

# Touching Tales:

## Emotion in Digital Object Memories

Dr Kerstin Leder, Brunel University  
TOTeM: Tales of Things and Electronic Memory  
[www.talesofthings.com](http://www.talesofthings.com)



**Affective Fabrics  
of Digital Cultures:**  
Feelings, Technologies, Politics

**Meaningful things...  
and feeling(s)**



# TOTeM

## ‘Tales of Things and Electronic Memory’

- Platform and technology to create physical and persistent links between objects and memories
- Personal narratives, digital media and ‘tagging’ (QR codes, RFIDs) to make ‘explicit’ already implicit networks of meaning (Daniel Miller, 2008; Sherry Turkle, 2007)



Welcome! - Tales of Things - Mozilla Firefox

File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help

http://www.talesofthings.com/

Most Visited Getting Started Latest Headlines Add to Connotea

Welcome! - Tales of Things

Log-out







home tales of things my things world of things scan a thing about

## Connecting anything with any media, anywhere!

Wouldn't it be great to link any object that direct to a 'video memory' or an article of text describing its history or background? Tales of Things allows just that with a quick and easy way to link any media to any object via small printable tags known as QR codes. How about tagging a building, your old antique clock or perhaps that object you're about to put on eBay?

**Add Your Thing and share its Tales**  
It's fast and simple

### Latest Things

 <p><b>Viking Warrior</b> This Viking (?) soldier has accompanied me since ... Added by kayle</p>	 <p><b>Low Whistle - ...</b> This is a whistle that is pitched an ... Added by HowardMusic</p>	 <p><b>tale1</b> my object story Added by yuval</p>
 <p><b>Delicious Ginger</b> yummy old fashion chinese ginger candy Added by f117f117</p>	 <p><b>Rum Caskets!</b> These are the caskets that age 30 yr ... Added by mariahurke</p>	 <p><b>Crocodile!</b> I was recently on a trip in Jamaica ... Added by mariahurke</p>

### Learn More

**how to tag anything in 4 easy steps...**

00:41 | vimeo

For iPhone Available on the iPhone App Store

apple art BBC calculator computarium

Done

Microsoft Outlook ... Skype Minutes 19.5... Microsoft PowerPoi... Welcome! - Tales of...

17:43

### The World of Things

View other things all around the world, using the map. You can click on each marker to learn more about that item.



Tale View for Viking Warrior - Tales of Things - Mozilla Firefox

File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help

http://www.talesofthings.com/totem/tale\_view/547/

Most Visited Getting Started Latest Headlines Add to Connotea

Tale View for Viking Warrior - Tales o...

"it's a memory thing"  
**tales of things**  
 beta

Log-out

home tales of things my things world of things scan a thing about

### Why not add your own tale using your own media!

Congratulations! You have begun your journey into Tales of Things. Why not add your own story to this object? It can be about anything, where you found the object, what the object reminds you of or any memories you have related to this thing. Not only that, but you can link video and images to your tale to create a truly wonderful story.

#### Viking Warrior

This Viking (?) soldier has accompanied me since I left my home country in 2000 to study in Aberystwyth, UK. He was given to me by a friend and neighbour (who, incidentally, has no recollection of the thing) and has served both as a reminder of home and as a miniature source of support and protection. My hunch is that he originated from a Kinder surprise... Perhaps my friend will remember and solve its mystery. I still have a farewell note from my friend, along with a drawing of the Viking. His speech bubble reads 'I fight for your right!'.

0 tweets  
 tweet

Tale for Thing: Viking Warrior

Comments

Done

Microsoft Outlook ... Skype Minutes 19.5... Microsoft PowerPoi... Tale View for Viking ...



# Research angles

- Internet of things, geography of things, memory economy → changes in object 'agency' / 'value'?
- Social applications and implications of tagging technology and personal narratives within a range of community settings
- Online community 'from scratch' → ethics, methodology, relationships between the 'real' and the virtual?





 **Future  
Everything**

“RememberMe”

touch me or scan me

[www.talesofthings.com](http://www.talesofthings.com)

# 'Affective' dimensions



1. Objects as emotional ties between people
2. The Internet as *public* stage for *personal* (previously private) stories
3. 'Affective fabrics' of digital object memories:
  - Issues of emotional 'disclosure'; user-generated vs. facilitated tales; who defines emotion?





P  
I  
L  
O  
T  
  
T  
A  
L  
E  
S



## Magnet light

‘The lamp in the fridge blew, and the spares shop is far away - but the pound shop is around the corner. 2 for £1.’ (**pollux**, 16.04.2010)



## Morning routine

‘This manual coffee grinder has been an important part of my morning routine since 2006, and has followed me from Dresden, via Zurich to London.’ (added by **anders**, 16.04.2010)

- ‘I have one similar to this. It has been in my family for as long as I can remember. My parents owned it and now I do (and I am a pensioner) and it still works wonderfully.’ - **ironjawcannon**





'mug of tea, with hearts on, its big. it makes me happy. I bought it to celebrate my first day at work at UCL, it now holds copious amounts of tea for me every day.' (added by **clairey\_ross**, 11.05.10)



'... Whether it was pix n' mix, cheap CDs, children's clothing or simply the friendly smile of staff members who had worked there for 30+ years, Woolies was always the place you went on a Saturday afternoon with your Mum! ...' (added by **jom**, 09.05.2010)





## Art / Intervention



## 'Collecting'



## 'Advertising'





### **esteros del ibera**

‘In 1998 I visited the incredible ibera swamps in northern argentina, and came across a man selling all manners of things. a sword caught my eye, and I asked what it was. He told me it was from 19th century wars. It was just 10 dollars (the tag is still visible) and I was suspicious, but what could I loose? ...’ (added by **lolovera**, 17.05.10)



### **First Nelfa Querubim Ceramic Collection Item**

‘... A friend during those years [...] brought me to Nelfa’s studio in Miag-ao, Panay. It was an inspiring visit and got me and my soon-to-be-wife (I was married in 1984) Susie started with clay and ceramic collection. Up until today, we acquire glazed pottery from budding and celebrated artists for our collection.’ (added by **aborrero**, 23.04.2010)



### Grandpa's Book

'My dad's father, my grandfather had some old, leather-bound books, circa 1950. When he died, my dad inherited all of the books. A couple of years later, I rediscovered the old books. My dad said that I could have one of them, 'Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea' and it is now my favourite book.'  
(added by **alexander\_w\_1998**, 23.04.2010)



### Dad's penstand

'I bought this penstand from Mumbai for my dad. When I gifted him, his eyes watered and he return-gifted the same to me with the words - "My boy is now a man".'  
(added by **shwetank**, 26.5.2010)



'When I was a child, as every child, I had my favourite toy. It was a small house that looked like a mushroom. It had a lift and a garage for a red sport car. The roof was blank with red circles on it and there was a family "living" inside the mushroom: father, mother, daughter and son. Also, there was a dog that was part of this family, but it used to stay outside, in a smaller mushroom home (suitable for a dog). I cannot say how many hours I spent playing with this mushroom called "Mundo Feliz" in Portuguese. I would translate it into English as Happy World...

### my mushroom



... It was almost the same: lift, dog's house, garage. I bought it immediately... For 3 Euro. [...] When I arrived in Brazil and visited my mid-sister to meet my niece - she was a baby at that time - I gave her "The Magic Three" [sic]. I cannot describe how I felt taking a photo of her playing with it. It was like a circle going on.'

(added by **josipazbrazil**, 27.05.2010)



# Where to go from here...

- What kinds of stories get told in different on- and offline contexts?
- How does the choice of media impact on whether (how) a story 'works'? → Connections? Emotional disclosure?
  - Social interaction on the site
  - Reflections within community settings
- Social benefits? → Technology as '(dis)enabler'?  
*Network* of people and object memories?
- Function of *hidden* and private things?
- Does sharing memories (emotions?) always build bridges?



Find us on:

[www.talesofthings.com](http://www.talesofthings.com)

[www.youtotem.com](http://www.youtotem.com)

twitter

facebook

**Thanks to my co-authors:** Angelina Karpovich, Maria Burke, Andrew Hudson-Smith, Simone O'Callaghan, Chris Speed, Ralph Barthel, Ben Blundell, Martin De Jode, Clare Lee, Arthi Manohar, Michael Quigley, Duncan Shingleton, Jane Macdonald

**Project partners:** Edinburgh College of Art, UCL, Brunel University, University of Salford, University of Dundee

