

Tales, Technology and Techniques - Ancient Tradition Meets the 21st Century
By Karen Chace

As storytellers, we spend our days reading and researching times long past, times devoid of listservs, blogs, podcasts, Google and YouTube. While it may appear that the Internet and the art of Oral Tradition have little in common, as we travel further into the 21st century, the connections become clearer, stronger, and, yes, even necessary. Although the array of Internet tools can be daunting, once mastered, they will open new avenues that will help develop your skills, widen the scope of your audience, and connect you with other storytellers and educators.

LISTSERVS

One of the simplest tools to help you connect with storytellers worldwide is a **listserv**. When you subscribe, you automatically receive emails, known as *posts*, sent by other subscribers on subjects relevant to the listserv's focus. You can opt to receive posts as they are sent, or sign up to receive them in digest format, which will send all the daily postings to you in one email.

My favorite is **Storytell**, a free forum offered by Texas Women's University for discussions about storytelling. It offers information on conferences, workshops and events, and it is a place to ask, and answer, questions about the origins and variations of stories and the business of storytelling, as well. In addition to the information and insight from tellers around the world, another benefit is the amazing friendships forged via this valuable Internet community. To join go to <http://www.twu.edu/COPE/SLIS/STORYTELL.HTM?printerfriendly=on>

Storytellers whose focus is the healing arts can find information, stories and connections by subscribing to the **Healing Story Alliance listserv**, supported by this National Storytelling Network Special Interest Group. <http://www.healingstory.org/listserv/listserv.html>

BLOGS

While it sounds like a character straight out of a folktale swamp a **blog** is actually a website where entries are written in chronological order. Some offer news commentary, while others are more personal, much like an online diary. Many artists are now creating their own blogs to share stories of their daily lives and connect with others. Two of my storytelling friends with creative and interesting blogs are Susanna Holstein of West Virginia <http://grannysu.blogspot.com/> and Gwyn Calvetti of Wisconsin. <http://musingsonstoryandlife.blogspot.com/>. Stop by for a visit and get acquainted. You won't be disappointed.

PODCASTS

Podcast is a play on the word “broadcast” but podcasters are not restricted by FCC or traditional broadcast formats and regulations. You can automatically download them to your computer, iPod or other portable media players so you can listen at your convenience. Some follow a talk show format; others share music or news; and now storytellers are using this tool to offer interviews and stories directly from their websites. Two storytellers who use this new format to enhance their websites and to offer informative interviews and online classes are Sean Buvala and Eric Wolf.

Sean Buvala has used the Internet to his advantage and our delight for ten years. He continues to expand his offerings and now includes a variety of telecourses and podcasts. Once a month Sean uses the “virtual conference room” of his Amphitheater to talk about issues and needs of storytellers and those interested in the art form. He also offers an array of articles to read and stories and interviews to hear. Some featured guests have been Laura Simms, Margaret Read McDonald, Kevin Cordi, and Judith Black. In addition, Sean continues to help storytellers worldwide by offering a free event listings and a storytellers’ directory.

<http://www.storyteller.net/>

Eric Wolf began **The Art of Storytelling to Children** in the spring of 2007 as a way to support the art form worldwide, but he has already amassed an impressive array of podcast interviews with well-known storytellers like Mary Hamilton, Eth Noh Tec, Heather Forest and others. Eric promises “a national conversation from all perspectives on the profession of storytelling with children . . . presenters, listeners, festival organizers, educators, parents and storytellers.” The interviews are done in a conference call format, and you can join the call or listen on line. For upcoming guests and topics go to <http://www.storytellingwithchildren.com/>

If you’d like to start your own podcast but don’t know where to begin, visit **How to Podcast – A Free Tutorial** at <http://www.how-to-podcast-tutorial.com/index.htm> and soon you’ll be riding the Internet wave with the best of them!

RADIO

Now you can hear radio broadcasts in streaming video through your computer, whether you live near the radio station or not, so just rev up your speakers and let the stories wash over you. One fabulous program that has been sending tales out over the airways for over a year is **Story Lovers World**, the creation of California storyteller Jackie Baldwin. It broadcasts on Sundays from 5-6 pm (PST) on KSVY Sonoma, 91.3 FM. You can reach the program via <http://www.ksvy.org/home.htm>

Click under *Stream It!* in the upper right-hand corner and choose either High or Low speed, depending on your Internet connection. For more information, contact Jackie at bubbul@vom.com.

STORYTELLERS IN STREAMING VIDEO

Need a story fix but can't get away to a festival? Just click a few computer keys, and some of today's finest storytellers will be right there to entertain you. As the director of a student storytelling troupe with a limited budget, I use our computer lab to bring tellers to my students via streaming video. They are not only entertained but are quickly exposed to a variety of storytelling styles and techniques. I find these two sites invaluable:

Enoch Pratt Libraries <http://www.prattlibrary.org/home/storyIndex.aspx> and BookHive.org <http://www.bookhive.org/zingertales/default.asp?storyID=9>

YOUTUBE

YouTube is an online video streaming service that allows anyone to view and share videos. You can upload yourself in performance for friends, family and potential clients to view, a terrific way to promote your storytelling style and skills. Not sure how to get YOURself on the TUBE? Then visit <http://msu.edu/~huntley9/wa/tutorial/>. When you're ready to hit the airways, go to http://www.youtube.com/signup?next=/my_account to open a YouTube account.

GOOGLE

By now you're all familiar with the search engine **Google.com**. I have used it for years to find public domain stories in every genre, plus articles and research information on the art of Oral Tradition. Without a doubt, it is the one tool that helped me build my Storytelling Links page <http://www.storybug.net/links.htm> on my website.

Now, Google has added a new feature, <http://books.google.com/>. They have digitalized thousands of books you can access for free. If the book is not in the public domain but the publisher has given permission, you may preview it, and in some cases read the entire text. However, if it is public domain, you are free to download a PDF copy for your files. While writing this article I easily downloaded *Irish Fairytales* (1920), *Myths and Legends of the Sioux* (1916) and *Where Animals Talk – West African Folk Lore Tales* (1914). This could definitely get addictive!

There are those who argue that modern technology and storytelling have no connection and that merely moving a computer mouse is far removed from the deep listening experience found at the feet of a storyteller. While that is true, I ask you to consider using the Internet not as a replacement for a personal storytelling experience but as a tool to educate more people about the impact of our art. There are many roads on the Internet highway, so why not leave a trail of breadcrumbs so folks can find their way to your door!

Karen Chace is a professional storyteller, web researcher and workshop presenter. She writes a regular column, Stor E Telling, for the national Storytelling Magazine, is a board member of the NSN Press Committee and the founder and director of a student storytelling troupe.

www.storybug.net

Content compiled by **Karen Chace, Professional Storyteller & Web Researcher**

East Freetown MA 02727 • (508) 763-8565 • Info@StoryBug.net • www.StoryBug.net

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