Storing memories in a digital scrapbook to fight loneliness

Founded by Charlotte McMillan, Storychest is a digital scrapbook app that allows people of all ages to record their unique and powerful personal stories by writing about what, is, and has, happened throughout their lives and their aspirations and dreams for the future.

Temps de lecture : minute

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This powerful reflective tool enables users to record moments that were triggered by happy or sad memories. At the moment we are living through an unprecedented time, which is momentous from a social history perspective, but which also has starkly highlighted some vulnerabilities in our society.

Right from the beginning of lockdown, it was clear that the older generation and those who have been required to shield could potentially suffer as a result of isolation and loneliness, and so ways to support and interact with these people were needed more than ever.

Since lockdown began on 23rd March, Storychest has seen a 400% increase in new monthly registered users reflecting peoples' desire to record this time and write about their family's experience. As well as enabling children, parents and grandparents, aunties and uncles to stay connected despite not being able to meet in person.

We all have a story that is worth documenting to recall and enjoy again and again as we progress through the journeys of our lives.

Charlotte McMillan woke up one morning when her boys were small and realised that as time was racing by, she was struggling to capture or record in any meaningful way the stories that make her family life. She had accumulated piles of physical mementoes, reluctant to throw them away: reminders of her own childhood and adventures, and now a growing collection of special treasures which she felt compelled to keep safe for her children.

Photos and videos, special keepsakes, 'artwork', school certificates, funny words and phrases scribbled on to scraps of paper, programmes from school performances etc. Her own collection included family heirlooms, menus from special occasions, wine labels, letters and postcards from friends, gig tickets and mementoes from her travels.

All of these things were scattered digitally across computers and phones, often lost in the inevitable demise of one system in favour of another, as well as physically in shoeboxes under beds, in the attic, or in makeshift "special boxes".

But keeping these items was only part of the picture, and Charlotte realised that details and feelings were being left behind, too easily forgotten as time passed by. Who said that? Where were we when we saw that? Do you remember the first time that…?

She felt that she was lacking a place to pull it all together, to capture all the stories that make family life before they get lost in the business of the day today, and she figured that the problem she was experiencing wasn't unique to her. So, she came up with an idea of creating a private space for people to capture and preserve the fabric of their lives and who they are, to enjoy, to relive and to pass on to future generations.

"I think that people's personal stories are so

fascinating, and yet we spend so little time trying to capture them. How many times have you said, or thought you must write that down before you forget" and yet it's too easy to put it off. I wanted to make it easy for people to capture the details as they go along, and to retrieve memories from the past – I'm using Storychest both as a journal of what we're doing now, but also as a way of resurfacing important moments from the past – like postcards sent to me when I was a child, or memories of cooking with my grandmother and the recipes she passed on to me." - Charlotte McMillan, Founder of Storychest

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