

*mStories*

University of Technology Sydney

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# mStories:

Understanding the new literacies of mobile devices through a creative  
participatory research project

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This Honours Thesis has been submitted as a requirement of the C09019  
Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Information Technology

## **Statement of originality**

I certify that this work has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being submitted as part of any other degree. I also certify that this project has been written by me, and that any assistance, and all sources used have been acknowledged within this project.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frawley', written in a cursive style.

Jessica Frawley

## **Abstract**

Traditional discussions on literacy have focused on the reading and writing of alphabet and character-based texts. However, innovations in information and communication technologies (ICT) have emphasised new forms of literacy that include still and moving image, and new modes of document reception and production. These ‘new’ literacies have become a significant area of research, however to date these understandings have been built without reference to the adult user, the informal learner and the mobile device. Though mobile devices enable increasingly multimodal behaviours little is known about how a device’s mobility affects these literacy practices. As Smartphone ownership increases and the semiotic landscape becomes increasingly multimodal there is a need for understandings of multiliteracies research to be applied and extended to the multimodal meaning-making afforded by mobile devices. In August 2011 *mStories*, a creative participatory action research project, was established by the researcher. Working with nine participants from Australia and the UK, *mStories* facilitates the creation and sharing of user generated stories created with mobile devices; in addition to changing user practice through action, this project contributes to understandings of multimodal mobile literacies through survey and interview research, and analysis of the *mStories* products. Grounded in the participant’s experiences and semiotic products, this thesis develops an understanding of literacy from the underrepresented adult user and the mobile technology that they use. From data derived from this participatory project, this thesis characterises mobile practice as one that is situated, locative, and experiential in nature; This project finds that mobile devices are catalytic to meaning-making within a wider ICT ecology.

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