Who knows stories better than libraries?! But are we telling our own stories well enough in our marketing and communications to our users, funders, donors, supporters, and overall community? I believe we can do better. I’m passionate about helping libraries to share our stories, the stories of our patrons and our communities, in ways that resonate and engage.

**CLASSIC STORY TYPES** – the basic plots behind all your favorite movies and books. Classics work for a reason.

- **Hero’s Journey** – also seen as ‘conquering the monster’ and the ‘voyage and return’. The odds are stacked against our hero/heroine, but through ingenuity/creativity/friends’ help/new tools/strength they overcome obstacles and succeed. In the ‘voyage + return’ version, the hero travels to strange or dangerous worlds (or could be leaving a metaphorical comfort zone, not just geographic one) before returning home. Making it home is emotional and usually the climax of the story. Examples: Star Wars, Super Mario, Back to the Future, Alice in Wonderland, the Odyssey, Phantom Tollbooth, Chronicles of Narnia.

- **The Quest** – a hero and crew/gang/set of buddies set out on a mission, usually to find/discover a person, place, or thing and they encounter obstacles and hardships before triumphing. Again, could be metaphorical journeys or wanted things. Having companions and cast of characters is essential in this one. Examples: King Arthur and Holy Grail, Lord of the Rings, Finding Nemo, Harry Potter, Catcher in the Rye, Wizard of Oz, The Princess Bride, Legend of Zelda.

- **Rags to Riches** – the ‘bootstrap’, ‘success story’, or ‘dream’ story, where a hero/heroine must overcome adversity, long odds, unfortunate start, and make it to ‘the dream.’ Example: Rocky, Cinderella, Great Expectations, Pretty

- **Rebirth** – the hero sinks to lowest of lows, is helpless, is swayed or lured by ‘dark forces’, or faces huge challenges to overcome and return to a ‘good place’. But hero manages remarkable recovery by the end, and all find inspiration in suffering, struggle and rise to success. Or, we see struggle and redemption of a villain. Examples: A Christmas Carol, How the Grinch Stole Christmas, Sleeping Beauty, every time James Bond escapes death at hand of a villain, Dr. Who (who literally keeps rebirthing), Return of the Jedi.

**Elements of Stories:** yes, stories can have multiple plot elements and classic components

- **Classic Story Arc** – a beginning, middle, end; there needs to be some conflict, a resolution, and the finality of an ending. One part of the story sets up situations or problems to be addressed, fought, explored, resolved in later part.

- **Comedy** – not every funny story is a ‘comedy’; think Shakespearean – comedy of errors, confusion among characters, bumbling of fools, ‘shenanigans’ all before the story resolves. Reframe a problem into comedic confusion and have your hero fix it.

- **Tragedy** – because it’s darker, harder to use well and safely in a marketing sense, as it is usually based on fatal character flaw or weakness that destroys the hero. You don’t want that for your organization’s story!

- **Yin/Yang** – stating the obvious (of a problem/situation/story) along with the unexpected, unobvious. Great marketing example = BlendTec industrial blenders (‘will it blend?’ Nails, screws, books, iPhones). Good for explaining and teaching - show a problem, challenging situation and then the happily-ever-after from the solution and change.
THE STORIES YOUR LIBRARY SHOULD BE TELLING WITH VIDEO:

- **Brand stories** – the story(s) that help build or contribute to the overall image of your organization's brand; 'Why you do what you do, and who you do it for'; NOT about missions/visions, or even specific services or programs – but how those services, programs, offerings affect their lives. Use the classic story elements to tell what's special about you!

- **Personal stories** – from the individual lives in and around your organization; from your staff, your Friends group, your Board, your patrons/users, your funders, your larger community. Tell one (or more) of their stories via a Hero's path, or Rags to Riches, or an Origin story, etc.

- **Origin stories** – how an organization, mission, program, service, or cause got started and why that matters to others. People may think they know how or why libraries started – but do they really know? Do they know about your branch, your college? Why are you in your location? Is the library named for someone and why? What could the history of the library mean to users?

- **Product stories** – how did a particular product, item, program or service come to be? What is IT's story? Were there pitfalls in the path to its creation? Was there a journey to get it into the hands of your community? Why do people love it? Would they miss it if it disappeared? What problems has it solved, situations changed, lives improved? What are its most creative uses?

- **Customer stories** – your users/patrons/customers should be the HERO in your stories – tell their stories in relation to your organization. How do they relate emotionally to your org? Have you asked them? Get them to talk about the benefits they've received, especially unexpected ones. Guide them to their own stories of interacting with your staff, programs, and services.

- **Customer-generated stories** – take to the next level and have your community create and share their own stories and tag you. Encourage photos, videos, live chats with you or involving you and how they are interacting with staff, resources, the building. Crowdsource, hold contests, reward sharing by loyal users.

- **Staff/employee stories** – people really like seeing ‘behind the scenes’, how an organization works, who the people are and how those people make it all happen. We think that people know how libraries work – but most really don't. Why do we assume this? Was there a mass class on How to Library 101?
that everyone was taught – and still – remembers? No! So, teach them now, but with the human element and a little ‘special treatment’ or VIP access. Show how programs are created, how books get onto shelves, how ILL works, who answers their questions, what prep for storytime is like – and how knowing all this can improve service for all. Let your staff share their own Origin stories, how they came to be librarians and came to be at this library.

- **Case studies** – detailed, well-researched, evidence-based stories; before + after, problem + solution; these are more thorough, educational versions of other stories.

Which story would be easiest for you and your team to create for your library – right now? Which story most needs to be told? Which story would be the most fun to create and put on video?

Want help getting your library’s story down and then out on video? Let me help! Email me at jburke@intellicraftresearch.com to talk about custom staff training, workshops, webinars and more.