

Call for Papers

International and Interdisciplinary Conference

Life Storying in the 21st Century: Interdisciplinary Approaches

Organizers: Jarmila Mildorf (University of Paderborn), Zuzana Fonioková (Masaryk University, Brno)

Venue: Masaryk University, Brno, 7–9 September, 2022

New technologies and forms of dissemination have arguably changed the ways in which people tell their life stories. Oral history interviews are now mostly conducted with a view to being archived online, life writing in its manifold subgenres has been influenced by new platforms of communication and digital formats such as personal weblogs, social media and hyperfiction. More storytellers can now be heard in wider public arenas and their stories potentially reach larger audiences. Furthermore, the boundaries between what is ‘private’ and ‘public’ have been blurred in the shift of initially more intimate genres, such as the diary, to their contemporary online equivalents. And even where autobiographies are published in traditional book form, the impact of other discursive and medial forms on the book’s textual design becomes visible, as can be seen, for example, in Neil Patrick Harris’s playful text *Choose Your Own Autobiography* (2014).

At the same time, transformation has not only marked channels for life storying but also the very lives that are lived and told. While people of all times and ages experienced changes in their lives, these changes have perhaps never been as rapid and as all-encompassing as in the first decades of this century. The current COVID-19 pandemic has brought this transformation into sharper relief, but it, too, is only the apex of more long-lasting developments that have been with us for some time now: changes at home and in the workplace; changes in social interaction; changes on a global scale in history, politics, the economy, and the ecosystem. How do contemporary personal life stories and their narrative strategies dovetail with those larger developments? What channels of communication do life storytellers use and what are their effects? What effects do changes in life-storying practices have on identity construction?

This conference seeks to bring together scholars from different disciplines (oral history, (auto)biography studies, sociology, linguistics, literary and cultural studies, media studies, psychology, ethnography, and others) with an interest in contemporary life storytelling in its manifold forms. Suggestions may revolve around, but are not limited to, the following topic areas:

- New technologies, forms and genres of life storytelling
- The aesthetics of life storytelling
- Media convergence in life storytelling
- The private and the political in life storytelling
- Playfulness and creativity in life storytelling
- Audience design in life stories

- Narrative strategies and life storytelling
- Fictionalization in life storytelling
- Tellings and retellings of life stories
- History and the self in life stories
- Identity construction in the context of new media and social networks

Please submit an abstract of approx. 250 words and a short bio note to jarmila.mildorf@upb.de and foniokov@phil.muni.cz by 31 August, 2021 at the latest.

We plan to publish a collection of essays based on this conference.