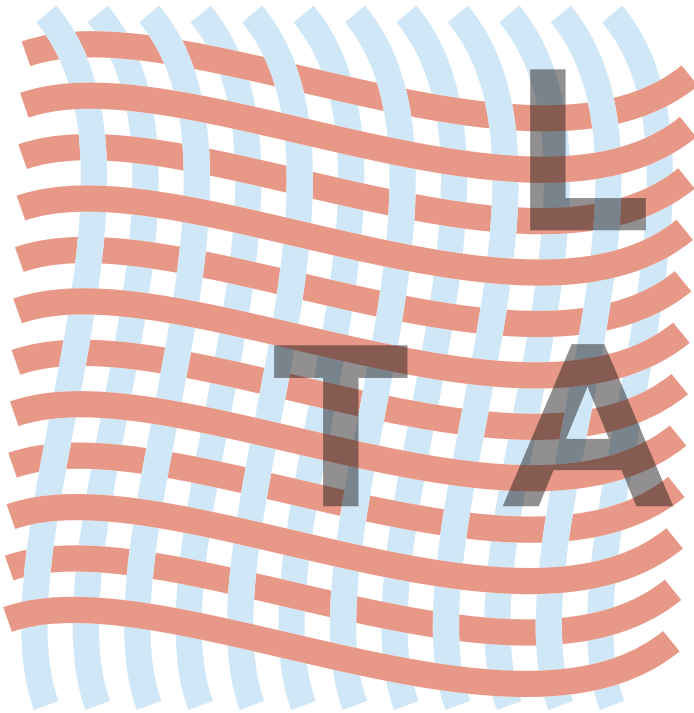


Building Skills Through Making Together

T E L

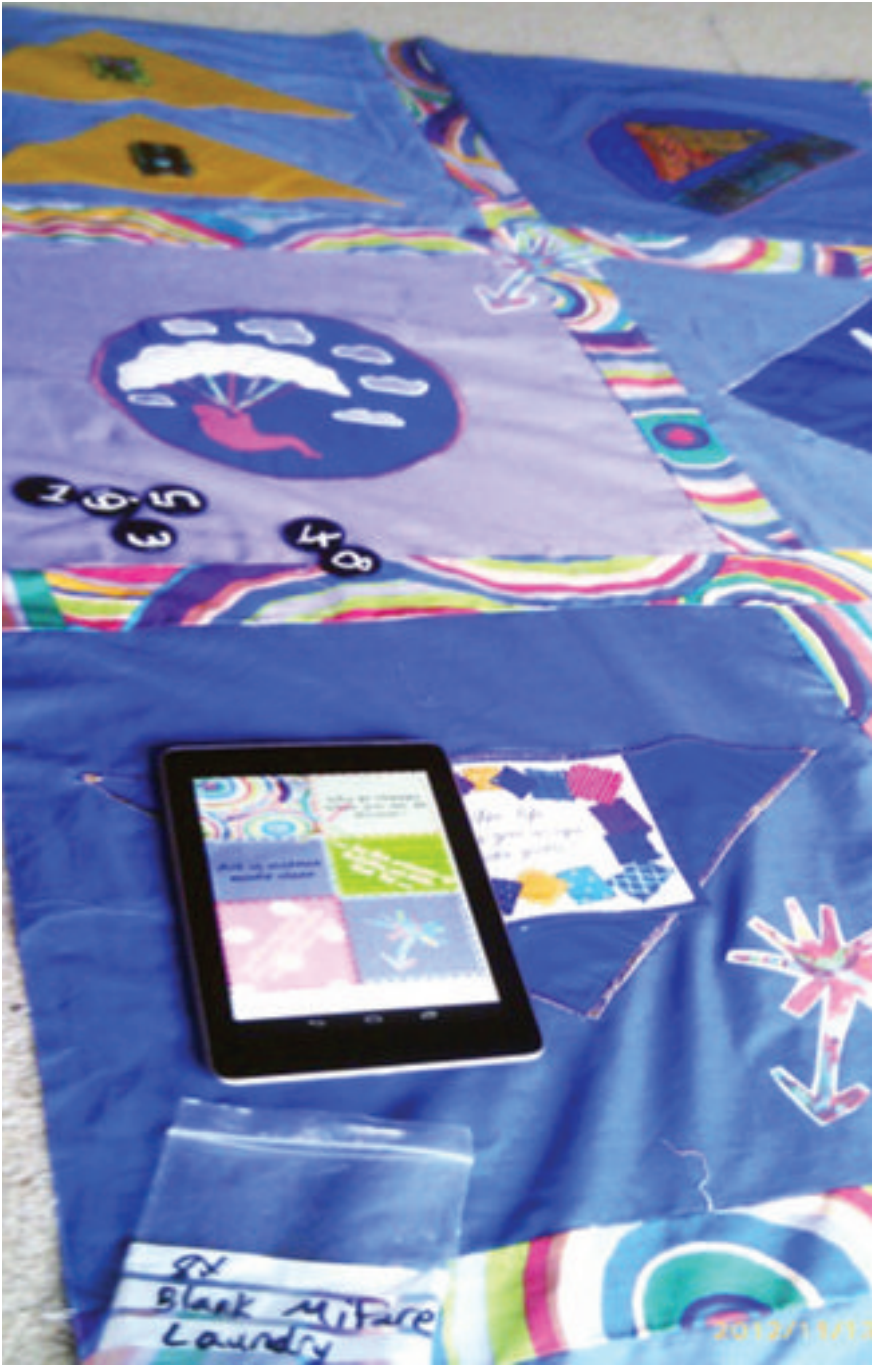


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Tell-Tale Technology

Rachel Keller

TELL-TALE TECHNOLOGY



Smart devices interact with the quilt to play videos, sounds and images.



Each quilt block was made by a different member of the team to produce the final quilt which centred around a certain theme.



The final quilt on display.

Tell-Tale Technology

Lancashire &
Cumbria

Contributors

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Lancaster
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Digital Tools Used

Near Field,
Communication,
(NFC) Tags,
Tablet Computers,
NFC Readers.

Tell Tale Technology is a community project using the swipe technology found in contactless payments to enable digital storytelling by linking textiles to video, audio, and photographs,

About

Tell Tale Technology links textiles to digital media using the swipe technology found in contactless payments. It provides a creative textile-based opportunity to improve and share digital media and making skills through innovative media sharing, whilst having fun and getting to know more people.

The first two community groups to work with the Tell Tale Technology project were a Family Centre in Cumbria and 'Blackburn Girl Geeks'. Rachel Keller of Lancaster University worked with these groups, with funding from Lancaster University's Faculty of Arts and Social Science and Unlimited Social Enterprise funding.

The two small groups met four or five times over several months. Each member of the group made a part of the quilt known as a block. The two quilts had different themes—one themed 'Girls into Computer Science' and other themed 'Favourite Things.' The group used computers to design their individual quilt blocks and the associated hidden digital story within it. To do this they used audio, photo, photo collage, slideshows and video.

Once the quilt blocks were finished and the digital media completed, each participant was given an electronic tag to which they could attach their digital media to by using an app. They then hid their tag within their quilt block. When a 'smart device' (such as a smartphone) is placed close to each of these quilt blocks, the device shows the digital media associated with it.

'I was thinking about making a quilt at home with soundbites, things we would talk about in an evening, and songs that I would sing to him and stories—we always do the same stories because he likes his routine, different sounds for the different squares. He can use that as comfort when I am not there. I genuinely believe it's going to have a massive impact'.

Mother of autistic child

What is the impact of the project?

The resulting quilts can be seen, heard, felt, and smelt. This attracted people that may not be that interested in technology or aware of the possibilities, as well as those already technologically skilled but who see an innovative potential in the textiles. As well as increasing confidence and knowledge, a wide range of skills were acquired between group members. From basics such as search skills and downloading, through to multimedia editing. Making together encouraged sharing the stories and experiences that members wanted to celebrate.

How did digital media make a difference?

Embedding digital media within the quilts allows people to explore the meanings and stories behind each other's squares. It also enables people to leave their stories behind for others to listen to when they are not there. For example one participant is planning one for her son who doesn't settle to sleep when she is working nights. Her son is nearly 11 and is on the autistic spectrum (see quote left).

What next?

We are currently working to simplify the digital process and make it accessible to more groups without requiring dedicated help—we are developing our own purpose-built free app that will help with this. The app and small electronic tags can be used, not just with the quilts, but with any item of significance to a person or group. It is taking the technology out of the hands of a select few and opening it up to the creativity of the ordinary citizen.

We hope the project will help to extend employability skills, unleash creative potential and strengthen the communities involved. The project also has therapeutic applications because of its multi-sensory approach.

What Others Can Learn

Organisation, finance and skills

Be organised, persistent, patient and have a vision for what you could do with your project. Have a checklist and plan of everything you need including materials, community tutors (or participants with the skills to share), policies and insurance. From a finance point of view, try to find a free meeting room and someone with the digital and textiles skills to help, as these tend to be the biggest potential costs. Bring along cake and drinks to share. We found the social times away from the project to be a valuable part of the project.

Tips and tricks for sparking the imagination

Spark the imagination—share ideas. The hardest part is getting people together at the right time and in the right place at an affordable cost. Showing ‘here’s one I made earlier’ may spark more interest. UFOs (Un-Finished Objects) are everywhere, even when people are enthusiastic about what they are doing. Plan how much time you need and double it. Gentle, timely nudges are good. Even if not everyone finishes, this doesn’t mean they haven’t found it useful.

“I’ve loved the computer – it has taught me not to be frightened of it – it’s not just boring spreadsheets – it’s given me the confidence to sign up for a class. I didn’t think anything was to be gained from having a computer”

Tell Tale Technology participant