implement and maintain. One of the goals of the project is to be a repeatable experience. Unlike the wonderfully-reactive live experiences we have on the web, I wanted this to be something I create once and then put out for people to experience any time they please. This creative goal was also linked to the revenue stream of pay-to-play. I could have created a one-time, highly reactive and ever growing experience and possibly charged for that. But I wanted to try something different.

In the original grand grand plan – I wanted to release the story experience with the platform to create your own audio paths and websites to build on the world. But I discovered pretty quickly that creating a start-up and an innovative creative project at the same time is...pretty darn difficult and silly. So I settled on the creative project.

So co-creation as originally planned isn't in there anymore (as are other grand goals). But I do love people participating in some way, and so I have integrated elements that enable players to contribute anytime. This ranges from adding "Reality Infringements" to creating their own "Artist Assassin Profiles" to having their own "Philosophy Game" included.

Just how hard is it to get through the clutter of cross media and/or transmedia projects nowadays?

I guess it depends where you're trying to get through. It is difficult when you're creating an original property, and when there are limited audiences for particular types of experiences. But in the end, there are difficult levels of clutter. You can break through in one community or area rather than trying to get through all.

You've gone down the crowdfunding route; what will happen if you reach your

goal, and what will happen if you don't? How hard does it seem to crowdfund?

The crowdfunding route is a last resort, but a potentially good one – as it helps give us some funds to complete, builds community, and sparks publicity. All of these will help for when we actually launch. If we reach our goal (wohoo!), then I'll be going back to the scripts and designs and making sure they're ready, and we'll go straight into recording and creating the websites. We'll then do another playtest and make any changes from there. We plan to have to launched by May (depending on iTunes acceptance time-line), and then release the "Creator's Log" (a record of a lot of my writing, design, and directing decisions made during the project) within a couple of months after that.

If the crowdfunding isn't successful, I'll still go ahead and finish the project in a much limited version. I've worked for a long time on the project, with great achievements already — such as having our prototype achieve Finalist for "Best Writing in a Game" at the 2012 Freeplay Independent Games Festival — and so I want to produce something. But what I'll do is rewrite so it is one short story experience rather than three episodes, and the Creator's Log will be a scaled down basic website with embedded videos and links and simple navigation. And this will all take longer as we'll be working around everyone's day jobs.

As for how hard it is to crowdfund? It certainly isn't something you just decide to do and then implement. I've spent months researching so many elements of crowdfunding, as well as honing the pitch, video, rewards, communication plans and so on. And then of course there is all the work you do during the campaign. It is certainly harder to have a successful crowdfunding campaign when you're not on Kickstarter (as they attract the most interest and press), but it is possible... 😊

Five transmedia projects – February 2013

[26/02/2013](#)

These are exciting times. New transmedia projects are cropping up left and right and the debate over "what the definition of transmedia is?" seems to have taken a bit of a step back. All in all it feels like we're slowly – or perhaps rapidly; these are things that can better be assessed in hindsight – moving towards a media and content world where there is no need to talk about transmedia, as **every project is as transmedia as it needs to be to fulfil any potential that project might have.**

Granted, we're still some ways away, but I believe we will get there – or thereabouts – sooner rather than later. With that in mind – here are five transmedia projects I will be keeping an eye on:

[Defiance](#)

I believe we've all heard of this one. A production by Universal Cable Productions where a TV series on Syfy is directly connected to the Defiance MMO game produced by Trion Worlds. You can read articles about Defiance [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#), and [here](#) is the Wikipedia article. It all looks promising, and they sure know how to get attention... but at the same time, I can see SO many pitfalls along the way to successful execution and long-term distribution. Still, I definitely want to believe, so I'll be keeping my fingers crossed on the 15th of April, for a very successful launch of Defiance.

[Authentic in all caps](#)

Christy Dena is one of the smartest persons in the field of transmedia, so if she says this project will be a good one, I'm inclined to believe her. Right now there are [some few precious hours left of the crowdfunding campaign](#), but which way that ever goes I'm quite confident this will see the day of light one way or another. A web audio adventure – or as the post on Reddit suggests, "think if Bastion's Rucks and Portal's Wheatley guided you across the Net!" – with some appealing aspects; I really hope to see (or hear!) it soon! For an interview with Christy, have a look at a post I wrote a little while ago [here](#).

Murder in passing

Every once in a while – and more and more often as of late – neat new ways of telling stories crop up. "[Murder in Passing](#)" is the story of a murdered bike courier. At the same time it's "a Whodunit for commuters, with new episodes appearing daily on Toronto's subway platform screens and online". Commuters are invited to solve the riddle of the murderer and win prizes, with the final episode airing on the 1st of March. Personally I just really like the idea – it's like elevators, where the best spot to place an ad would probably be in the upper corners of the elevator since everyone is looking there to avoid eye contact. The same here – everyone is at least glancing at the screens, and chances are the same people are in the same place at the same time at least five times a week.

Great experiment if nothing else, and I'm eagerly awaiting a case study afterwards!

Beat Girl

[beActive Media](#) turned ten years earlier this year, and they're as effective and as productive as ever. I feel [Beat Girl](#) deserves a mention here, even though the Pinterest-driven drama premiered last year already. It's now that we can see just how the strategy works out for Beat Girl and how something that started as a way of using super-popular Pinterest in a storytelling setting is turning into a feature movie, gold records and a great project. The latest news – of US company Electus optioning the US rights to the format – are just the icing on the cake. This case study – with all facts and figures pretty please! – is also one I'd like to take a closer look at.

Maze of Games

Well, it might be debateable whether this solve-your-own-adventure / puzzle book is truly transmedia or not, but I'll happily give it the benefit of the doubt. It looks like great fun, with [one of the best run Kickstarter campaigns](#) I've ever seen. The stretch goals in and of themselves are magnificently thought out, not to talk about the puzzles hidden in the Kickstarter page itself and elsewhere. The review over at ARGNet, by Michael Andersen, should do the trick of convincing anyone still hesitating. It will be funded on the 14th of March, with delivery in November – apparently, Christmas might come early this year!

Honorable mention also to just-launched and beautifully named [“The Daring Adventures of Captain Lucy Smokeheart”](#) by Andrea Phillips. If it looks interesting and it smells interesting and it walks interestingly, my bet is that it *is* interesting.

COMMENTS

[steveyleeinger](#) says:

This is so awesome! Seeing these ideas of transmedia projects has totally blown my mediocre ones out of the water. I'm really looking forwards to this semester.

Defiance – defying the odds

[17/04/2013](#)

I will admit I was at times being a bit sceptical towards "[Defiance](#)", the transmedia project from Syfy. I felt it could be great, but at the same time I was afraid of being let down (again), or having to witness a project where everyone involved decided to try too much and achieving too little.

It seems my worries were unfounded. I'm still waiting to log my first hours of game play, but I've seen the premiere episode and am quite convinced by the world building, the characters introduced and the scope of the story arcs starting to unwind. The ratings for the first episode back this up and the sentiments from people I trust serve to underscore the message. "**Defiance**" is [the best opening title for Syfy since the premiere of Eureka in 2006](#). In a changing media landscape, where second screening and DVR:ing are the norms, that is quite impressive. The social media impact of the premiere was also significant, outperforming amongst others the first episode of the new Game of Thrones-series.

So, what did they do right? Just about everything, it seems. Where transmedia storytelling builds on the principle of creating a thorough foundation to ground all stories, story arcs and characters in, **Syfy and Trion Worlds (the game creators) apparently did a great job of stripping the IP down.** They realized they needed to get to a level where the TV and the gaming parts of the narrative could talk to each other in a logical way. Then, they continued, by building it all up again after that, to achieve the complete package we can take part of today.

There are of course still question marks that abound. Do the TV and game narratives influence each other in any way? There's been such rumours; how that'll play out will be infinitely interesting to see. Will the audience stick around? We'll just have to wait and see; but **with a 7.8 score on IMDB after the first episode, level with series such as The Killing and CSI, I don't think it'll be scrapped anytime soon.**

I am also quite looking forward to see what other projects will rise out of the Defiance world; in a sense, I think we've only just scratched the surface of what can and will be. Plush toys, anyone? 😊

COMMENTS:

RhysMT says:

I saw the first ep last night – it's good! (very sci fi, with loads of references to other series)

Waiting for the game, so I'll tell you what that's like too!

- [Simon Staffans](#) says:

Yeah, getting myself acquainted now as well. Looks good!

Dark Insanity says:

Love the site and now following also hoping you do the same...good stuff

- [Simon Staffans](#) says:

I think I will yes. Liked the world-building, will see how it goes!

Five transmedia projects – autumn 2013

[29/08/2013](#)

In February I did an overview of five transmedia projects I would be keeping an eye on. Of the projects I wrote about back then, Defiance opened to mixed (and some derisive) reviews. I thought it was a brave step, a good story and something I'd be happy to have on my CV. Beat Girl, another of the projects, has since February gone on to movies, bestselling music, deals in the US and so on. Great stuff from Nuno! And Authentic In All Caps ran a successful crowdfunding campaign... all in all, moving forward on all fronts!

At the time, I wrote:

These are exciting times. New transmedia projects are cropping up left and right and the debate over "what the definition of transmedia is?" seems to have taken a bit of a step back. All in all it feels like we're slowly – or perhaps rapidly; these are things that can better be assessed in hindsight – moving towards a media and content world where there is no need to talk about transmedia, as **every project is as transmedia as it needs to be to fulfil any potential that project might have.**

I feel everything is continuing to move in the same direction – towards the media and content world I describe above. With that in mind, here are five transmedia projects, in different fields, that I'll be keeping tabs on over the following months:

Quantum Break

As I've pointed out in posts from different gaming conferences and conventions, I believe the TV (and other "traditional" media) industry could learn quite a lot from the gaming industry and vice versa. [Quantum Break](#) is a slightly different animal. Produced by Finnish (yay!) game developer [Remedy Entertainment](#) and published by Microsoft Studios, the Xbox One game will be accompanied by a TV series, now in production. Apparently "how you play the game impacts the show, and the show informs how you play the game". With "[Defiance](#)" fresh in everyone's mind, it'll be very interesting to follow how Remedy and Microsoft pull this one off.

Aurelia: Edge of darkness

The [Theatrics](#) platform is an interesting one. It's designed to enable creators to create a story, invite participants and manage the show, through a video storytelling platform and its suite of social video tools. [Aurelia](#), a "steampunk fantasy web drama starring you" is distributed via Theatrics and is included in this list as an interesting project to keep an eye on. You could also immerse yourself by creating an account and join the participants already signed up and try the platform out yourself.

Hollow Documentary

Every now and then these beautifully crafted online documentary projects pop up on my radar, dazzling me with their artfulness, the skill and thoroughness on display and the way they invite you to immerse yourself. There have been [Pine Point](#) and [Bear 71](#) from

NFB or the gripping "[Alma: A Tale of Violence](#)" from LightBox. [The Hollow Documentary](#) is another one in the same vein, a collaborative effort focusing on the diminishing and possibly soon to be extinct rural areas of West Virginia. It's on this list as a great resource for inspiration, whatever it might be you yourself is working on right now.

Feuten (Freshers)

This project, "[Feuten](#)", comes from the Netherlands and is running for its third season on BNN's channel 3. It's a story about "the troubles of a fictional fraternity group called H.S.C. Mercurius". What companies Spektor and Elastique have done for season three is create an app where people can apply to be accepted into this fraternity. The culling process involves popping 30 beers in a minute (hopefully not having to drink them all!) and answering questions about the fraternity. When you're finally accepted, you can – via the app – do all the things you would be able to do in a real fraternity; arrange parties, chat to other members, raise their own chapters together with friends etc.

The reason I find this project interesting is because it touches on one of the things I always keep in mind – plan for success. You never know which project might be the one to take off, and if it does, you have to be prepared. This is what has happened now, with 15.000 members signing up immediately, keeping community managers working 24/7 to keep up. If there is a proper strategy in place, this could become a case study on how to harness success.

The Marvel Experience Tour

A list like this wouldn't be complete without something blockbuster-y, right? This is something that we'll see in 2014, but to TL;DR it, it's a real-life traveling experience bringing the Marvel Universe to everyone.

Producers Hero Ventures promise that the [Marvel Experience Tour](#) will be everything from 4D motion rides to VR and holographic simulations, from 3D animation features to "dynamic interactive activities", all in the setting of a first-person Super Hero adventure.

Now, I'm fully prepared for this to be something not-quite-what-they-promised, but on the other hand, it could be the oh-my-god-that-was-AMAZING!-experience all Marvel fans would hope for. Definitely something to keep an eye on.

All in all, some exciting months up ahead. Let me know of all the projects I've missed in the comments!

COMMENTS:

[kevin moss \(@kevmoss\)](#) says:

I'm going to have to throw our <http://nightvisionexperiment.com> in the mix. Opened to

some amazing reviews.

And we're selling tickets, there seems to be a true appetite for a digital performance, which in the big picture is really exciting. We've not done much PR at the moment. Starting slowly but so far it's been really exciting.

Next performances 3rd and 26th Sept 9pm GMT

"Nightvision puts the creep back into horror"

"Going to be one of those cult things that people talk about years from now"

"Couldn't have existed at any previous point in history"

<http://www.thelondonfilmreview.com/film-review/review-night-vision-experiment/>

exciting times ahead

Interview - Christian Fønnesbech

Cloud Chamber is Christian Fønnesbech's 36th online/transmedia project. He spends most of his free time here: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/playerofgames/>

2013 saw the birth of "The Cloud Chamber"; how has this shaped your year? What's your experience from the ride? Any major lessons learned?

Our team really likes the idea of exploring unknown territory. With this project, Mikkel Thomassen (my creative producer) and I really feel we have broken new ground. There have been many, many major lessons. The most important one, for us, is that our idea of making a permanent, premium online mystery really does work ... We feel we are on the verge of a whole new era of fiction and drama. We worked three years on this – on something that nobody has really done before - and as you can imagine, we were holding our breath, waiting to see if the audience would take to it.

- Would "normal people" pretend the story was real?
- Would they play their part?
- Would they discuss their way through the fiction?
- Would the mix of found footage and actual documentary gel?

When we got the first, very positive user comments, it was a very emotional moment. Now, the core audience is super engaged - one user has written over 51 very lucid A4 pages of comments in Cloud Chamber. Seeing our artistic and technical project work like this is pure bliss!

And now we get to climb the marketing and distribution mountain. Bringing something like this to the global market is just as much of an exploration as the artistic project was ... Many more lessons await us. Stay tuned ;-)

You've been producing and creating for clients for years; how has the industry changed over the years? Where do you see multiplatform and transmedia now?

Many things have changed. We started doing this before Facebook, Skype, App Store and Kickstarter even existed. There are many great opportunities, now. But there are also challenges. I think it was easier to sell experimental projects to commercial clients, before. There was more of a feeling that you had to try wild stuff – and that the wild stuff could and would produce results. That is part of the reason that Mikkel Thomassen and I got to make 35 projects, exploring everything from webisodes to communities and gameplay. Today, you need big company support, if you want traffic unless you're willing to trust in luck). But at the same time, you are now able to kickstart your project and the middleware has gotten so much better. All in all, I think it is a very good time to want to tell stories in new ways – but also a challenging time. Nothing has changed – and everything has changed. I'm glad we've managed to build experience and a project portfolio – but I am sure that newcomers will find new ways to get experience and build their abilities.

So, today, how do you see up-and-coming multiplatform storytellers getting a break? You got to make experimental stuff because you were doing them at the right time, is crowd funding now the way for new producers to go? Or team up with more established producers?

I'm not so sure if I can answer this. Our own take on transmedia is to mix media types instead of media platforms. This is controversial for some - they insist that transmedia has cross media channels and not just media types. But, in my personal experience (which doesn't necessarily apply to anybody else), I found multi platform storytelling to be ... very troublesome. Sure, you can always use other media to market a product that plays out on a single medium - that has always worked, and storytelling to advertise has always worked. But if you really want to tell a story that crosses media channels, then the trouble begins. For one thing, you're even more dependent on big-media traffic flows and budgets, for the simple reason that that is almost the only way to get uniform exposure. If you diverge from this, you quite quickly end up being dependent on a very small and very dedicated audience: the few who are actually willing to follow the white rabbit from channel to channel. Then there are the logistics demands, which quickly become absolutely insane. If you've ever tried to coordinate anything across craft domains, business domains, media empires and so on, you'll know that I mean. And don't even get me started on longevity: many cross-channel properties disappear almost as soon as they appear - it takes an enormous, cultural impact, for something so fragmented to "stick together" over time. For these reasons (and quite a few more, including production complexity, the law of silent witnesses and so on), we're concentrating on mixing media types on the internet and crafting a single narrative out of that.

We also firmly believe that it's all about the Internet and how it has changed things - it's a genuinely new medium, one that touches on almost everything traditional media can do, and quite a few things more. And everything, everything, EVERYTHING comes out of that.

Now, if that is what you want to do - how do you get to do it? I think the architects know it, when they say "Getting to work is half the battle." And one way to get to work is the way it has always been done: you start with friends and you make little projects and then you look for ways to make bigger projects happen - and you keep doing it and doing it and doing it until you get so good at it that people become willing to pay for both you and the budget you need. Along the way, you get to know people and you ally yourself with talents who are better than you ... and then it slowly grows. I'm sure there are many other ways - but it seems to have worked for me

What are you looking forward to most for 2014? Any particular highlights? Any particular challenges you see on the horizon?

Right now, we're learning about Cloud Chamber and it's audience in the first test market. I'm very much looking forward to correlating everything we're learning - audience emotions, marketing, media partners, story strengths and much more - and using that to continually improve Cloud Chamber. It's quite dramatic, just how different

an art form this is: when you “finish”, it’s not like sending a film or a record to distribution. It’s more like opening a club, where you can continually watch how the content is interacting with the audience. I think it will be a long time before it is truly finished, and that is a new thing. We’d love to do Cloud Chamber 2, because there is a lot more story in there. And then, of course, there is the next big one: Project X, slowly simmering on a stove, somewhere in the back of my mind. This is a good time to be alive and exploring the future of stories.

Interview - Nick DeMartino

Nick DeMartino is a Los Angeles-based media consultant specializing in digital content and distribution strategies, strategic partnerships, and emerging technologies, having served for 20 years as SVP of the American Film Institute. Follow him on [@nickdemartino](#).

How was 2013, with the Theatrics launch etc? Did something in the transmedia and multi platform world move you to tears this year? And what about 2014 - where do you see us heading?

2013 was a great year for me. My focus has been work with start-ups in the digital media/technology ecosystem. Some examples:

I am Senior Advisor to [ideaBOOST](#), a new accelerator for start-ups in the media/tech field, created and launched by the Canadian Film Centre in Toronto. We completed and launched two cohorts -- more than a dozen companies including game platforms, transmedia properties, mobile apps, story-based e-commerce, and much more. We launched cohort #3 in late November, as well as a unique Production Lab in conjunction with wearable computing pioneer, Mind Pirate, a company that I advise. This Lab will incubate as many as five new products that run on Google Glass, as well as iOS and Android in 1st quarter of 2014. I've just gotten my own Google Glass device, and I'm very jazzed about this new form factor for experience delivery.

I'm also mentoring companies in another accelerator called [Dogfish](#), based in New York City, with a focus on content creation startups. This accelerator from within the independent film community, and like ideaBOOST, believes that the principles of the "lean startup movement" can and should be used by content creators in order to develop sustainable business models for the digital era. One of the companies I advised is building a live-action game engine/platform, for example. Very interesting.

I also continued my work with [Theatrics.com](#), a collaborative media platform based in Houston. The company grew out of a unique interactive sci-fi soap opera called "Beckinfield" in which users created and performed as characters in the story. I loved that idea and felt that I could help the company introduce this form of deep fan engagement to the television industry. To that end, Theatrics helped power [The Social Sector](#), a digital native story-driven "mystery" that invited fans into the story world of the characters from USA's hit series PSYCH, which ran for 8 weeks in Q1, and is still live.

In April we expanded the idea by offering the beta version of the Theatrics platform aimed at independent transmedia producers who want to offer fan-based content in a story container. Our first example was "[Welcome to Sanditon](#)," the sequel to the Emmy-winning "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries," which modernized Jane Austen. In Sanditon, fans could impact the story through their own character engagements uploaded as video, text or images. Other outstanding examples included The Ghost Club and [Aurelia: Edge of Darkness](#). The latter, a steampunk adventure, struck a chord with Live-Action Role-players (LARPerS). The beta test continues -- anyone can create their own interactive show by using the wizard on Theatrics.com. The company is also building other applications in conjunction a range of online publishers and enterprises.

Theatrics is but one example of the rise of what I'm calling "Fan Powered Media." I gave several talks focusing on the idea of audience as engagement engine with content, including [this presentation](#) at the Broadband TV conference that used "The Walking Dead" as an example. Henry Jenkins and others have shown the way in recognizing that deep fan engagement, including content creation by users, is happening in both authorized and unauthorized ways. So a piece of commercial content is no longer just the linear artifact that attracts the fans -- it's really a vast ecosystem of fan engagement as well.

In terms of transmedia work this year, I focus on the independent projects, which are what interest me. I'm sure that companion apps for the latest Hollywood superhero movie were awesome, but this is not my terrain, except when forced to watch by friends or a long and boring plane ride.

Rather, I applaud the talents and especially the perseverance of my colleagues who have managed to devise and launch ambitious independent projects that hold the greatest chance of moving me like novels, films and great TV.

I was very moved and quite impressed with [The Hollow](#), an interactive documentary about an impoverished county in Appalachia. The creators used the power of documentary storytelling, but layered the navigation of the experience with very beautiful graphics and a killer UI. I don't know any more what is "transmedia" and what isn't. I just know that intensity of feeling is the goal, and this work brought me there more than most. Elaine McMillion and her team found support from Tribeca, Kickstarter and elsewhere to support a long-term media commitment to a specific place where information can make a difference. What makes her effort distinctive is the authenticity of the content and the delight one has in navigating the site.

A similarly beautiful user-experience was achieved in National Geographic Channel's "Killing Kennedy" TV movie's companion website (Kennedy and Oswald) <http://www.kennedyandoswald.com/#!/premiere-screen>. Our web technologies allow such a rich mix of media types in a user-controlled environment. In this case, the emotions were less intense than a dramatic narrative, nostalgic and bittersweet, sort of like reading an old LIFE Magazine.

I saw a screening of the theatrical component of the much-awaited transmedia production "The Cosmonaut" which also included webisodes and other digital elements. At the time I [reviewed](#) it, the non-film components were just being released, and so I concentrated on the film itself, much of which I liked, though not entirely. I did very much like the premise of taking a historical milieu, in this case the world of Soviet-era cosmonauts, and creating a fictionalized world that unfurls in different media. There was a delicate, haunting quality to this work that was quite fine.

"[The Institute](#)," is a 2013 film by Spencer McCall that documents the story of an alternate reality game held in San Francisco a few years ago in which some 10,000 people participated -- a hoax-based story world revolving around a kind of EST-like cult, the mystery of a missing girl, and a lot of real-world activities on the streets. While McCall can't replicate the experiences of those involved, we get a sense of the

experience through interviews with many of those involved, including the creators, the participants (including a few who are mentally ill), and occasionally capturing scenes as they unfold. By the end, some viewers might themselves wonder what is “real” and what was manufactured for either the game or the film. I liked this because it reminded me that we don't really have any way to archive these time-limited experiments. Even those that are entirely digital may suddenly vanish with the fortunes of the companies housing the data.

On a slightly different note, I've been very impressed with the curatorial excellence of Google's [Creative Sandbox](#). While much of the work is from agencies and brands, it's very nice to have a neutral location that enhances discovery with a different spin from the always useful [FWA site](#) (Favorite Website Awards). And in the transmedia/ARG area, I find Michael Anderson's [ARGNet](#) indispensable.

Year's end affords an opportunity to reflect on where we are as a community. We saw the demise of the Story World conference and the launch of the Transvergence Summit, two conferences with some overlap and similar challenges -- an attempt to bring under one big tent a hydra-headed monster of a community which can't even seem to settle on a definition of what it does, and probably with good reason.

The nomenclature flame wars, to wit Brian Clark's recent [Facebook post](#) and the comments that followed, are tiresome. The essential issue being raised by many early transmedia practitioners has come and gone -- namely, that stories can unfold in many ways across a number of different platforms. Got it. Now what?

We've seen multi-platform story experiments large and small from mainstream television and motion picture producers without much evidence that there is sustained interest there, other than to find inventive ways to promote and market the mother ship. Sometimes this stuff is great fun, especially with properties that already have fans.

A new artform? Not so much. Just take the meteoric rise and fall of so-called "second screen" apps, especially for TV, as an example. Marketers have done a lot of different implementations for many, many shows on a slew of emerging platforms, and I suspect will continue to do so, but the real winners at the end of the day are the all-purpose platforms Facebook and Twitter, which are easy for agencies to understand, and have massive scale. And can be measured, sort of. And therefore monetized.

So, I would expect experiments with the form to remain the province of independents who have different measures of success, though some financial return would be much appreciated, I'm sure. These folks want to invent something new, and perhaps along the way deliver a deeper experience to a smaller, but more intensely committed group of fans. Many of these folks will emerge from the transformed film and journalism programs at major universities, which, if you haven't noticed, are bursting at the seams (go figure!). We have a new generation of transmediologists coming up. I look forward to seeing their work.

Interview - Alison Norrington

Alison is a transmedia producer and storyteller, a strategist and story architect, and the founder of Storycentral DIGITAL. Follow her at [@storycentral](#).

What would you say were the highlights of 2013? What surprised and excited you the most?

I'd say the highlights for me are pretty much reflected in the Emmy Award Winners for the year. Exciting moments for me include the groundbreaking 62 hour story marathon that was Breaking Bad. Twisting and turning every episode, Vince Gilligan managed to cement the rumour that this could 'The Golden Age of Television'. After a few years of [Buzzword Bingo](#) about techniques, processes and approaches to new, fragmented and immersive modes of storytelling there remained some uncertainty as to what fantastic storytelling really looked like. Breaking Bad not only served as a reminder of that, but raised the bar for future storytellers.

HBO's Game of Thrones and Showtime's Homeland were nominated in the Outstanding Drama Series and the inspired and highly engaging Lizzie Bennet Diaries set new standards, nailing an Emmy in the Interactive category. At the same time, the Netflix launch of House of Cards in February, and Hulu's 'East Los High' represented interesting new approaches to business models. In addition to this a fragmentation seemed to occur in the community – a series of continued debates around terminology, a distinct fatigue of hype, a definite sharp focus on audience (finally!) and it seemed the smoke and mirrors were beginning to clear.

Disappointments for me included the revival of Arrested Development (it was great to catch up with Seasons 1-3 on Netflix and then be slammed with the strange 'rashomon' style of Season Two, complete with botoxed and sometimes barely recognizable cast). Another big and continued disappointment is seeing a handful of colleges and universities that are jumping on the bandwagon of teaching 'Transmedia Storytelling' but on closer scrutiny are hugely misguided in their choice of case studies and teaching methods, serving only to confuse debates around terminology further!

You've been around the world to a number of conferences, workshops etc - how is the state of transmedia globally, from your point of view?

I've been excited to see Europe not being treated as a 'region' as I travelled from Norway to Poland, Malta to Stockholm, Estonia to Belgium and a slate of projects in development that are native and inherent to cultural mythologies whilst also being tuned in to relative cultural behaviors and trends. It's interesting to see that, in some areas where oral and organic storytelling still has a strong presence, a strategic approach to utilizing digital platforms to tell extensions of stories comes without a label.

One of the most impressive is a project that was brought to one of my storycentralLABS at the Asia Media Summit in Indonesia in May. A story that, in it's most basic form is Romeo & Juliet, is retold through a modern day lens of 2 tribal people that are caught up in a forbidden love affair. With a strategy to tell these character stories through media

that is relevant and accessible to their Nigerian audience, the producer/writer strategy didn't attempt to be more than it could be – utilizing radio, national newspaper, live event and SMS messaging. I'm excited to be in continued discussions with these producers from Nigeria. Whilst being a resonant and powerful story it also serves to break down prejudice and barriers. Powerful stuff!

Speaking to producers in Bogota in September I was excited to see a series of projects that are aiming to give the 'unlistened to' a public voice through fragmented storytelling that works across relevant platforms. There's a lot of great work being developed out there and I'm excited to see these come to fruition in 2014.

What would you wish for for 2014? Do you see any particular possibilities or challenges?

I see publishers finally upping their game – ready, willing and excited to engage with audiences beyond the book. There are a host of opportunities now for writers to reach out to publishers with a more innovative approach to storytelling. I'd love to see more experimentation, more prototyping, more making, doing, sharing and testing. It's a tough call to ask writers and creators to open themselves up to 'fail fast', but with the right attitude and support I still believe it's the way forward.

CHAPTER SIX - EVENTS

It's all good and well to sit behind a desk, stand behind a camera or hack away at a typewriter (does anyone still use typewriters?) and develop groundbreaking stuff in the Now Media field. But the practitioners are still fairly spread out globally, and a lot of the other areas of the media industry are still slightly hesitant when it comes to adapting for several screens and several platforms.

This is where the different events come in over the calendar year - events that let producers and creators get together to learn, to teach and to find new inspiration and collaboration. Some of the events are much more focused on business - which is not a bad thing, as a business mentality is very handy when it comes to working on projects, helping the producer/creator stay true to the original concept and aiding in achieving financial sustainability, something more projects should have in my opinion.

This is a chapter dedicated to all the conferences and classes all around the world where creative people can meet and become even better at what they do.

Entertainment Master Class – television on the move

[09/02/2013](#)

I was graciously invited to come and talk to the Oslo-edition of the [Entertainment Master Class](#) 2013. It's a course that seems to have a lot to offer professionals within the TV industry; if nothing else, it's interesting to see that several of the participants are coming back for a second or even third stint at the programme.

My subject was threefold – one part was a talk based on the publication "One Year In Now Media", one part was looking at television and it's possible connection to transmedia, while the last part was a talk on what new business models are on the rise. It's always a challenge to put a talk like this on the right level – too complicated and people will fall off, too simple and no one will be interested.

Other speakers this Saturday include [Keri Lewis-Brown](#) from K7 and [Simon Brickle](#) from Monterosa, looking at social TV and second screening respectively. There was a ton of interesting and informative stuff, and what really resonated with me – and that I talked a bit about over here – is the fact that **the behemoth that is the TV industry is on the move**. It's a bit like watching an avalanche – it starts as a puff of something, but quickly gathers momentum, and anyone standing still and refusing to move will most likely be run over (and have St Bernhard-dogs come digging for you in the wreckage that's left).

Still, while everyone is – sooner or later – moving towards second screening and multiplatform – when it makes sense in the context of the content of course – some old practices still hold very much true. **"Igniting the Core", as [Rob Pratten](#) says, remains a critical stage of any content**. And the fact is that even though there are outliers that show that viral marketing can get something up and running in no time, **for the major part of multiplatform concepts traditional initial marketing is key** to build a critical mass of audience members. This marketing can, of course, be ingeniously created and build fully on transmedia storytelling principles, but it needs to be there and it needs to be budgeted for.

Likewise, **any possible talent, such as a show host, must be as proficient as any other show host; in fact, probably more proficient**. Just because the viewers are showing that they are engaging in the show and at times perhaps even contributing to the content doesn't mean that a show host can step down in quality, engagement-wise and content-wise. On the contrary, the talent must strive even harder to get everything to fit under one umbrella and feel as natural as humanly possible.

So – a combination of the best practices of old with the most exciting possibilities of now. And listening to the other speakers here, I can say that the possibilities are almost endless. Just don't rush it; make every decision after careful consideration and preferably thorough testing on the target group.

MIPFormats and MIPTV – is it on?

[05/04/2013](#)

To my delight I've seen a lot of great transmedia-related projects turning up left and right in the TV business over the past months. One of the most obvious is of course "[Defiance](#)", which for the first time tries to blend an MMO 3rd person shooter with a scifi TV series and let the two influence each other. A highly anticipated venture, the game has opened to generally favorable reviews, while the TV series debuts right now. There are of course others, some of which will be presented these coming days.

I'll be spending the next few days in Cannes at the MIPFormats, [MIPTV](#) and MIPCube conferences. A central hub for the TV industry, this is where a lot of new trends are revealed (and a lot of semi-old ones re-hashed). Looking at the programme for the days ahead, there are some things to be glad for. **For the first time there is a session called "How to make your format transmedia?"**, a challenge I've written about several times on this blog.

There is a lot of talk about branded content, about social media formats, how to negotiate the difficult waters of multiplatform formats and so on. My hope is that I will see a clear shift forward, towards a world where "transmedia" is no longer needed as a term, since every project is inherently as "transmedia" as it has to be to achieve its maximum level and no one thinks twice about it.

Another interesting aspect at MIPFormats will be to observe what kind of value the market puts on social interaction, social media, social engagement. Will formats that are building on these variables be more or less successful on the marketplace?

During MIPTV and MIPCube, Monday to Thursday (although I'm leaving Wednesday late in the afternoon) there is even more to look forward to. Alongside stalwarts of the conference such as "Fresh TV Around The World" are new and interesting sessions; "Create killer social experiences", the Content 360 pitches, a TV Hack Fest, a MIPCube start-up competition, how to create user interface etc and so on.

In between meetings I'll be tweeting, and to what extent I have the time, blogging from the events. I'm also moderating a couple of sessions on Wednesday – "Meet The Digital Producers" at 9.45am in the Producer's Hub and "Producers: Take Back Your Monetisation Power" at 14.15 in Esterel. If you're there, come say hi!

MIPFormats Day One

[07/04/2013](#)

The MIPFormats 2013 edition kicked off yesterday at the Palais des Festivals in Cannes. The format business is a booming one, for good and for bad (but mostly for good). **The good part is that producers can get the formats they create on air in any which one territory in the universe**, if the ideas are good enough and they manage to find a buyer. For the viewers, there is the added value of tried and tested content being produced for them; chances are, whatever you're watching, it already has a strong track records in at least three other territories, **which means that most of the wrinkles have been ironed out and what you're experiencing is the show at its best.**

The drawback is of course that **diversity is hampered**. In one way this is bad, as this means that unique ideas may never get produced and genius but niche solutions may never get financed. In another way it's perhaps not so bad; evolution-like, the strongest ones will survive and rise to the top.

There were quite a few interesting sessions, some of which I could not attend due to meetings. At the "Fresh Formats around the World" showcase the Japanese (again) caught the most attention – Clock Hanger was simply brilliant, if silly, featuring a quiz show where the contestant hangs on to the large hand of a gigantic clock, answering questions as the hand turns and having to hang on while answering to avoid falling down into a puddle of mud. Genius!

The Nordic focus on formats also showed some really good shows – "Entertainment with a Purpose", as Jan Salling put it. Stop bullying was the theme of one show, change the behaviour of reckless young drivers another one. You can access all of the formats at [Nordic World's pages](#).

Tom McDonnell of [Monterosa](#) gave a good presentation on developing formats with second screen elements; **"The greater the conceptual intersection between TV and 2nd screen, the more people will participate"** is a good quote to take from the session. Also the absolute need to make it simple to understand and easy to use. Also, if going global with your second screen experience, there are five points to remember – 1. Make it great but cheap, 2. Make it really easy, 3. Make sure you let the customer/broadcaster set it up themselves, 4. Make sure to give them control and 5. Make sure to sell them the benefits of the second screen solution (Entertain audience more, activate sponsorship & create media opportunities and get registration and data).

MIPTV and MIPCube 2013 – a brief review

[12/04/2013](#)



I'll be keeping this short and to the point, as I'm swamped with things to take care of in the aftermath of [MIP](#).

First, I have to note a slight sense of disappointment. I do not feel the television industry is moving with the times, to the extent I feel the industry would need to. This is, I confess, a sentiment coming out of a pretty selfish point of view; I know television, and I know transmedia storytelling / cross media / multiplatform / whatever you want to call it, and unless the TV industry comes to grips with the new world they're living in, something else is going to come along and disrupt it. And as I can't see what that's going to be yet, it'll put me on the spot just as much (or, well, not as much but enough) as anyone else.

There were a number of great examples of storytelling or techniques or services that touches on television, but the majority were just that – touching – never to really make an impact on the core of television. And, the TV execs might be forgiven for thinking, why bother? The TV industry goes splendidly as is, why change a winning formula? Well – things went splendidly for the Pony Express as well. Then came the railway. Things went pretty neat for VHS as well. Then came the DVD. I think the TV industry has every reason to try to be a bit pro-active right now.

Secondly, I have to note a slight sense of elation. There are so many great people attending the MIPs; all from different angles and facets of the industry. Some are brilliant sellers, some are intuitive buyers. Some are intelligent and creative in a way I can only dream of, while others are socially über-capable and the life of any party. If nothing else, I'd come to MIP for the people, that's for sure.

[MIPCube](#) is an increasingly interesting event. It's still seeking its identity to some extent, this time around being placed in the basement level of the Palais des Festivals (with the TV Hackers in a small building outside the Palais). I believe it would be best if MIPCube was either even more centrally placed – physically that is – or given an autonome space to play around in (a bit like last year when it was in the Gare Maritime). The talks were overwhelmingly great though, interesting stuff, the ones I managed to attend. I

moderated two talks – meet the Digital Producers was the first one, where some interesting producers showed some pretty interesting solutions and content. Do check out [Pocket TV](#) from Sweden, looking pretty handy, as well as [Watch With Mother](#) (which is a slash/horror/gore/comedy series – you’ve been warned!). The other was how to take back your monetisation power as a producer . We talked with [Pokeware](#) and [dot.talent](#) about online video monetising as well as the worth of followers, likers and social buss.

All in all, a great experience. I would encourage anyone who’s thinking about MIP or the TV industry as a whole, to tag along for the next one. Not only do you meet people you’d never meet otherwise, you also know a lot more (perhaps more than you wanted to know) about the industry than before.

Nordic Transmedia Meetup and Nordic Game 2013

[28/05/2013](#)

The most prevalent feeling I have of attending the [Nordic Transmedia Meetup](#) and [Nordic Game](#) in Malmö, Sweden last week is one of "so, we've finally arrived!".

See, some years ago when I was introduced – and for the first time actually grasped – the concept of transmedia (according to a definition I, like all other transmedia practitioners, made for myself, one that fits my particular needs) it was a revelation to me. It was also a gateway into a little part of the creative media world, a gateway that few apparently had found up 'til then. It was also apparently a gateway that didn't look like much of a gateway for many of the people who actually had found it, leading to them discarding the "Transmedia" gateway in favor of more elegant, bigger gateways by the name of "Marketing", "Online", "Mobile", "Social media" and so on.

What the people who left the "Transmedia" gateway unexplored didn't realize was that it was that precise gateway that was the only one leading into the full world of possibilities. The other gateways merely offered one tiny part of the full world, much like looking at a fenced-in area for wild animals through a glass wall; you will see some of the animals for some of the time, but the only way to see them all, smell their scents, feel their fur and risk getting torn to pieces is to avoid the fences, enter the area and go stand in the middle.

That's what transmedia has felt like to me. A special area, found by few people, and sparsely filled with a tribe that has congregated in that fenced-in area, a tribe that has had differing opinions regarding what the area actually is. These differing opinions then stemming from the other areas these people have immigrated from.

At the Nordic Transmedia Meetup and Nordic Game 2013, I felt a change. The glass walls are beginning to dissipate, not through anyone's explicit doing, but rather through EVERYONE'S collective doings. This means more people are finding their way into the area. The major change is that these are people who are not in the least inclined to put much effort into trying to categorize the area or the practices going on within the area. They're just there, enjoying the view, petting the animals and having a good time. All in all, good fun – and it makes for a more relaxed atmosphere as well!

Finally, I'll say that – looking at the games and the talks at Nordic Game this year – I believe the gaming world and the TV/film world will have a lot more in common – much more than today – as games are becoming more narrative (at least some) and TV/film are moving more and more into interaction, second screen and gamifying. Exciting times ahead!

MIPCOM 2013 – thoughts and reflections

[12/10/2013](#)

I just landed back from a week of TV, online, second screen, contentcontentcontent and all the other things that a regular [MIP week in Cannes](#) consists of. This year one of the main strands of talks and discussions was on "**The Golden Age of Television**", which we apparently are living in right now.

And yes, I can't but agree – looking at some of the brilliant storytelling going on over on television right now, I do believe there has been a **shift towards television** when it comes to people looking for **content to engage and immerse themselves in**. Increasingly – in my opinion – movies are being viewed as the "less serious" medium, something that might have a lot to do with **the fear of commitment** we're experiencing right now. Hooking your time up to a five season long TV series such as "Breaking Bad" is a very serious commitment, much more so than going to the movie theater to see "The Avengers II" or suchlike. This has given TV a more serious role in people's lives, and TV has responded magnificently.

What I noticed very clearly at this years market is that, while there still is a lot of money sloshing around in television, there is also an ever-expanding market to be filled with content and paid for by that same amount of money. So even though there is a lot of €€ available, these funds are being stretched more and more. This means **producers need to get into a start-up mode**, and that **the "fail fast and fail forward" principle has never been as important as now**.

With regards to genius content, I will readily say that this time around I saw nothing to really get me excited. There were interesting formats, but nothing new or groundbreaking. There was beautifully shot drama series (including [one set in Aberystwyth](#), the Welsh town where I spent the best part of a year back in the 90s) but nothing that in any way could be said to "revolutionize" storytelling or "disrupting" the TV industry. All in all, much of MIPCOM was about "same same but different". I would have liked to see the people behind the [Lizzie Bennet Diaries](#), for instance, tell the industry **how they've used audience engagement and transmedia storytelling methods to get hundreds of millions of views**. Perhaps in the spring!

All in all I noticed a TV industry that is being drawn out of it's shell, quicker and quicker. And to be fair, there are quite a few parts of the industry that are quite happy and actively assisting in this. There's still hope for this old dinosaur! 😊

Interview - Liz Rosenthal

Liz is the founder and CEO of Power to the Pixel, an expert on cross-media storytelling and an early advocate of digital distribution and filmmaking. Follow her on [@powertothepixel](#).

How was 2013 for you and PTTP?

Another super busy year for us at Power to the Pixel! Our main development programme Pixel Lab 2013 ran from June to October, our annual centrepiece event, The Cross-Media Forum in October 2013. We partnered once again on The Writer's Room with TorinoFilmLab which ran over three sessions and also completed the second edition of High 5 For Kids, Cross-Media scheme for kids projects with the Nordisk Film & TV Fond. We did events at the Berlinale, Cannes Film Festival, Merging Media and Cinemart.

What were the greatest projects and events you took part of and attended?

I was grounded for a lot of the year with two slipped discs in my neck but once I tentatively got back on the road, my most enjoyable outing was our Pixel Lab residential week that took place in Genval in the Wallonian region of Belgium. This year we selected 16 producers with projects and 16 media professionals who attended without projects, all mentored by 18 of the world's leading innovators in the Cross-Media space. It's a privilege to be able to spend a whole week with some of the smartest and most creative people in the space and having a whole week to immerse myself in project work inspires me for the year to come. We're announcing new dates at the beginning of the year and a new regional partner. Watch this space.

In terms of up and coming projects that I'm excited about seeing completed, I can't wait to see *Get Over It!*, by our Pitch Pitch Winner, Paula Schargorodsky and *The Viking of 6th Avenue*, by Holly Elson, winner of our Pixel Lab Prize. One of my favourite completed projects this year was *A Short History of the Highrise*, the latest part of NFB and Kat Cizek's *Highrise* Project.

You see a lot of established as well as up-and-coming people in the crossmedia / transmedia field, where do you see the industry is heading? Becoming more mainstream or not?

We've seen a huge leap forward in terms of quality and ambition of submitted to The Pixel Market and The Pixel Lab, over the last year. There's a roster of fantastic projects that are about to launch this coming year. At this year's Pixel pitch, our jury frequently awarded projects 10 out of 10 – a first for this event.

However as a cautionary note, The TV & Film still operate in silos and their involvement in cross-media experiences is still conservative. When they do support interactive or cross-media projects, it's generally as a secondary product that is dependent on the funding and existence of a traditional primary media product before being commissioned.

Native and user-centric cross-media projects are rarely developed. Most of the projects

we see coming through our programmes are still developed around film or TV properties and because they are secondary, the funding comes last and the production often happens in a last minute rush impacting on the potential success for all aspects of the project. This is mostly due to the way projects are financed. Platform agnostic funds like Tribeca's New Media Fund and work work from broadcasters ARTE and ITVS are exceptions. There are no significant funds that focus on platform agnostic work, community building, brand development and R & D of content. It is at this early stage that soft funds should be active where private investors are loath to take risks.

What would your dream event look like?

My dream for Power to the Pixel's London Forum is to develop an audience-focused programme where we develop live experiences and showcase some of the projects we've nurtured through our Lab and Market programmes to audiences. It's really important to have spaces to showcase new types of media experiences, but at the same time a challenge since every project has a different shape and needs a specific space, set of platforms and technology. The huge challenge is finding venues and a sponsor in such an expensive city. Any offers are gratefully accepted!!!

My dream project – not necessarily an event is to develop an early concept incubation lab with seed money attached.

Finally, what are you expecting for 2014? Possibilities and challenges?

I hope that 2014 is the year when we stop misusing or using the "T" word. It alienates and confuses for the most part. We see multitudes of projects each year that describe themselves in the first line of their synopsis as a 'transmedia project' at the expense of simply describing the story and who it is aimed at. Arguments over language and definitions are tiresome – sorry to bring it up once more - but if we want to persuade people to engage and invest in our projects then we need to go back to basics and describe our ideas in terms of great stories and experiences that will excite, motivate and inspire audiences and users not in terms of tired and over-complicated buzzwords and info-graphics.

Interview - Mike Dicks

Mike has spent over 17 years exploring the multi-platform market working with producers and broadcasters to develop innovative cross platform formats. He's currently in start-up mode, launching the Media Writers Association - a B2B content company. Follow him on [@mikedicks](#).

Looking back at 2013, how do you view it in the light of different events? What were the highlights and why?

The Adolescence of Social

The aftermath of the [Facebook flotation](#) in 2012 and subsequent [Twitter float](#) in 2013 have seen the emergence into the troublesome teenage years for social networks, the ones where they will have to get serious about finding an income stream if they want to go to all those parties. And they have both done a lot of good work trying to understand the needs of the TV industry as a result.

The emergence of [SecondSync](#) as a reliable measuring system for social activity around TV shows, has made it a lot easier to compare social content ideas and the effect they have on audiences.

How Video took over the interweb

Google's short dalliance with YouTube [Channel investment](#) has kick started a number of media players into taking the platform more seriously, and expanding their own experiments and discovering the rules of the new video market.

[Video](#) is king, not necessarily Content in its broader sense, at the moment it would seem that everyone wants video online, on demand, and the TV companies can understand and profit from that.

How Brands discovered Editorial

[Brands becoming Broadcasters](#), the advertising industry is getting serious about making content, building audiences (as opposed to Consumers) and some of the work they are doing is better than the broadcasters have done. They are also rapidly learning some of the issues that Broadcasters solved many years ago.

Interactive Movies exist

[Grand Theft Auto V](#) reminded me that interactive movies already exist, they are still called games, but they are seriously immersive storytelling experiences. And the fact that it generated over [\\$1bn in just three days](#), puts the revenue from Apps and the Web into some context.

The Syfy channels [Defiance](#), demonstrated a bold attempt to create a TV and Games franchise in the mainstream, albeit Sci Fi, market – and despite mixed results something we should encourage.

Mobile is now the window on the web

Mobile has settled in as the primary interface to the internet for the majority of people, and that – rather than connected TV's – has made it possible to develop companion digital experiences.

You've been in digital since before digital almost even existed; now we're moving into multiplatform, second screen and transmedia storytelling with neckbreaking speed. What do you reckon are the most interesting areas right now?

I think some people are moving at breakneck speed, the majority of the TV industry is slowly turning to face the worlds of social and second screen, and they are looking ahead of themselves at the digital content makers (please don't make me say Transmediaists) for ideas. In truth, as with all the developments I've seen in my time in the digital content world (as you point out, from the days when it was all in black and white) the market moves at a variety of speeds. We're still looking for something that really demonstrates the coming together of mainstream TV and Digital, both editorially and economically. Finding a few of those, would be a really interesting development. As for cool stuff, I remain impressed with the work [The Project Factory](#) have done in the UK and the way [Monterosa](#) are developing second screen technology for producers.

Looking forward to 2014, what are you expecting? Possibilities and challenges?

If 2013 was about the growing up of Social and Mobile then 2014 will be the Third Console War year (You'll recall that Sony won CW1 and Nintendo CW2) this time Microsoft and Sony are head to head with their new Entertainment Centre devices the [XBOX One](#) and the [PS4](#), and both of them are looking for ways to bring gaming, TV, Film and social together behind a single paywall.

This has to be the biggest opportunity for digital people, the boxes can deliver the kind of connected, smooth and seamless platform we've always wished for from our creaky PC's, Macs and Smartphones – and there is nothing as good as a Cold War to release some serious development money into the creative market.

I'm not a big fan of wearable technology myself, but the [Google Glasses](#) and Samsung [Watches](#) will be roaming the streets next year, and I'm certain we'll be able to think of some cool things to do with them as far as story telling is concerned.

Finally, I'm really looking forward to launching and building [MWA \(the Media Writers Association\)](#) with an odd Finish chap I know. We're planning to create a network of smart people to provide social content around industry events, like [MIPTV](#), and have some fun on the way.

CHAPTER SEVEN - THE MIP BLOGS

I am a regular contributor to ReedMIDEM's blog over at blog.mipworld.com. Since a lot of the stuff I work on is very much in the television vein, the MIP Markets in April and October in Cannes, France, are important events, business- as well as inspiration- and networking-wise. In my blog posts I try to introduce different aspects of today's multi platform and transmedia world to the television industry, which traditionally is an industry not overly fascinated by new approaches (in the vein of "why fix it if it ain't broken", which is totally understandable, yet at times slightly frustrating).

This following chapter is a curation of the posts I wrote for MIPBlog over the past year.

Transmedia Pitching 101!

All the advice you need to prepare the perfect Content 360 pitch, in just five handy points!

So, that deadline is creeping nearer. You know, the deadline that will close the window for you to apply with your fabulous cross media / 360 / multiplatform / transmedia proposal for the chance to win €5000 in development funds from Russia's top independent broadcasting company, CTC.

Now, your idea is pretty awesome, I get that. Otherwise you wouldn't be entering into the competition, right? Well, since you're obviously going to be one of the finalists (m'kay?), here are five pieces of advice when it comes to preparing your idea for submission on the 24th of February, ahead of your pitch for the 8th of April:

1. Meet the brief

Easy to say; at times, surprisingly hard to accomplish. If you're entering this competition, chances are you already have something under development that "would fit the bill perfectly, if only I make a few adjustments". Probably not, no – unless it's actually something that meets the brief, as in it having been built with **proper transmedia storytelling methods**, have **mobile use integrated as a core facet** of the concept, have a twist or a hook that would **compel new users to sign up to the internet services of the main sponsor**, have a **high-visibility TV aspect** and so on. The brief is quite thorough in this case – make use of that, and meet it.

2. Wise up on your target

You're competing in Cannes at the MIPCube's Content 360 competition. Earlier sponsors have come from Korea, the UK and so on. This time, however, Mother Russia is calling. **What CTC and MTS are looking for is something that will appeal to an audience of 70 million people:** half the population of the country! This in turn means that **niche-ideas would need to be utterly outstanding** — on a Gangnam Style-level of outstanding — to convince the jury. Russia is the world's 6th largest economy, in GDP terms, and is a country that spans over nine time zones; something that poses its own demands on, for instance, the distribution of transmedia content that would strive for audience interaction. As always, thorough research is your friend.

3. Connect everything

One aspect of transmedia storytelling and of developing content according to those principles is the need to **develop all aspects of the content – on all platforms – hand in hand from the very beginning**. It is heartwarming to see more and more producers realising this, and more and more writers, thought leaders and lecturers pointing this out as a necessity. This goes for your pitch as well; **if you can't show that all parts fit together naturally and logically and actually enhance each other** and together offer a richer experience to the end user, **don't bother incorporating those parts in your pitch**. By all means, include them in further development work, if you're adamant that they will work, but don't pitch Facebook games and ARGs as part of your project just

because the brief stated that “games and live events are encouraged”. **Either they fit your concept and you’ve built them as an integral part of your story and story world, or they don’t. And if they don’t, omit them.**

4. Find your twist

There are quite a few case studies out there to look at for anyone feeling the need for inspiration — pages such as [this one](#) or [this one](#) might reach around to help stuck producers getting unstuck — but at the same time, **originality must be a priority**. This could be as overwhelming as a magically complete and enthralling world of fiction upon which a story is built for this competition specifically; or something building on well-known tropes, but with a decidedly unique and compelling twist. Strive to find that twist, and when you’ve found it, let it infuse the rest of your proposal with its uniqueness.

5. Crush it

As anyone who has ever heard a pitch or pitched something to someone knows; **it’s ultimately all in the delivery**. There are a ton of good advice on how to actually pitch your idea and I’m sure anyone with a modicum of Google-Fu will be able to unearth some gems in no time. If you don’t have ‘no-time’, here are [a couple](#) of [useful links](#). All you need to do now is **rehearse and repeat, convince and avoid defeat**. Then best of luck with your newfound partners in Russia!

Turning piracy on its head

Game of Thrones was last year's most-pirated show. MediaCity's Staffans asks how that buzz can be put to good use

A couple of weeks ago **David Petrarca**, the freelance director that has worked on True Blood and HBO's hugely successful fantasy epic **Game of Thrones**, [answered a question](#) at the Perth Writer's Festival. It was a question of piracy – **GoT having been the most pirated TV show on earth** – and Petrarca seemingly shrugged it off, stating that "the show thrives on cultural buzz".

The next day Petrarca [clarified that he was not condoning piracy](#) in any way, shape or form. He acknowledged, however, that piracy meant that there was an interest in and a hunger for GoT content – in essence, a "buzz". Petrarca finished by stating that **he hoped that technology would find a way to make the piracy issue redundant.**

I personally do not condone piracy either, but at the same time I view it as something we will never get rid of. If Petrarca hopes for technological solutions, I look for creative ones. **How can we turn piracy into buccaneering and making the pirates fight on our side?** What kind of agreements can creators and producers strike with the downloading brigades that would turn today's situation into a win-win for all parties involved? How can we, as TV industry people, create content that can be readily spread but at the same time generate sufficient revenue for everyone involved?

Spreading not only the content, but also the buzz about the content, is becoming increasingly important too. [A recent article in Wired Magazine](#) looked at how **traditional Nielsen ratings are a lot less relevant today than just a couple of years ago.** Instead, **it's all about the buzz a show can create**, the interactions, the impression on the national and global media landscape – a landscape that includes social media. In this more flexible world, creativity is again of essence. **Piracy in itself could be looked at as something to be harnessed to generate and promote such buzz and such interactions** – if done in the right way.

Right now the TV industry is, again, in a flux. There is the small matter of the [record-shattering Kickstarter campaign](#) to finance a **Veronica Mars** movie; a campaign that anyone with any interest in moving images is keeping close tabs on. Since the Veronica Mars collective can pull this off, what about all other hugely-popular-within-a-niche TV series that were discontinued? How about a **Jericho** movie, or a **Firefly** one? The sky seems to be the limit.

Then there is the question of everyone who is simply **bypassing the traditional channels and not going through any broadcaster at all.** [House of Cards](#) on Netflix is a prime example, but there are also successful indie-productions. One is the award-winning sci-fi drama [Pioneer One](#) from a couple of years back, **funded solely through donations and releasing its episodes on BitTorrent (a platform usually associated with piracy...).** All in all, things are not as they used to be, and we creators need to take note and take action.

With regards to piracy, and following up on the statements of Petrarca, **I turned to the**

torrenting community to try some theories. I believe there is a great mass of people who are right now torrenting TV series and movies for lack of a better alternative. A mass of people that do this with a bad conscience, be it from a fear of getting caught, for moral reasons or something else. **What if we could target these people and initiate an exchange of some kind, that would not necessary have to involve money?** What if we instead could build on the buzz, build a larger following, turn pirates into something else?

[A poll I made](#) turned out some interesting results. I asked people what they would be willing to do, if they could legally torrent a movie they wanted to see. Here are some key findings, from over 200 responses:

- **Four out of ten would respondents agree to be sent between three and five targeted commercials.** The creative challenge is obvious – how to make people actually notice these commercials? A simple solution could be to gamify the experience and do three follow-up questions on the commercial before viewing or downloading. It's all down to what fits the concept of the content or the associated brand.

- **More than one in five people would be happy to exploit their social media accounts to gain access to a movie;** this could work if you let a brand sponsor the movie, and in exchange for a Like on Facebook and a follow on Twitter, you'd be allowed to download the movie.

- Even more interestingly, **one in six would happily contribute creatively** – in writing, designing, graphics etc – in exchange for the right to torrent a certain movie. In this instance it is up to the developers and creators of the content to think – well in advance – about how to include the audience and collaborate with them, to make it as meaningful for them as for the brand.

- Of much less interest to the torrenting community was the **possibility to spread word about a sponsoring company or product to five friends.** No independent internet-wizard will want to be viewed as an errand boy for big companies. The possibility to work for an NGO (Red Cross, UNICEF etc) was also scorned, albeit a little less. Again, an avid Internet user would not willingly expose themselves as hawking their skills and reputation on behalf of a distant brand.

What to learn from all of this, then? Well, to conclude, I still believe **piracy is here to stay**, in one form or another. I also firmly believe **we need to get utterly creative around this fact.** This means being very clear on what the target is and what the tools, methods and content there are that will take us to that target. Finally, I'm hoping for less sandboxing and silo-ing and more genuine collaborations across department levels, so that the end result is as great as possible.

If we as the industry don't solve these issues, we can be quite sure that the world

will solve them for us. I'm afraid we might not like those solutions very much.

The Creative Fan: Friend or Foe?

The "Age of Social" that most of us are experiencing right now, through Facebooks and Twitters and LinkedIns and Quoras, brings a lot of [new possibilities](#) to [the world of television](#). But also a **bunch of hitherto not-so-often-faced challenges**.

For content creators and producers, one of these challenges is one that was addressed during a session I moderated at the [Nordic Game conference](#) a week ago. The session was named "Fan Fiction: Free marketing or IP anarchy?" and addressed the increasingly common issue of **fans electing to create content of their own**, linked to whatever you have created.

One of the members of my discussion panel was Carri Bugbee, a social media marketing exec from Portland, Oregon. Her trackrecord includes being one of the very first to explore the power of Twitter by creating the — unofficial — [@peggyolson](#) persona to intersync with the narratives of the hit series **Mad Men**. She's experienced the good sides – an overwhelming positive response from show fans and other co-creators – and the bad side – getting shut down by Twitter within a couple of days (yet later reinstated). I asked her how important will co-creating fans be for television in the future. Her reply merits a massive quote!

*I feel like **collaboration with fans is the ultimate form of social TV**. Web 2.0 brought about social media, which allows web users to interact with other people and content. Merging social media with TV (and film) means fans will (or should) be able to interact with and sometimes even influence outcomes for TV and movie content. That could be as basic as sharing favorite movie lines with friends on their social networks or as complicated as influencing the direction of a character or story arc online.*

*In many cases it won't be fan fiction because the majority of people on the web don't have the impetus to create something elaborate. Most just want to pop in, make a comment and be done. But there are still plenty of people who will want to create something bigger and I think those numbers will only continue to rise. After all, **we have an entire generation of teens and young adults who grew up with the power to create videos, sophisticated graphics and games at their fingertips** — in many cases, in their pockets. Naturally, they will use their favorite characters, scenes and story locations as jumping off points for stories.*

*Plus, creating fan fiction is becoming easier and more fun with new, specialized tools and platforms. [SocialSamba](#) has a great storytelling platform that not only provides simple ways to incorporate digital assets into a story, but also makes it possible to find people who like the same types of stories or genres such as Harry Potter or vampire narratives. There's a new tool launching late this summer called [Plotagon](#) that fan fiction creators will also love. **Fans will be able to make characters move and talk on screen just by typing a script.***

All that said, most people who work in the burgeoning social TV industry right now aren't thinking that much about fan fiction. The industry focus is primarily on building second-screen experiences for mobile devices.

One example comes from **Welcome to Sanditon**, a continuation of the Lizzie Bennet Diaries, which in turn was an adaptation of Pride and Prejudice that was released earlier this year. In Welcome to Sanditon, the users make up a large portion of the content. But there is a clear 90%-10% relation, [according to the creators](#) – **90% of the viewers, be they however young and tech-savvy, still want a good linear narrative more than anything else, while 10% want to jump in and co-create.** But with this number set to rise as interaction and co-creation finds new forms to better integrate with the linear narrative, how then do we as creators and producers act to foster positive co-creation and avoid detracting and negative fan interactions? Bugbee sees simplicity as the core:

The best way to foster co-creation is to make it easy. Give your fans cool tools and digital assets they can mash up, promote those opportunities so fans know about them, and reward fans for their efforts. That could include a contest for the best content or character ideas or creating a community where people can meet like-minded fans, share ideas and work together.

There is an **understandable reluctance amongst IP owners** and content creators to hand over part of the control over IPs to the eager hands of engaged fans. On the other hand, providing reasons to share, mash-up and co-create and giving the audience the adequate tools to do so, can only help IP owners to steer possible fan fiction in the desired direction. Also, **an active audience tends to behave better if they know they are being observed by the original creators.** So an acknowledgment of the audience's interaction is a given. One final question – are there any definite no-nos when it comes to audience interaction and fan fiction? Says Bugbee:

The biggest mistake is to approach this stuff from an old-school marketing or production mentality where you would budget time and resources to support it for a finite amount of time and then just shut it down when that time is up. You can't approach social media—whether that's fan-fiction or any other activity—the way we did business before.

*Time-shifted and binge viewing has dramatically changed when people consume content. Streaming and VOD (video on demand) have changed how people consume content. That means, if you want to build an avid fan base, you need to support fans with engagement opportunities over shorter and longer product cycles than we've been used to. **If someone wants to do everything you've laid out in one day, they should be able to. If they want to do it two years after your programme's initially aired, they should be able to do that too.***

If you want to build a community, that's a 24/7 endeavour. For example, you can't assign community managers or customer support personnel to work nine-to-five, Monday through Fridays if people are most active at 10pm on Saturday nights and might need help at that time.

*Of course, the ideal approach is to build something self-sustaining so members of the community can help each other, but that takes time and requires critical mass. The point is, **you can't just drop the ball and leave people hanging when fans expect to interact with your content.** The world has changed. Fans and customers expect to interact with*

and discuss content on their own schedules.

So, there you have it. Now, only thing that remains to do is to boldly go forth and create!

Five ways to stay in the loop this summer

So, it has come to this.

We're standing staring into the collective abyss of the annual holidays. **Weeks, if not months**, of not obsessively checking Twitter feeds, of not reading half a dozen industry blogs every other hour, of **not having a calendar shouting appointments at us incessantly**. Once we sink into it, there is no guarantee we'll ever be able to crawl our way up again.

How will we cope?

Fear not. Below you will find five handy tips, to help you keep your edge and build that ladder that eventually will let you climb out of the pit of lethargy and see the light of the multiplatform TV industry again!

1. Get to know your audience

Now is your chance. You will have days and weeks to **immerse yourself in your target audiences** to really get to know them, their tastes, their needs, their wishes and their desires. Book that **Mediterranean cruise if you're doing something for the affluent elderly!** Go on blind dates to your heart's content if you're producing a dating show! It probably is slightly more fun if you're working on Temptation Island than on Dog TV, but that's not to say you can't enjoy yourself... and learn a thing or two, no matter what your target audience is.

2. Instigate a viral marketing campaign

So, we've already established that you have nothing planned for your holidays and no one who can stake a claim on your time, right? Well, now is the time to tackle the most mythical beast of them all – the viral marketing campaign. How in the name of [insert preferred deity here] can anything we do go viral? Now's the time to find out. **Shoot a clip of you pushing some ladies into a pool* and getting chased by their spouses**, put it on YouTube, and try to follow all the great hints and strategies that are posted all over the internet. Evaluate the results, rinse and repeat.

3. Get social and build your brand

Since you have nothing but time on your hands, it's time to do all that stuff that you know you should have been doing during the winter. No, not exercising, duh! I'm talking about building a credible personal brand for yourself online and on social media, of course! Set a goal of at least **500 tweets per day for a period of four weeks, along with 10 Facebook updates per day**. If you tweet this much, it will last you the whole year, I promise!**

4. Diversify

Now's your chance to **get out of your comfort zone** and go look at the world from another angle! This will help you immensely when it comes to generating new and fresh ideas come autumn. So, mix it up! **Don't read the book you're reading, read another!**

Don't meet the same people you always meet, meet new people! Don't do the hobbies you like and love, do other hobbies! **Don't stay married to the same person, marry a new person!***** You'll feel as good as new, come back-to-work-time!

5. Stay in the loop

Make sure you **use at least a couple of the most important catchphrases around in every conversation, so you don't get rusty**. Tucking in your kids at night? Tell them the story of the siblings ROI and ROE who always got mixed up and never could agree on which of them was more important. Giving a speech at a wedding? Tell the story of the two kings – Content and Context – who both vied for the hand of the fair maiden Audience Engagement. Make sure to also drop “transmedia”, “multiplatform”, “UGC” and “Big Data” into the mix.****

Do all this, and in NO TIME AT ALL this purgatory will be over and done with, and we can start looking forward to some meaningful existence again. See you all at MIPCOM!

** The author would like to stress that it is advisable to agree on this with said ladies and spouses before the actual event.*

*** The author would like to stress that he had his fingers crossed behind his back while writing that sentence, and hence isn't promising anything of the kind*

**** The author would like to stress that in no way is it advisable to seek divorce based on a general opinion in a blog post*

***** The author would like to stress that he does not accept responsibility for possible consequences if following this advice to the letter...*

Is the Author an Endangered Species?

In case you hadn't noticed, the media world has evolved a little bit over the last decade or so. Or, *technically* speaking, it has. With regards to the audience, you might actually rather say that it's on its way back to its roots.

I regard myself as an author, a creative and a developer. For a considerable amount of years, this role – which also could be the director, the script writer or some other, similar role – has been an authoritative role. **The Author created, the Audience received.** The Director directed, the Audience consumed. At times research departments perhaps asked the Audience for their opinions and preferences. Some adventurous creators went to the Audience and based their creations on these experiences.

Today, I might still be an author, but authoritative? This is no longer a given.

Before the rise of the Author as the harbinger of stories and experiences, storytelling was a community affair. **The medieval theatre audience was an active part of any performance, supporting certain characters, opposing others, and voicing their opinions and preferences loudly and clearly** – at times even throwing food at the actors. Similar behaviour is still apparent in, for instance, the Japanese Kabuki theatre, where actors can step out of their roles and interact with the audience, who get to respond.

Today, the signs are that other media are also moving back to this mindset. Now, though, we are no longer looking at an audience of a couple of hundred of people in a theatre, interacting for a set amount of time, a couple of hours at most. Rather, we are looking at a potentially global audience of hundreds of millions, interactive 24/7 for as long as they retain interest in the author's creations. If the content is compelling, engaging, immersive and gains a following, the author will – sooner rather than later – also be looking at a host of very much unofficial co-creators popping up left and right, producing fan fiction, memes, spoof videos, mashups, social media content and so on.

Today, then, three main alternatives are apparent for authors, when faced with this flattering but potentially challenging situation:

1. Pay no heed. If you ignore the interactive and co-creating audience, you will probably be able to continue creating what you want to create, without having to bother your mind with unnecessary distractions. For some, this might be the only viable option. Don't get me wrong, **the end result might be just as stunning. But everyone involved is missing out on possible interaction** that could enhance the end experience for author as well as audience.

EXAMPLES:

This could be anyone from authors with a capital "A" that wouldn't dream of diluting their creations by involving the audience – think **Woody Allen, Quentin Tarantino** and other A-listers – to newcomers and smaller outfits that simply don't have the skills or the resources to explore a shared-authorship direction.

2. Delegate. Acknowledging that people are fascinated by your creations is one thing,

but to find the time to actually do something about it another matter altogether. The route many established authors choose – in all fields of media, not only TV or publishing – is to **delegate the interaction to other people. Perhaps the community managers of a TV channel, or the social media managers of a publishing house**; if you have access to such services, it might make sense to avail yourself of them to let you keep your peace of mind and your creative process free from outside influences.

EXAMPLES:

This is where you'll find most of the productions around the world that have *some* money behind them, productions with enough funds for there to actually exist someone to delegate to. One example is **J.K. Rowling and the Harry Potter franchise**, which – after years of ignoring fan-fiction – opened up [Pottermore](#) as a first step into connecting interactively with the fans. Another example is **True Blood**, where Charlaine Harris' books, translated into a great TV-success for HBO, have spawned a lot of [interactive content](#) for the audience, including webisodes and blogs.

3. Embrace. Some authors find that they thrive off of interaction, off of new influences, new ideas and new connections. Whether it's an ego-trip or a genuine interest in what the fans have to say about your creations, if you feel inspired by exchanges such as these, embracing the interaction might be the best thing for you to do.

EXAMPLES:

This would include authors in the multiplatform and transmedia genre, where interaction is incorporated in the development process from the very start. An example is [The Cosmonaut](#), the spanish sci-fi movie that had thousands of producers involved, innovating the financing as well as the development and production of the project. Another area to watch are the different crowdsourced projects, such as "[TV by the People](#)" (more about that from Armoza's Daniel Ravner, [here on MIPBlog](#)).

As a final piece of advice for any creators, producers and authors reading this: **try it yourself**. Find a narrative, a story, a TV series, something, that resonates with you, that you can feel that "yes, this is something I'd like to contribute to!". Then try it out. Then, take those experiences with you, next time you create something, and apply them to your content and your strategies. Chances are, you'll be pleasantly surprised.

Where is television heading?

Where is television heading? The million-dollar question – strike that, the *billion* dollar question – is asked with increasing frequency around the globe. On the one hand, there looks to be no immediate cause for alarm; TV viewing figures have not experienced anywhere near the plunge that was predicted some years ago. On the other hand, **the industry on a whole is recognising a fundamental shift in audience behaviour**, a shift that can only mean that an equally fundamental change is looming.

[Jeff Gomez](#), CEO of **Starlightrunner Entertainment**, transmedia strategists and producers for *Men in Black 3*, *Avatar*, *Pirates of the Caribbean* and *The Amazing Spiderman 2*, sees **an audience that no longer has the same relationship with television as before** and must be approached in new ways on new platforms:

“What’s very interesting is the migration of young people away from television. If they’re not watching the screen in the living room, they’re going to need to become and be made aware that a certain TV show exists in the first place. Even just to get them to go to iTunes or to stream it. Transmedia components help the creators and the producers to place the story world – the intellectual property - in different context across different media platforms, that the audience can encounter there. It’s the subject matter, and the characters that are going to draw them in – not the fact that it, like television today, is located on a single media that you have to make an appointment to go and see.”

“Transmedia is essentially a way to pull people in who are not really watching TV anymore. That in and of itself makes it a model well worth considering by the networks.

[Erinrose Sullivan](#) is a digital marketing strategist and former director of global insights and strategy for **Electronic Arts**. Looking at the TV industry and the world of gaming, she sees a shift that can be directly correlated to the active nature of the audience.

“The interactivity that is happening in television right now is actually being driven by the consumer. Through tweeting about the shows, through campaigns to prevent shows from being canceled, through consumers talking about plot lines and how the plots should develop... Effectively, the audience is pushing this change onto the television industry. When they watch a show and see an actor they like, they go and look him up on IMDB. Essentially, the consumers are creating their own interactivity, patchworking their own experience. TV and TV shows need to start watching that and providing adequate opportunities for the audience to engage with the content

The shift is also noticeable on the children’s content market. Made In Me’s [Eric Huang](#), formerly of **Penguin UK** and **Mind Candy**, sees an increasing awareness of the importance of true worldbuilding for children’s properties:

“These days, when we’re commissioning a book and it has TV potential, we’ll be thinking stories that could be told as film content or animated content from the very beginning. In the past, TV and books was more licensing; if a TV series originated from a book it was an adaptation of the book, and vice versa. Nowadays, stories are different. Publishers are much more open about having the TV be more interpretative. There may be new characters, they might even look a bit different but they also fit within what I guess I’d call a transmedia. If we create original content that expand the story world, that’s something

that the audience reacts positively to.

[Ingrid Kopp](#) is director of digital initiatives at the **Tribeca Film Institute** and has noticed a world where the shape of the content fits the traditional TV screen less and less:

“I think television will become less important. The content is already flowing among a lot of different screens. The traditional concept of ‘TV’ is not going to be of importance. In essence it’s just a distribution avenue, and there will be a lot of content that doesn’t fit that shape. There are many questions though. When things are not 16:9 and not 60 minutes or 30 minutes, where do they go? How do you get them to where they should go and how do you make money out of that?”

All in all, there is no denying that change is on its way. The jury is still out though on how quickly or how slowly this is going to happen. **Producers who now start preparing now**, taking into consideration multiplatform strategies, an active, co-creating audience and the need to move with the times, **will be the ones that are the best equipped to foster their stories and, in the end, see them propagate the media world.**

What can TV learn from online producers?

As online is becoming increasingly important for content creators, both as a way to tell stories, to reach customers and to gain new revenue, the challenges of working in a new environment are becoming apparent to many people in the television industry.

Simply taking a show from the back catalogue and putting it on YouTube is no guarantee for success and sustained traction, as many have come to realise. At the same time, online native companies such as **Netflix** and **Amazon** are knuckling down and investing heavily in content that would grace any TV channel's schedule, but are for-online only.

But there are people who have been online for years and years already, creating series and content that draw on the powers of the internet and harness the best ways of working online for an online audience. Many of these web series producers know what it takes to succeed.

So, what can a TV producer learn from online producers? **How should TV people approach online, and why?** I spoke with Carrie Cuthforth-Young, the executive director of the **IWCC** ([Independent Webseries Creators of Canada](#)) to get some answers.

Simon Staffans: So, what's the deal with web series? What makes them so good?

Carrie Cuthforth-Young (photo): They've **enabled content creators to tell the stories they want to tell on the platforms they want them delivered on, directly to audiences**. This is ideal for groups that have been marginalised – women, people of colour, LGBT and so on. TV is moving into web now, as business models are beginning to emerge and the audiences are increasingly attracted to web content, the millennials in particular.

The **challenge for a lot of content creators now is to try to become their own hybrid distribution system, beyond leaning only on YouTube**. And to map out how will they get that direct contact with the audience. If you only have an audience on a platform such as YouTube (outside of subscribers), but you don't have their contacts, you don't have their e-mail addresses, you don't have them as an audience – you have their views from last week or a year ago. And what good does that do you now?

> Hang on, you said something about revenue?

There are quite a few **emerging revenue models**. What **Kickstarter** is doing right now, is **allowing content creators to understand this as more of a business and see opportunities for financing**. It may be possible in the future to use the mechanics of the Kickstarter model – or other crowdfunding services – not to raise capital, but to monetise content. One can basically look at it as a subscription model. But **there needs to be a shift in approach. Look at Red Bull!** They're an energy drink company that learned to be a production house. What **production companies now need is to learn how to become the energy drink sellers!** The key is to **figure out how to turn an**

audience into sales.

Also, we're seeing brands opening up to the world of web series. Some find that through web series, it's possible for them to reach niche audiences much more effectively.

> Finally, how do you view the web series industry and the TV industry collaborating?

Web producers have some things figured out. They're really smart when it comes to tech. They're really good at being creative, they're really good at form and online delivery and distribution, they are learning news business models as they emerge. **TV producers understand production protocols and distribution models that web series producers may be unaware of.** There is an opportunity here, instead of "us vs them", for a lot more collaboration to get these two worlds working together.

CARRIE'S FIVE TIPS FOR MOVING INTO WEB SERIES

1. Try to **think more creatively** around producing for the web than just making a television series and putting it online. It's a lot about form as well. If we look at **Lizzie Bennet Diaries**, one reason they did so well was that they took a long hard look at how the vlog production model worked, and created something that drew on the strengths of that. **Whatever distribution platform you decide to use has its own mechanics**, which can be gamed quite differently, as long as you're aware of them.
2. **Stop looking at financing as the marker of success.** It's not fruitful to throw money at a production for a web series, while ignoring the most important parts – audience engagement, development and growth, as well as conversion to monetisation.
3. **TV producers should work with strategists; either transmedia strategists or audience development strategists**, that know how to deliver an audience, and how to retain and convert that audience into an audience for the long tail engagement that the web is best suited for.
4. You need to **have a very clear strategy.** We're no longer in the wild west of media when it comes to web content, we're at the gold rush. And as with any gold rush, there are going to be carcasses littering the sides of the roads, since the competition for eyeballs is so fierce. Be very clear about **WHY you are doing what you are doing. Who is your audience? What do you want them to do?** How do you want them to do it? And what is the value you're offering them to get them to do that?
5. Be prepared for the fact that everything is collapsing and converging. TV understands how to do high production value, market really well and target huge mainstream audiences. But **there is a need to find out how to tell stories that target niche communities.** If there is a need in society and we don't see that recognised on television, **that's where we can see an opportunity to create something online.**

CHAPTER EIGHT - IN A STATE OF FLUX

I've heard this phrase quite a few times over the past twelve months; that the media world - and why not the world on the whole - is "in a state of flux". I tend to agree; things are moving along at neck-breaking speed right now. Any producer, creator, distributor, buyer, commissioner or regular member of the audience is hard-pressed to keep up.

New possibilities crop up constantly, as well as new challenges and new pitfalls. The challenge is identify which is which and act accordingly. "Fail Fast, Forward", as I mentioned earlier in this publication, is the approach more and more people see as the only way to even remotely try to keep up with the times.

This chapter, then, is dedicated to all the changes happening around us, and all that they might bring.

Torrents in exchange for personal data, collaboration

[02/03/2013](#)

I [conducted a mini-poll yesterday](#), as a follow-up to [a blog post I wrote](#) on the need for creators to get creative around torrenting and piracy. This is how I thought and the results of the poll (*disclaimer – I'm aware this might not hold up to full scientific scrutiny, so take all of this at face value please*):

Targeting and contribution

I targeted the torrenting community via a couple of sources; Ernesto at [TorrentFreak](#) was kind enough to RT my query to his/their 36k followers. I started two threads on Reddit, on in the /r/torrents subreddit and one in the /r/piracy. I also shared the poll on Facebook and to my own followers on Twitter and Scoopit. Most visitors came via Twitter, but Reddit was a very close second.

All in all, at the time of writing, 207 people have answered the poll. I could wait for more, but the trend regarding the answers has been the same from the first 20 answers onwards, so in that sense there's really no need.

Questions

I decided to use a maximum of five different alternatives so as not to scare people off. A couple of the questions had to do with giving up personal information in exchange for getting to torrent a movie legally, one was asking if a user would agree to be used as conduit to his/her friends, and a the last two asked about co-creating or collaborating in some way, in exchange for the right to torrent a movie.

The results

38,16% said they'd be willing to have three to five targeted ads sent to them. This is to be expected; we're subjected to targeted ads daily anyway, so if we really can get something meaningful in exchange for our attention, why not? Now, how to make sure everyone just doesn't go to the loo when these ads are on? Creatively (and with the risk of annoying people), why not "gamify" *shudder* this process? Show three targeted ads (and this implies you've given the provider SOME information about yourself, in order for your ads to be able to be targeted) and before letting the user start torrenting, **have a three-question quiz that has something to do with the content in the ads.** "So, how much IS the Double Cheeseburger this week?" or "What color was the new Galaxy SIII?" etc. Make it fun enough and people might not mind answering them.

22,22% were willing to give out their social media presence – Facebook, Twitter etc – in exchange for the right to torrent a movie. Now, this is in a way a one-trick pony; when someone's got your FB Like they've got it, and they needn't give you another movie one week later (unless you un-Like and Like again, not sure how that works). One

solution would be **to have one particular company be the sponsor of one particular movie**. Say – Coca Cola sponsors Django Unchained; you Like Coke and you get to see Django. Next week it's Intel with The Hobbit, and so on – or a combination of several sponsors per movie.

15,94% would agree to collaborate creatively with writings, graphic designs, logo suggestions etc. I think this is pretty neat. Granted, you couldn't be sure of the level of the participants and the quality of submissions, but I'm not sure you need to think of it that way either. If someone creates something for your project, they've invested a bit in it. Since what I want to achieve – through great content and meaningful interaction / collaboration – is a sense of loyalty (that goes both ways, naturally), this might be a very good step on that road. Especially if I view this as **one step on the road to creating a community around the content**. I'm fully aware that this needs some serious planning and that a lot of mistakes will be made and a lot of case studies examined, but if one in six torrenters would be willing to contribute creatively, we should be able to harness that.

The last two – "do 30 mins of promotional work for an NGO such as the Red Cross or UNICEF" and "promote something to five of your friends" – **only got 10,63% and 7,73% respectively**. This, I believe, has to do with integrity. On the Internet, **no one wants to be seen as a lackey to someone else**, an errand-boy doing the bidding of some master – not even if the master is someone like UNICEF. Everyone has a reputation and a facade to uphold, and no one wants that to be disrupted by Big Corps.

Conclusion

Well, in brief, I think it's quite clear that people don't mind being subjected to ads to get what they want. We would need to become more meaningful with the ads though. What I'd like to do is experiment more with the collaborative possibilities – how to do it and what to actually do.

Thanks to everyone who participated! To a future with still better content and better distribution models!

How to disrupt television – six tips to start you off

[20/01/2013](#)

During the eight years I've been working in the television format field, I've nearly lost track of all the people who've claimed they were going to "disrupt television". I'll freely admit that I've echoed that sentiment too, over the years. Moreover, I'll readily admit that I've not given up on it either. Disrupt television, and you'll be onto a goldmine; not only financially, but also socially and storytelling-wise.

Disrupting television is, however, a lot easier said than done. Many attempts have been made, and television as a whole has shrugged its shoulders and carried on with business as usual. For anyone contemplating being the person to actually disrupt television, here are six starting points to take note of (and please note there is no finger-pointing here, these points are conclusions I've come to myself, after having banged my head on each and every of these walls at one point or another):

Understand the people in television

This might be news to some, but the television industry is made up of hundreds of thousands of people. They might just have started out or they might have been in the biz for decades; they might be operating cameras or work as show runners, or they might be in the upper echelons of major broadcasters. They're all people, though. And they all have the same traits as people overall; some are reluctant to change, some embrace it. Some are in it for the money, some for the art, and so on. What anyone wanting to disrupt television need to embrace is the simple fact that they need to take into account a long history of how things have been done, and try to argue against this history, while viewing figures are still as strong as ever. I saw a good example of this issue at MIPCOM 2012, when YouTube held a workshop for producers – "How to work with YouTube" – where there was very little discussion and quite a lot of "listen to us telling you how you should function and produce". Yes, YouTube has a lot of weight to throw around, but at the same time, actually listening to and respecting your counterpart is usually a good way to start off collaborations. **Research the people, how they talk and how they function, so that you can talk on the same level to them.**

Actually watch some TV to start with

It's interesting, how many of the people I've met working on disruptive stuff that don't actually watch television. They might have a favorite series, that they torrent once a week, or they might catch sports events or the occasional other event, but they don't watch television. **It should be an essential part of anyone working on disrupting a field, to familiarize themselves with that field of activity before attempting to disrupt it.** Again, look at it as research. But never just watch TV. Stay focused and analyze what you see, mirroring your analysis against what you're working on.

Make it easier, or cheaper, or better

There are only three ways you will gain enough interest for whatever it is you are doing for it to get any sort of traction within the TV industry. **Whatever it is that you're trying to do it has to make people's work or their output or their connection to the audience either easier or cheaper or better.** Preferrably all three, of course; if a choice has to be made I, as a creator, would go for better over easier and easier over cheaper; other people in the biz would probably have other preferences.

Understand that there is no one fix for all

Again, so many of the people I talk to claim that their solution will work across the TV industry. It won't – simple as that. **If it's not down to territories and cultural identities and tradition, it's down to even more basic stuff such as audience and genres and broadcaster policies and ratings.** A thorough market research is the one thing essential to perform to break through this. You need to know WHO would need what you have on offer and have a pretty good guess as to HOW they might react when you pitch it to them. Even then, if you've managed to land a deal, make sure you keep check on everything you can keep check on; even within the walls of a broadcaster, the differences between different departments – silos – might be staggering.

The audience is – again – your channel

I wrote a post earlier on the audience being your channel to utilize to connect to other members of the audience. **The same goes for broadcasters; the best way to get to them is through their viewers, without TV being attached at all from the beginning.** Take for example the instant social media behemoth that is Twitter. Since people have started using Twitter and discover that the instant communication possibility is both exhilarating, interesting and a little bit frightening, and that it is as made for tweeting and commenting along to different types of content, broadcasters have begun to take note as well. They HAD to, as people were talking about their shows on Twitter anyway; now they hashtag every other show on their channels. By not giving a damn about the TV industry, Twitter impacted it more than many other ventures around the world.

Be prepared to let partners in, or to let go of control

Finally, **there is next to no way that you will have your solution to yourself, if you want to get into the industry and make an impact.** Just as with TV formats, where the first broadcaster to agree to broadcast a first series in most cases automatically assume that 20-30% of the rights to the format should belong to them. And they usually do. Also, distributors, co-production partners etc, they all have their say and their claim on percentages of your idea. My suggestion would be to lawyer up and defend your corner and your proposal – within the limits of decent behaviour and common sense, naturally.

Interview - Carrie Cuthforth-Young

Carrie Cuthforth-Young is a storyteller, producer, and strategist as well as a passionate community builder in the transmedia and web series space. Follow her on [@CC WHY](#).

As the executive director of IWCC – the web is already immensely important for content, yet for a lot of creators the money isn't there yet. Do you think it'll change, or is it a question of funds being spread too thin?

It's a very complicated question and the landscape is constantly changing. I think for more content creators to make sustainable livings and even profit a few shifts need to happen (and I see evidence of this already).

One, we are moving past the R&D phase of web series pioneering in which viable business models are beginning to emerge. That doesn't mean new models and opportunities won't continue to be generated and exploited, but I see the beginnings of certain practices becoming codified. In Toronto we are rapidly moving from a "community" or "scene" to an industry, and with that will come a further rise in best practices. The peer-to-peer professional development of the community can only lead to the rise of sustainable productions all around.

Second, the cultural shift online is happening with millennials. They did not grow up in the Stewart Brand era of "information is meant to be free". They are not willing to spend hours googling for free content as Gen X'ers were. They are much more likely to pay for subscriptions for the curated content that appeals to them. This cultural shift needs to be encouraged by content creators educating fans on why we need money to both produce and sustain the niche content they would not otherwise have access to. Jason Leaver's [Out with Dad](#) is a great example of this, and I think Kickstarter has had a hand in this cultural shift: content costs money to produce = support creators to produce your content.

Third, there is a cultural shift happening with content creators too. Five years ago they might have been more willing to produce things with sweat equity just to gain an audience, but they are becoming more insistent that their fanbase supports them towards sustainability or demanding of better rev shares from distribution platforms. This trend will continue.

Name three things/projects/events in 2013 that knocked you off your feet (or that at least made a favourable impression on you)!

I think on an industry level: [Lizzie Bennet Diaries](#) for sure. There were a few things they hit upon really well: the format taken from the vlogging model, content appealing to cross-generation of girls-women (which is bizarrely underserved and considered niche), their genius Kickstarter campaign ([which I wrote this case study on](#)). Yes the transmedia elements for audience development were done really well, but what should also not be overlooked is the PR machine Pemberley Digital has managed to become.

The web is so funny in that you can discover great shows for the longtail, so some things that have knocked my socks off in 2013 might have been created earlier. I've just been introduced to [Standard Action](#) while in Vancouver and it was not only hilarious but also they are doing some amazing creative things in regards to format strategically informed

by their last [crowdfunding campaign](#): I was impressed.

It's hard for me to talk beyond the obvious because I'm seated in the position of choosing favourites, but the beauty of the web is we don't have to think in terms of competition. The things I tend to like are not from a fan or audience perspective but my respect for the creative dev into financing or audience development. I'm a huge fan of Nuno Bernardo in this respect. I followed his transmedia strategy for [Beat Girl](#) (and before that [Aisling's Diary](#)) as a prospective template for [All Your Fates](#).

To shake things up and put them on the right track, do you think a revolution would be necessary? Where in that case – in transmedia circles, in television? How would you like such a revolution to turn out?

I think I touched upon this already above. Transmedia, outside of artistic practices, theatre and web series, is really more of a service industry with a few exceptions. My focus is on independent practice and I'm excited to see more than a few transmedia independent creators busting out to do great things in the new year, particularly those with web series seated at its spine. Television will continue to converge with digital and reshape some of the web into its own fashion.

Politically, there will always be push back on the net to keep it open and democratic. The [IWCC](#) is supportive of initiatives like [Open Media](#) in Canada and others around the world that are working hard in the space, and believes vigilance and patience is required to stem the constant tide of politicians or media conglomerates to bend the internet to the will and profitability of a few. Revolutions can get a ground swell of support because they seem exciting but this is temporary. Lobbying and sustained protest is a grind, but crucial.

The function of the IWCC however is to inform and educate, and be inclusive of a diverse range of voices, range of web series models that are specifically independent, audience focused, creator driven. So we will continue to present and support the needs of creators to various bodies including the public.

What do you envision for 2014? Possibilities, challenges?

Well, there will be an explosion of literary adaptations banked from the success of Lizzie Bennet Diaries (happening all ready). It's really hard to predict. Two years ago people would insist that Youtube HAD to be your primary if not only platform or fuggedabout it. That has radically changed particularly this last year. Maker's announcement of buying Blip is definitely a game changer, but who knows what will spring from this.

The IWCC's continued focus will be to encourage the spirit of independence and the continuing development of a vibrant industry through further peer-to-peer support, knowledge sharing, cross-promotional audience strategies and so forth. In addition to [TO WebFest](#), which I can now safely announce will happen May 9-11 at Toronto's [Harbourfront Centre](#), the IWCC has several initiatives in the works that we hope will no doubt have positive impact for both our members and their audiences.

Interview - Brian Clark

Brian Clark, CEO of GMD Studios, is an experimental media theorist and experience design producer. Follow him on [@gmdclark](#).

You successfully Kickstarted an initiative for civil debate online – how was 2013 otherwise? Do you feel online is an environment well suited for debating in? Or is it more a question of "fishing where the fish are"?

I'm far more interested in dialogue than debate, as debate implies a winner and a loser. I think we spend too much of the collective energy of online culture debating and frequently miss out on the far more remarkable quality of digital technology to create meaningful dialogues. It is one of the big tragedies of the first two decades of digital media that we chose to optimize for clicks and page impressions and not towards quality of connections between people.

The great news is: we don't have to build the Web the way we've been building it, and most of the core experiments on how we might do it differently have already been done. We just ignored them because they weren't "One Weird Tip to Increasing Revenue on Your Website That Will Amaze You!"

So, how would you want to rebuild (or build on) the web?

Most of all, by modeling more of what brings the best out of people in real life, rather than assuming that the rules of human interaction are all set aside or rewritten online. I think we can all point to places where that just isn't working out for us as a society.

Your post on "Transmedia's failures as a scene" stirred up some controversy; one argument being that transmedia has tried to encompass way to many different strands of projects and initiatives. Do you think transmedia can ever move from that? How?

Does it really matter, though? I've always been more interested in how terms like transmedia could change the way we could talk to each other as practitioners. It remains a useful term if it is used with some specificity and suffers, like any term, if it gets stretched into two large of an umbrella. More smaller scenes. That's what we need to fuel more innovation in the scene.

More specifically, I think the Achilles' Heel for transmedia might have been the community's desire for instant professionalization. I hear people complain they can't find jobs with good salaries to make transmedia. I have to remind them that writers, filmmakers, musicians, entrepreneurs etc. don't have that either. This means people pour way too much energy into positioning and credentializing themselves, and that makes substantive conversations so much more challenging.

You've stated that you "put the audience at the center of my work". Do you feel this is an area where practices are lacking at the moment? Can it be rectified in that case – more incentives for producers to integrate audiences perhaps (through for instance more data on the positives of doing so)?

I do. I think far too many design practices work from an assumption that all audience

members have the same experience. One of the most influential new ideas I've been absorbing into my own work comes from Tommy Edison, a blind film critic. Serious: BlindFilmCritic.com. Some people who watch films are blind, and hearing the experiences of what works and what doesn't for Tommy has changed the way I think about film edits. I think, as storytellers, there's no better thing for us to do than fall in love with our audiences instead of just imagining the proper way they should consume our work.

So, is there a love potion of any kind to get the audience to fall in love with us back?

Of course: create triggers for meaningful experiences and audiences always fall in love with you. Or they hate you, that's meaningfulness too. You just can't let that go to your head or believe you as the author (rather than the audience) created that meaning. It is far harder to fall in love with each member of your audience: we've got more work cut out for us as creators. But I can tell you, I'm never really interested in work that doesn't have that dynamic in it anymore, so it clearly has meaningful rewards for us as creators to put that effort in.

What are your thoughts on 2014 – possibilities and challenges?

So color me an old man, but this year was the 20th birthday of the Web. For the first two decades, we were largely obsessed with how we could create the digital equivalent of familiar things, much the way the first two decades of television were largely radio with pictures or stage performances captured to video. The really interesting stuff was always going to come after we worked through those basics.

What would you categorize as really meaningful stuff? Projects for social good? For revolution?

Ultimately, I think the most meaningful stuff is as simple as holding up a mirror to the audience and letting them see themselves in it. Make them meaningful, because meaning is personal as much as it is universal. To crib one of Brian Eno's descriptions, people listen to music and read books and watch images to transform themselves, if only into someone who is less bored if nothing else. Give them an opportunity to transform themselves.

Interview - Louisa Heinrich

Louisa Heinrich - strategist, speaker, designer, instigator, and the founder of futures agency Superhuman. Follow her on [@customdeluxe](#).

Among a lot of other things, you're a strategist. Looking at the state of media today, could producers put more effort into strategic work for their projects?

A big part of strategy is devising frameworks that help us make better decisions when we're in the thick of the work - to that end, some strategic thinking could definitely make producers' work more powerful. I think we miss out on a lot of opportunities to create deeper connections with audiences - understandably, we tend to be completely focussed on the current piece of work, and thus we fail to see how content and services can interlink to convey stories more powerfully. Understanding these connections better can also help to uncover new formats and commercial opportunities. Spending a little time up front considering this could make a big difference.

With producers and companies chasing the "next big thing" with increasing fervor, what would you give for advice when it comes to standing out of the crowd with a project or a service?

Put people first! People are the ones who will take money from their pockets to buy your wares, make your programme or brand a household name, engage with your story - or not. People also evolve at a much more reasonable pace than technology. Ultimately the tech isn't what's important - what it can do for people is. And when it comes to stories, we humans tend to like the most the ones we feel belong to us: either because they happened to us, or because we've known them since childhood, or because we've created or told them ourselves, or simply because they resonate.

If the focus is on that, suddenly opportunities emerge where before there was just noise. At the moment, interactive content is always thought of as secondary, supporting. But does it have to be? Interaction has the power to truly draw an individual into a story or scenario - if we begin to think of interactive content and services as equal and complementary, we might be onto something.

Have you experienced any interactive project that has offered you just that which you describe - being drawn into the story?

The Lost interactive experience (though it looks dated now) was great and immersive, a wonderful complement to the linear series. And the Walking Dead game and others like it do something similar, placing the player in the world of the programme. But what I'm hoping to see next is a step beyond that - being able to, for example, take on the role of a character or historical figure, interact and make decisions, see different outcomes, have a newfound understanding of how and why the story turned out the way it did - perhaps even to have my interactions and movements in the physical world somehow impact the story. As far as I know, this hasn't been done yet, but that's part of why I find it so exciting!

Finally, how was 2013? And what are you looking forward to for 2014?

2013 was really exciting for me, seeing new OTT players like Magine enter the scene. I can see many opportunities to build new, super-engaging experiences on these platforms. I'm looking forward to seeing the foundation for that laid in 2014, and hopefully getting involved in some of the work. It's exciting because these platforms are removing some of the hardware-based barriers to great interactive experiences - once those are lifted, we can really begin to experiment with polymorphic content, where the linear media has components that move into group interactions, and then into more intimate personal interactions. We can create whole new formats that engage with people like never before. That's hugely exciting to me.

And it's also my favourite kind of challenge - doing something that's never quite been done before, and making it both commercially viable and a great, groundbreaking experience.

CHAPTER NINE - THE FUTURE

This is the third wrap-up I've done. Predicting what will happen in the next twelve months has never been easy, and is even less so today, I feel. "Hope for the best, expect the worst" is a saying that's probably well worth following, as the ups and downs of the multi platform media industry are very much dependant on a lot of other variables in the surrounding world.

Still, I feel there is reason for cautious optimism regarding the future. I believe we will see a maturing audience, followed by a maturing way of approaching and celebrating the audience. I believe feasible revenue models will crop up with increasing regularity. I also believe we will see some groundbreaking stuff next year, also in other fields than entertainment. Here's hoping!

This brief and concluding chapter, then, is dedicated to what will or can be, in due time.

It's the new style – producing in a multiplatform and interactive world

[23/04/2013](#)

This spring is proving to be an interesting one, if you're a storyteller focusing on multiplatform storytelling, online storytelling, interactive storytelling or just about any kind of storytelling that expands on more traditional forms of the same.

I've already talked quite enough about "[Defiance](#)", for instance [here](#), but it will be extremely interesting to see how it all plays out over the course of a full season. The hype has been quite considerable, the game has gotten mixed reviews, the TV series seems well-liked and had pretty neat ratings for the premiere... Will it all keep up? I hope so; so far "Defiance" is proving to be a pretty great case to point to when I want to explain and talk about transmedia storytelling and the principles behind it.

Another great project is "[The Lizzie Bennet Diaries](#)", which just got close to half a million US\$ through [their Kickstarter campaign](#). Goes to show that a) **great stories – such as "Pride and Prejudice", which LBD is based on – never go out of style**, that b) for-online content can be as compelling and professionally produced as any fiction series on TV, developers and producers just need to be aware of the style, possibilities and limitations of the medium, that c) crowdfunding is a viable way forward, as the campaign money will also help pay for the next production, "[Welcome to Sanditon](#)" and finally d) **planning for interaction, collaboration and interactivity heightens the experience for the audience – if integrated into the concept from the beginning and executed according to plan.**

Myself, I've been partly developing TV shows – how they all play out, I'll be sure to inform here as soon as we hear back from our distributors – and immersing myself in "[The Energy Ambassador](#)". TEA is **a project fusing more than ten global companies from the energy industry to a major storytelling and marketing venture that launched a little over a week ago.** My role is that of the storyteller, and I can't help but rejoice at the chance of getting to use transmedia storytelling techniques for something so "real" as the need for sustainable renewable energy solutions globally – and finding that the techniques work a treat. It's basically using what I've practiced doing for decades in a new setting. Exciting!

All in all, it seems like we've turned some kind of corner with regards to telling stories over different kind of media. What we have now is not a Utopia, which was what some envisioned some years back as the term "transmedia storytelling" started to take root. We are not living in a world where stories are automatically better than before, where storytellers are naturally using multiple platforms in unique ways compared to before or where commissioners and buyers are eager to pay more for multiplatform content.

What we have instead is a world where practitioners and audiences are finding each other in a more natural, logically connected and, yes, human way. **It's a world where the word "transmedia" will soon be redundant, as everything produced will be as transmedia as it needs to be, as a natural part of the essence of the product.** It's a

world where the user experience is starting to take precedent, and it's a world where new financial possibilities will allow more content to flourish in new ways.

All in all, it's a pretty neat world, for a storyteller. And I have a feeling it will only get better.

Interview - Gary Hayes

Gary is the Director of Storylabs & MUVEDesign, ex ABC BBC Multiplatform Producer & Development Manager, writer, consultant, lecturer, photographer and musician. Twitter: [@GaryPHayes](#)

How was 2013 for you? Raging bushfires aside?

2013 was good personally. I managed to introduce 2nd screen & interactive TV thinking and process at the ABC here, producing their first ever services and apps plus a custom dual screen synch back end. Since then I have worked on several lab projects, consultancy to some amazing new Oz projects and prototypes as well as continued work on my own Augmented Reality titles. I also moved to a new region up in the fire ridden mountains to concentrate on writing and development, which fires aside, is working out great. Finally been planning a series a series of training initiatives at a new and custom permanent Multiplatform & Social Media training location in Sydney and locations abroad.

You've been working at ABC in Australia, among other engagements. How do you view television in the age of multiplatform / transmedia / second screen? Will it die out, transform, grow... ?

I finished formally at ABC in August of this year after a 2 year contract finished. TV as a form, live appointment to view will be around forever. Event basic streaming video (news, sport, events) will probably be renamed eventually but the distribution and device that used to be called TV is already crumbling at the foundations. But although it is obvious to many that on-demand video or catch-up or binge watching TV series is becoming a need, broadcasters I believe are resting on their laurels. Simple catch-up players and a bit of marketing on YouTube is a drop in the ocean of what they need to do. Like most broadcasters the ABC is suffering, desperately trying to claw back dwindling linear audiences but also seeing a massive decline in general web traffic. Most traditional web traffic has switched to mobile, apps and accompanying 2nd screen yet the broadcaster content systems in place are 5-10 years out of date, mostly designed for simple web publishing. Also many broadcasters are still struggling with resource and process issues - the teams in place are tiny, unable to manage basic social media, never mind a rapid increase in app development or adaptive websites or most importantly developing new interactive formats that use the video stream as an integral components. This means that they are not set for the next generation of audiences who are now 2-3 years ahead in sophistication and need. Broadcasters generally have a chance to become trusted aggregators of on-demand content, but they are driven by numbers and 2-5% of overall audience on their catch-up players means very little forward thinking in new types of viewing. Netflix, Hulu, Amazon, Google and others are already around the first bend, TV broadcasters are still deciding what tyres to put on their wheels.

You put a lot of emphasis on the community – and on a lot of other things as well, but I'll focus on community for this question – so how would you suggest a producer deals with a community? Integrates into the community, interacts,

becomes a part of it? Or is a community something that can be built?

A content producer without a two way community, or trusting loyal fan base will be invisible in today's media landscape. There are still those who think that with a bit of distribution and a bit of luck at the pitching event/markets/festivals they'll be all set for a prosperous career. You are now responsible for your audience, in much the same way that Music A&R only really signed artists that had an existing fan base who would come to every concert they could. To put it simply; a loyal following shows that you have value. Every producer now has the tools to build communities of interest in themselves and their work. OK, granted, it takes time and it is generally a long haul, but you need a constant dialogue with your audience. Use the tools, the basics of Facebook pages, twitter accounts, YouTube channels, Instagram and blogs - you need to run all of them, keep them fresh and become a content producer, because you are being a content producer in these communities. It is about who you are, not what stuff you throw into the throng every two years or so - you become trusted (and I use the word trustonomics more and more) and that trust will turn into revenue. You can certainly become part of existing communities but if you are and want to become a significant content maker, one who is able to sustain a long career, you will need your own community around you. If you cannot build one, perhaps you should reconsider your role as a storyteller, director, producer. If you cannot interest enough people in what it is you are doing, perhaps you need to be doing something else?

Finally – what are you looking forward to for 2014? Any possibilities or challenges or coming projects you're looking forward to, or any trends?

2014 - Really looking forward to much more mobile and locative works. I have had two major pieces myself in the works for over two years now, rich 3D game environments overlaid on the real world one using a kinect type device to map environments dynamically over existing ones and one using alpha video placed in real world, so hoping to push that forward. Really hoping for more games like Ingress.com MMLG (massively multiplayer location game) to come along and inspire a new generation that looks at things like Foursquare or walk around audio tours or other social utility services and yawn. I can see this overlap with an increase in the zeitgeist around the internet of things. Products, places and people become trackable and recognisable and associated with big data (anonymously of course) allowing story tellers to utilise the data for much more profoundly integrated works, where the mechanic for a game like Watchdogs (out in January) becomes available to everyone, able to tap into big data systems and flow stories through it.

At a more mundane level I really hope that we see some real story integrated 2nd screen services. We have hopefully set the foundation for basic parallel ads/marketing, quiz, extra info and can move into significant editorially driven services. Also moving beyond multi-choice or find object or background story and into parallel video/audio, alternate perspectives and a sense that this is a live shared event, vs a canned 2nd screen experience. Finally I hope to see the more adventurous TV companies (well their adventurous favourite production companies) looking at true game/TV like experiences. I like the idea of the new Israeli show Rising Star where the votes are in real time and a virtual audience appears on a wall based on their Facebook avatars to take part in real time with this X Factor type of show - sadly this is a small interaction and only adds a

small veneer of interaction based on existing format. We must go further, learning from the lessons of Defiance or Nowhere Boys (playing here in Oz at the moment) and coming up with must-view broadcast and must-play console/mobile/locative parallel and inclusive games.

The TV format will need to change. Reality TV has run its course. Talent show formats have run their course. It is now time for the 3rd phase of interactive TV in 2014 - we have had one way red button interactive TV, we have social TV...now it is time for Massively Multiplayer TV... well, perhaps 2015 then!

Interview - Angela Natividad

Angela is a digital strategist + writer based in Paris. She covers advertising, technology, TV + the intersection of all three. Follow her on [@luckthelady](#)

You're covering a lot of what is happening in the media world and the social media world – how has 2013 been from your point of view? Highs and lows?

I can't think of many lows because the highs have been so encouraging. Brands are maturing in their use of social media, and by that I mean they're really leveraging the different qualities each platform has to express their messages in fun new ways. (To wit: Tide and Twitter giving horror movies their own branded spin on Vine.)

At the last MIPCOM I also sensed a sea change in attitudes toward OTTs and cross-platform use in general. Instead of teeth-gritted toleration of a new fad, producers, networks and content distributors are enthusiastic about the new opportunities that digital provides for storytelling and new business. It was exhilarating.

There are so many producers and companies and individuals right now trying to come up with the Next Big Thing. The social media sphere is pretty crowded, gaming even more so... do you have any thoughts on where this Next Big Thing might pop up?

I try to stay open. In the ad world, the crucial thing is building coherent long-term strategies that also take the ephemeralness and mutability of digital into account. We grapple with this because of the organisational and legal issues that digital platforms inherently present: we're expected to be more casual, friendly, transparent and responsive to real-time situations, which complicate things like legal and partner validations. The protectionist structure of most big businesses is inherently incompatible with digital — it really demands that we loosen up, find new solutions and train people well, but mistakes still happen, and brands are still accountable for them.

But they're starting to get the hang of it, and I really want to help facilitate that process before projecting onto "the next big thing".

I do have my theories, which will sound pretty derivative: the no-data trend is becoming significant, as is at-home printing and storytelling appropriation (and self-recording) in industries like gaming. It's all big, complicate stuff with a lot of strings to tug on and a lot to play with.

Looking forward to 2014, what are your expectations? Possibilities? Challenges?

Integration in two ways: a more intuitive socialisation and humanisation of brands, which must also express themselves off digital as responsible entities in the world (think Chipotle's scarecrow execution). Also, deeper integration of technology and platforms in both our lives and ourselves.

Think Google Glass but way more intimate: contact lenses, fingerprint technology and visual recognition will become increasingly standardised and more intuitively incorporated into our daily-use technologies. The question is how to do both while

protecting data and respecting individual expression and autonomy.

Interview - Ian Ginn

Ian is a transmedia author and experience designer at Hubbub Media and Media Research 360. Follow him on [@ianginn](#).

There's been - again - debates over transmedia vs multi platform vs cross media vs the need to have any term vs the need to have ONE specific term and so on. You're working a lot with up-and-coming people in the business; how is their approach to the whole issue?!

I don't think that the debates, discussions, and flame wars have so much been about this vs that, but more about whether transmedia is useful, actually means anything, and if so what. There have been discussions about whether it should be used as a noun (transmedia), adjective (transmedia storytelling, structure, architecture), or verb (to transmediate). And then there is a more recent discussion about whether any of the examples held up as successful transmedia projects were pre-planned or were actually emergent, an afterthought or even accidental..

By contrast, the stakeholders that I've been working with over the last 12 months are not concerned with these debates. They see transmedia as an opportunity.. perhaps a transmedia opportunity (adjective), or perhaps they want to transmediate the opportunity (verb).

In any case, some are certainly opportunistic, adding a transmedia label to their project, intending to gain advantage in raising funds, pitching to broadcast commissioners or other gatekeepers. This is usually a short-lived dream, because as many of us have found out, including the 'T'-word in a pitch only results in blank stares and much shuffling of paper.

A second, much more interesting group regard transmedia as a possible creative opportunity. They come to workshops with an indie project in development, curious to explore how transmedia thinking (that adjective again) may benefit it. Generally they already work with one or more of Henry Jenkins' original seven principles - not from a theoretical understanding, but from experience and common sense. This fits a description of transmedia which I understand and agree with, which is that in one sense it is a palette of media choices available to any creative open to considering their usefulness. This group understands that indie transmedia is not about first creating success in one medium and then leveraging it in another through licensing. It's more about transmediating the story or game that they are making now, by finding ways to extend it to reach other media and channels and so new and other audiences.

When you look at the people you're working with in workshops and so on, what can you say about the future - where will they be heading?

A couple of things that I have seen in workshops this year which could well have a place in the future would have to include:

- Playable live events, which are neither LARPs or ARGs, but a development of the 'come

out and play' movement (athensplaython.org), adding transmedia extensions and rich experience design.

- Connected art works and installations which start to push at the idea of the 'internet of things', using found objects and sometimes remixing history. For example students from Darmstadt University proposed rebuilding a chronophotographic gun (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chronophotographic_gun), incorporating an iPhone and Instagram-like app to simulate the original's 12-photo series of images.

- Social media engagement can look very different, and take on new physical forms. For example, the aim of "Elf Scare" (www.elfscare.com) is to stop each elf from crossing the bridge by shouting at it until it falls off. As the elves cross faster and faster, and the player still needs to take a breath every now and then, the only way to succeed is to have three players work together to create one continuous shout.

Finally, what have been the most exciting things for you during the past year? In your own work as well as otherwise?

Number one has to be writing my first novel. I had planned to create a framework for a trilogy of novels, taking place in the "Saligia-7" (saligia-7.net) storyworld, and then have another writer complete them. But instead I got hooked, loving every opportunity to sit and write. If things go to plan, you can expect my first e-novel at the end of March.

Secondly, just a few weeks ago I received an offer to join a team developing an indie game app, and with plans for a book and a whole lot of social media extensions and live events. It's a great way to end the year!

The speaking, teaching and workshops that I get the chance to lead have again been among some of the most rewarding times over the last year. A couple of 'exciting' highlights would have to be my trip to Bogotá to speak at Colombia 3.0, when I met many old friends and made some great new ones, and B3 in Frankfurt, a new biennale focused on 'expanded narratives' which included some stunning media-art and installations (www.b3biennale.com/en/ b3-festival)

Then "Breaking Bad" paid out, displacing "The Wire" as my favourite ever TV series, which had displaced "The Sopranos" before it. Where can US epic narrative go next?

Finally, HTML5 has really started to deliver this year, changing our expectations of native online content. One smart comment during the IDFA Interactive conference was that projects such as "Waterlife" (waterlife.nfb.ca) and "Highrise" (highrise.nfb.ca) have rendered the term 'web-docs' obsolete, and that we need start to discuss other descriptors... Oh! that's where I came in...

Epilogue

Thank you for reading this publication. I hope it has been of interest to you, perhaps even instructional or helpful in some way. One thing that is abundantly clear to me as I've put this publication together, done all the interviews, re-read what I've written over the past year and generally reflected on the year 2013, is that there are many ways to do things. Some of them are better, some of them are worse and some might be worse at one point and absolutely perfect at another point. We won't know until we try, so in my mind that's what we have to keep doing - trying, learning, and trying again.

With my best wishes for a fruitful and engaging and exciting and fulfilling 2014 for all of us - thank you! And if you need someone to host a workshop, do development and/or brainstorming or come speak at your event, my contacts are below :).

Cheers!

Simon

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