

The 4th International Storyline Conference in Portland, Oregon, USA

6 to 9 August 2009

– a personal account
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The International Storyline conference was held the last few days of our summer holiday, in Portland, Oregon, USA.

An incredible heat wave with a record-breaking 9 days of over 90°F occurred just days before the conference.

When the time came for the conference to start, the weather became a bit more comfortable but we kept the warmth throughout the interesting lectures, workshops and all the rewarding meetings with pedagogues from near and far.

After lunch on August 6th the pre-conference opened, at Portland State University, with different workshops. For example you could practice Storyline or learn how to use a “Visual art Journal” in the classroom as well as privately for your own purposes.

In the evening everyone who wished was invited to a barbecue by an American host. We were served Hot dogs, Sloppy Joes and other typical barbecue food. That was a perfect start where we got to know people from different parts of the world before the conference got underway. We even had a hummingbird as a visitor in the backyard and we were also invited to some neighbours to see their fishing photos.



Every conference day started with music by students. On Friday it was a Marimba Band that played magnificent African music and they were honoured by a standing ovation. After that Jeff Creswell and Steve Bell bid us welcome to the 4th International Storyline conference.



The first keynote speaker was the author Michael Hoeye who told us about the creating of his characters and stories. Michael has written the book "Time stops for no mouse" which became his first success as a children's book. The book is the first in a series of four which seemed to us to be well worth reading.

After that flying start we all walked away into different classrooms to take part in the lectures/workshops we had chosen. The organization was good, however some of the rooms felt a bit tight when all the participants had taken their seats.

A selection from what you could listen to this morning were: "Key Questions revisited", "Using Storyline with multiple classes", "Storyline makes learning history easier" and "Storyline: a vehicle for teaching foreign language".

The hard bit was to choose – there was lots of tempting stuff to choose from.



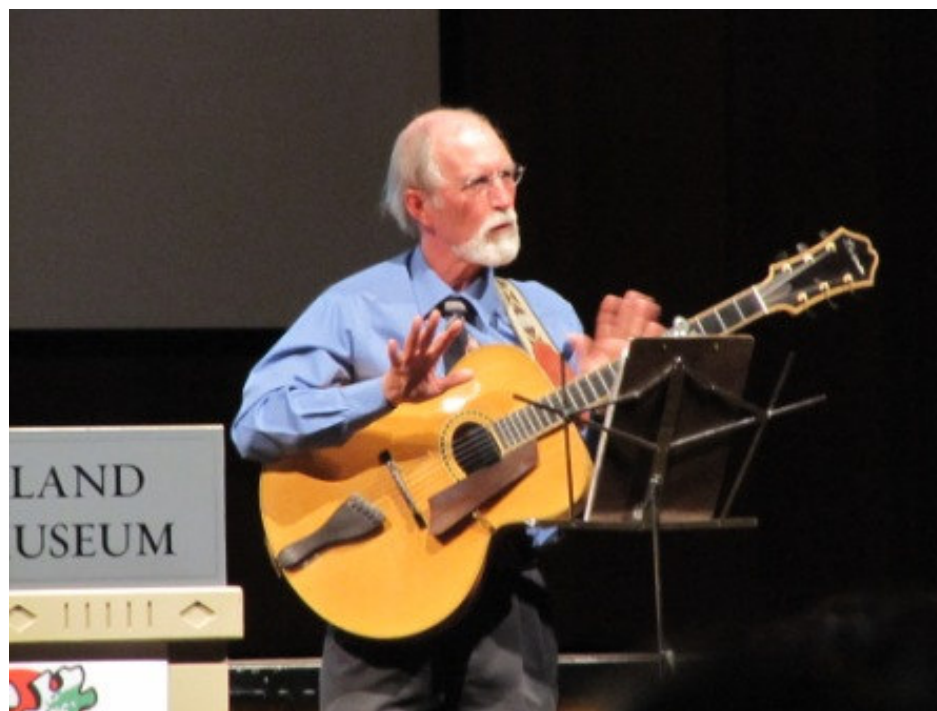
After lunch Steve Bell and Sallie Harkness took us on a trip around the world where they showed how Storyline is adopted by educators in many different countries. We took a trip from USA to Brazil and further to, among others, Sweden and Thailand. It's amazing to make the experience of how Storyline is spreading and developing all over the world. Steve and Sallie were a bit sorry for the fact that it had been a hard time for Storyline in Scotland during the 90's, because of political resolutions, but expressed also their happiness that others were continuing and developing Storyline at that time which has helped them so much as Storyline is now returning to Scotland.



The afternoon was spent with the married couple Jill and Paul Wells from the UK. They told us about "Using aspects of Storyline in the Primary school". They showed how to take parts from Storyline in "everyday" use and the benefits of that.

They told us that using characters and different scenarios are very useful in both primary and secondary school. We got the chance to create both characters and stories.

In the evening there was a banquet at Portland Art Museum with lots of delicious food and nice entertainment from among others Steve Bell ,who told us about food traditions and exotic dishes he had met all over the world. Carol Burnes, a storyteller gave a dramatic presentation of the " Story of Story" and Dennis Hopkins led a Sing-along with American songs such as "Home , home on the Range" and "Take me out to the Ballpark".



A group of Carla Wilson's Flute students started Saturday morning with a high class performance. After that the second Keynote speaker - Marie Jeanne McNaughton – entered the stage. She works as a drama pedagogue in Scotland and told us about using drama as a medium to learn. She told us about different kinds of drama and how to implement it in learning situations. It was a lively performance.

Some of the Saturday sessions were
"Storyline characters as a tool for teacher development"
–about how to use parts of Storyline to develop student teachers in their education,
" Digital video/DVD production as a Storyline culmination"
– we got an insight of how to use recording at the culmination of a Storyline.
"Storyline in secondary school", "Poetry in Storyline" – where Carol Burnes (who entertained us at the banquet) told us of some ways to use poetry and "Storyline at a distance: using technology", where we together with Todd Stewart Rinier listened to Hanne Lund Kristensen (from Norway through Skype) and she told us which experiences she had of difficulties/possibilities cooperating with others using the Internet.





On Saturday evening Mayor Sam Adams held a reception at Portland City Hall for all the delegates where he gave a short speech and afterwards mingled with the conference participants and asked them about their experiences of Storyline and the city of Portland. Some of us continued the night at "Taste of Oregon" – a food festival where you could try and taste lots of local dishes.

On Sunday morning the "Pacific Youth Choir" – twenty-two girls and one boy, gave us some wonderful songs. Their programme contained both solos and chorus. Standing ovations seem to be more common in the USA than we are used to, so of course they also got one and on the last day of the conference we got a good workout doing standing ovations a couple of times.

Sallie Harkness held a popular session about "Book based topics" where she told us how to use fiction when you create Storylines and how that can make it feel easier for Storyline beginners.

Other sessions this very last day of the conference were: "Storyline in the university classroom", "Using Storyline in Alaska: from rural Eskimo schools to urban schools k-12" and "Victorian melodrama."





As a collective terminal session there was a panel discussion with students who had worked with Storyline in primary- and secondary school. They shared their experiences – both good and less good – with us. It was Jeff Creswell who ran this fascinating discussion.

Last but not least we got the information that the 5th International Storyline Conference will be in Reykjavik, Iceland in August 2012.



Every conference day we were served delicious lunches at the Portland State University and between the sessions there was time to visit an exhibition with beautiful friezes from different schools and Powell's bookstore had a place there too, with lots of books to offer at good prices.

“In summary we think that our best memories from Portland and the conference are all the meetings with other people.”



Storyline seems to be a method which works in all countries and using Storyline, bridges can be built which initiate relationships all over the world.

Technology has provided great opportunities and it's important for us to help each other to develop the method. Networking is central and a conference like this gives amazing opportunities.

Storyline Design and Portland State University made a great job with all the arrangements and everything worked out very well. If you are able to join such a conference you should have no doubts - just take the chance, you will not regret it!

We want to give a huge **Thank you** to Bionär (the former Älvkarleby district heating company) for the scholarship which made our study trip possible and to our school - Älvboda Friskola - because we are always given opportunities for personal development and education.

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