Title of Session: The Art of Storytelling: Comic Life
Moderator: BJ Berquist
Guest Speaker: Keith Lang
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BJB2: you can download a trial version of Comic Life at http://plasq.com/comiclife

ValeriePe: Wow! Just the little example on the webpage looks neat.

ValeriePe: I didn't get a chance to look at it sooner because I have been so busy

ValeriePe: I am glad I picked this chat

BJB2 understands

DeborahEK: Hi B, I'm back

DeborahEK: I have opened the comic life website; looks interesting

ValeriePe: Yes, it does. I am downloading the free trial

DeborahEK: well, I'll do that later, of do I need to do that now for the workshop

BJB2: Keith Lang is scheduled to be our guest speaker. Hopefully he will be logged in soon

DeborahEK: okay

BJB2: I don't know how long it takes to download the trial version...

BJB2: and you may be fine without it

DeborahEK: okay

ValeriePe: Mine is still downloading but than too I have dialup

BJB2: two books I recommend if you want to really get the most out of comics as communication are Understanding Comics and Making Comics

BJB2: both are by Scott McCloud

ValeriePe: It is going to take a while. I am just going to stop it. I is at 1.4 mb and it

says 512MB RAM; 1GB RAM recommended

ValeriePe: • 40 MB available disk space

BJB2 nods to Valerie

RosannaM joined the room.

BJB2: Hi, Rosanna. Welcome

BJB2: here for the Storytelling discussion?

RosannaM: Yep

KeithL joined the room.

SusanR joined the room.

KeithL: Hi All!

BJB2 cheers...Keith's here!

ValeriePe: Hi!

ElaineGa: Hello to all

BJB2: I'm going to announce and then we can officially start

ValeriePe: Sounds good

DeborahEK: hi

DeborahEK: okay

BJB2: let's start with brief intros so Keith has an idea of his audience. Tell us where you are located and what you teach or hope to teach

ElaineGa: I'll start

ElaineGa: I am in Amherst, MA

ElaineGa: and have my own instructional design and technology business

RosannaM: My name is Rosanna Martinez, and I'm an EC-4 generalist student teacher from Houston, TX

ElaineGa: SparkFireLearing

ValeriePe: I am in Houston, Tx. I am a student teacher who is with first graders until the first week of March. In march I will be with third grade

DeborahEK: I'm Debbie

ElaineGa: haven't done anything with digital storytelling

DeborahEK: I teach at a 2 year college in Elizabeth, NJ

DeborahEK: I'm an ESL teacher, mostly with adult immigrants

BJB2: I teach communication in Pennsylvania

SusanR: I am in Ottawa, Ontario. I facilitate the K to 3= Resources sessions here in TI and I am a substitute teacher

BJB2: I think you'll be amazed at how your students become engaged in storytelling and using language when they use comics

ValeriePe: I have used photostory before

ValeriePe: I like it

DeborahEK: I can definitely see the possibilities for ESL students

KeithL: hmm - I don't know it

BJB2: Keith, you want to take over and give us an overview of what Comic Life is?

ValeriePe: I can't wait to learn about his one

DeborahEK: I have as well, it was very user-friendly

RosannaM: is comics a program?

KeithL: Sure, I'll do an intro

KeithL: My name's Keith :-)

KeithL: I'm from Melbourne, Australia, and am part of a little company called plasq

KeithL: We're spread all around the world - the US, Norway, France, Brazil Australia and more

DeborahEK: sorry, just curious- what time is it there?

KeithL: Comic Life is an application that we made about 2 1/2 years ago, originally on the Mac, but now available on the PC

KeithL: It's 1:09pm Thursday :-)

ValeriePe: Happy Valentine's Day!

DeborahEK: yeah, happy V-day

BJB2 chuckles

KeithL: Thanks! I am in fact typing from a hotel room where my girlfriend is sleeping - just checked in and hence I was late, sorry :-)

ValeriePe: No Problem

DeborahEK: no prob

KeithL left the room (signed off).

BJB2: oops

BJB2: Keith mentioned he was struggling with wifi

BJB2: hopefully he will be back soon

ValeriePe: As teachers we deal with everything :)

DeborahEK: okay, we'll wait

DeborahEK: so true

BJB2 nods to Valerie

SusanR: the unexpected

DeborahEK: gotta have a backup plan when technology fails

ValeriePe: yes

ElaineGa joined the room.

ValeriePe: I have experienced that with one of my lessons

BJB2: so how do you think comics can be used for storytelling?

BJB2: welcome back, Elaine. We've lost our speaker

DeborahEK: I was doing a class on using a website I created, and the website was not cooperating

BJB2 . o O (hopefully for a brief time)

DeborahEK: it was very frustrating

ValeriePe: For one the child can use their creativity and be them self

DeborahEK: It could be used with basic ESL students to write simple stories

BJB2 nods to Deborah

ValeriePe: Great way to practice their writing

DeborahEK: yup

RosannaM: I'm still not sure what the program is, I thought this was how to use comedy while telling stories!

BJB2: are you familiar with graphic novels?

RosannaM: yes

DeborahEK: and fun

BJB2: think graphic novels, Rosanna...

DeborahEK: Persepolis

BJB2: although being funny can be good too!

RosannaM: ok, so this program helps children create their own novels?

ValeriePe: Also it is a great way to incorporate technology in the classroom

RosannaM: Where do you get this program?

DeborahEK: http://plasq.com/comiclife-win

DeborahEK: check it out. You can download a free trial

ValeriePe: you can download a free trial or buy it

BJB2: the free trial is for 30 days

DeborahEK: that's long enough to see if you really like it and can use it with a class

RosannaM: cool, I'll be in a fourth grade class in a couple of weeks, and this sounds like a great program

BJB2: Keith is logged in and should be back with us shortly

KeithL joined the room.

ValeriePe: ok

BJB2: voila!

KeithL: sorry about that everyone

DeborahEK: that' ok

KeithL: something weird happened here

ElaineGa: welcome back Keith

KeithL: hehe

DeborahEK: stuff happens

KeithL: back to explaining Comic Life...

KeithL: Comic Life is a software application that lets you easily turn a stack of digital photos, images, or webcam/isight captures into a photo comic

KeithL: can I ask, how many people are here on a Mac, and how many PC?

DeborahEK: oh, wow, fascinating

BJB2: pc

DeborahEK: PC

KeithL: (Just to get some reference to what terms I use)

SusanR: Mac

RosannaM: pc

ElaineGa: mac

KeithL: ok, thanks

ValeriePe: pc

KeithL: Comic Life is identical for both platforms - just on a Mac you have an iSight, whereas on a PC you usually use a 'webcam' etc..

KeithL: so if you visit http://plasq.com/comiclife quickly you can get an idea of what the application looks like

ValeriePe: I saw it and it is fascinating

KeithL: I'll also tell you at this point that there's a 30 day fully functional download, so go ahead and download and try it out if you haven't

KeithL: but I can walk you though what lots of schools around the world do with it

KeithL: Which has been an astounding (and unexpected) pleasant surprise for us

BJB2: I'd love to see some examples, Keith!

RosannaM: is this a product that you and your company developed?

KeithL: Let me find some good educational examples..

DeborahEK: the family album demo is very interesting

KeithL: yes, I'm one of the founders who made Comic Life

ValeriePe: wow!

KeithL: which is now is 1000's of schools around the world

KeithL: we like schools :-)

RosannaM: how expensive is it to obtain a license for an entire school?

RosannaM: or district?

ValeriePe: I bet the kids really are eager and excited to their work. I got excited just to see the little example on the webpage

DeborahEK: yeah, they are great.

ValeriePe: It made me want to create one

KeithL: If you have a look at the education page, all pricing is there

DeborahEK: yup

RosannaM: sorry if that sounds tacky, but my district won't let anyone use a program that's not available to the entire district (equitable access)

KeithL: you can find lots of examples in our gallery: http://plasq.com/comiclife/gallery/

BJB2 checks to see if everyone got the url

KeithL: Education - the education pricing if you're interested

KeithL: oops, that didn't work

KeithL: http://plasq.com/edustore/

KeithL: html pastes here, but doesn't work :-)

KeithL: We have a lot of schools using it to document school outings, tell social/ historical stories, some use the live webcam/isight capture to make up a story with toys as they go

KeithL: We've been astounded at what kids can do with it

KeithL: And the level of visual aesthetic they posses

ValeriePe: They are so creative and imaginative

JeffC: a buck a license for 1000 seats for both doozla and comic life... sounds like a deal to me.

ValeriePe: Yes, it does

JeffC: I'll try and pry open our district's wallet.

DeborahEK: yeah, I was going to say it's actually not that pricey, which is nice

KeithL: yeah, we keep it cheap. we like kids, and think software should be affordable to all

ValeriePe: I agree

DeborahEK: good point

JeffC: you're obviously not a capitalist.

SusanR: btw Skitch integrates with Comic Life

SusanR: http://plasq.com/skitch

DeborahEK: what's skitch

JeffC: can you save the comics as jpgs or ebooks?

KeithL: yes - you can save to jpg, tiff, slideshows, html, print out, lots of options

JeffC: cool

KeithL: let me take a screenshot for you

JeffC: they'd make excellent ebooks.

ValeriePe: I agree

JeffC: which for the most part are .pdf.

KeithL: http://skitch.com/keith/geba/comiclife

KeithL: I'm using a great little tool of ours called Skitch btw to do my screenshots etc

KeithL: as you can see, there's lots of export options

DeborahEK: yes, that's a plus

KeithL: I also just googled 'Comic Life teaching resources' and found http://www.digmo.co.uk/tutorials/teaching-with-comic-life-download/

JeffC: excellent... this is really great, Keith.

KeithL: because Comic Life came with the Mac for some time (ended up on 10,000+ machines) there's a LOT of schools who have great material to share

KeithL: sorry, 10,000,000

KeithL: lots of machines :-)

BJB2: wow

KeithL: we've had school districts buy it in lots of 10,000 seats

KeithL: so there's a lot of support out there, and resources

ValeriePe: that is good

KeithL: which is nice, cause teachers are overworked and underpaid

DeborahEK: were you ever a teacher, Keith?

KeithL: no, but we work with schools which have great passionate teachers

SusanR . o O (wonders if Ontario, Canada has bought it for their school districts)

KeithL: and there's 4 teachers amongst my relatives

JeffC: I see lots of possibilities... storyboarding (there's a link on the last site)... for kids to create their own movies...

DeborahEK: great!

KeithL: Susan, Good point.. sometimes people don't even know it's already bundled on their machine

KeithL: if you bought an intel mac a few years ago

JeffC: how many upgrades would a site license entitle one to?

KeithL: so worth checking !

KeithL: Jeff, we no longer offer site licenses - when we started offering the PC version it simply wasn't viable

KeithL: so it's a per seat thing

KeithL: but gets pretty darn cheap at numbers >1000

KeithL: everyone here is in the US, correct?

RosannaM: yes

BJB2: Sue is in Canada

JeffC: right... I'm thinking about how I'm going to sell it to the district and how they're going to respond.

KeithL: Hi Sue, eh ;-)

RosannaM: (I am at least)

JeffC: I mean... if we bought 1000 licenses, and then next month you upgraded... would we be entitled to an upgrade or have to spend another grand?

KeithL: In USD, it's about $1 a copy greater than 1000

KeithL: upgrade is for the 1.x of the product

SusanR . o O (will it ever become web based)

KeithL: For example, we're announcing a new product, Comic Life Magiq, which will be Mac only, but that's running parallel to the existing Comic Life - which will be around some time longer, because many schools don't have 10.5 which is required for our upcoming Comic Life Magiq application

KeithL: Susan, Web is something we're looking into - and there's some great little web apps out there now

KeithL: worth looking around for - but at this point most people still have their images on their local drive

KeithL: But it's certainly something we're looking into for the future

JeffC: how about language support characters, i.e. Spanish?

KeithL: I hope I don't sound like I'm trying to 'sell' Comic Life btw - we just really have strong social feelings about education, and I'm happy to answer any questions etc that I can

SusanR: also French

SusanR: support

DeborahEK: good question. Many of my students are Spanish speakers

DeborahEK: and French/Creole

JeffC: I'm not worried about it Keith... I'm already sold... just thinking of the obstacles I'll have to overcome in selling it to my district.

KeithL: Comic Life Mac is localized in English, Italian, Spanish, Japanese, German, French and Dutch

ValeriePe: I don't see it like you are selling it to us. I see that you are just telling us about your product

KeithL: Windows is only in English at this point - we're working on it

JeffC: yay!

JeffC: oh... darn!

KeithL: sorry!

JeffC hopes that that upgrade will be a 1.x one!

KeithL: yeah, it will be

KeithL: it just takes time

KeithL: Comic Life for Windows is relatively new

JeffC thinks of amazing possibilities for ESL, creative writing, language arts, SPED...

DeborahEK: Jeff, what do you teach?

JeffC: nothing

DeborahEK: ???

JeffC used to teach English/ESL... have a credential in English in CA, but I'm in Oregon now... so... can't get licensed... only subbing at the moment.

DeborahEK: okay, I'm an ESL teacher- nice to meet you!

JeffC: u2

DeborahEK: thanks

DeborahEK: what grade did you teach

DeborahEK: I teach adults

JeffC: HS

DeborahEK: in a 2 year college

KeithL: Btw, if anyone wants to put a face to a name, this is me at the recent Macworld

Conference http://www.tuaw.com/2008/01/15/best-booth-wear-plasqs-jungle-skins/

DeborahEK: Thanks!

JeffC . o O (cute OUTFIT!)

DeborahEK: yeah, real interesting!

DeborahEK: was it comfy?

DeborahEK: LOL

KeithL: It was actually. We like to have fun, as you can see

ValeriePe : Yes you do

DeborahEK: it took a brave man to wear that outfit!

JeffC: of course that will be the toughest sell to my district... something fun is usually banned in education.

SusanR : you're a gutsy guy

DeborahEK: Fred Flinstone, etc.

DeborahEK: Or were you more like Barney?

ValeriePe smiles

KeithL: it was a jungle theme

KeithL: in the corporate dry, world, we tried to be a little oasis :)

SusanR : It should have been bundled with Leopard

KeithL: Apple doesn't bundle any 3rd party applications anymore

BJB2 chuckles...good one, Sue

SusanR : with an extra fee

KeithL: ah, I missed the joke!

KeithL: but it was leopard skin, I made sure of that

KeithL: There is an interesting story I like to tell about the time the police emailed us..

ValeriePe: what!?

KeithL: They emailed to say 'thank you' for making Comic Life..

DeborahEK: do tell

ValeriePe: ha ha :)

KeithL: Seems they used it for laying out their gory crime scene photos!

KeithL: and it made their life a lot easier

RosannaM: definitely multi-functional...

ValeriePe: wow!

SusanR: neat

DeborahEK: great. They use storyboarding to figure out a crime scene, time line, etc

DeborahEK: And they could add whatever captions they wanted :)

ValeriePe: interesting

KeithL: hehe

KeithL: What kind of resources would make it easier to convince your department heads to buy comic life?

KeithL: I'm interested - it seems there's lots of stuff which teachers want, but can't get unless jumping though hoops

DeborahEK: cost, and whether it will be used by more than one dept or subject

SusanR: Does it have audio support, Keith?

DeborahEK: good question

KeithL: no - not at this time. but it's a common request, and we're looking into how to best add it

BJB2: what is the best way for us to get in touch with you or comic life if we have questions, Keith?

SusanR: Thanks Keith. It is on my best buy list!!

DeborahEK: yes, very informative. Thank you!

ValeriePe : Agree

BJB2: Thanks for joining us, Keith, and taking time from your hectic schedule.

ValeriePe : Thank you!

RosannaM: thank you so much for all the info!!

DeborahEK: Thank you all, It was fine, and thank you again BJ, for the tour

DeborahEK: Will be back, that's for sure

BJB2: our time is about up. Thanks, everyone for your participation

DeborahEK: Good nite!

KeithL: any questions,, email me keith@plasq.com , happy to help!

ValeriePe : Thank you for talking to us about your product.

SusanR : Thanks again

BJB2 waves goodnight.

ValeriePe : goodnight

KeithL: goodnight all