

## Us++: Tools and Methodologies for Personal Reflective Story Construction

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In telling our personal stories we seek to humanize fragments of experienced time and shape them in collusion with an audience into a communicative narrative unity. The transition from a life lived to a life recounted involves a complex interplay of agency between the author, actor and the audience that ultimately provides us with our sense of selfhood and indeed our narrative identity, both as individuals and as social, cultural beings. Advances in digital technologies and network communications provide opportunities for exploring alternative modes of mediated storytelling that invigorate and re-imagine our represented experiences. This paper introduces Us++, a research initiative that explores methodologies and tools for seamlessly and fluidly documenting our experiences and sharing them with others in a reflective, thoughtful and engaging manner. Using media-rich weblogs and custom-designed software, this process adopts an integrated, conversational and co-constructed approach. Multiple participant inputs and perspectives expand and surprise our story-selves as the roles of creator, interpreter and audience are continuously exchanged. Experiments with a variety of participating communities are discussed, including descriptions of group-specific software iterations, story emergence and development, and evaluation of the approach as a methodology and practice for representing, sharing and understanding our life experiences.