

# Transmedia Takeaways from SXSW

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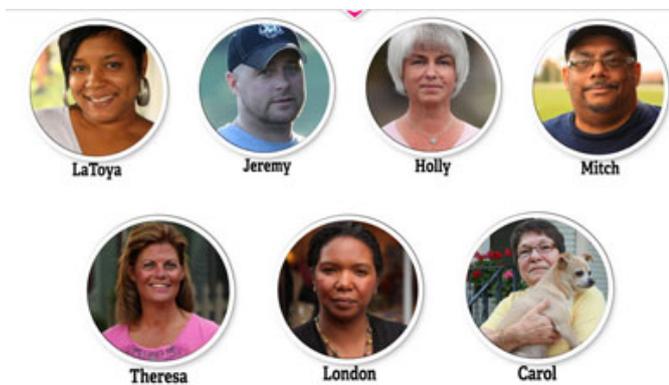


Transmedia-- the interaction of sound, image and text on platforms that let users interact and sometimes participate--got its own track of panels this year at SXSW, angled toward filmmakers. At the exuberant, raucous and high-decibel meeting of film, music, and geekdom, on display were tools, ideas and even finished work.

SXSW showcased works that take transmedia at its simplest—the notion of making multiple iterations of a work (for instance, creating discrete but related units, such as a website, a social media campaign, a film, an app, or a book).

Some socially-minded examples:

[Exit Zero Project](#) [2]: Describes the experience of de-industrialization in one Chicago neighborhood. This was showcased by MIT's nascent Open Documentary Lab (URL).



[Reinvention Stories](#) [3]: By renowned social documentary filmmakers Julia Reichert and Steve Bognar, explores deindustrialization in Dayton, Ohio. The site features a series of short profiles of Daytonites, a tour of Dayton, and an [opportunity](#) [3] to contribute stories. [Localore](#) [4], a project of [AIR](#) [5], sponsored that project, along with a clutch of others, with public broadcasting money.

[Jerusalem Unfiltered](#) [6]: Liz Nord's film in progress, "[Battle for Jerusalem](#) [7]," is accompanied by an app, which provides a tour of activist sites in Jerusalem (it works both as a virtual tour and to accompany physical tours). She spoke at a panel on storytelling in unlikely places.

## Tools of the trade

A major obstacle to film-to-transmedia development has been the lack of off-the-shelf tools and platforms to allow filmmakers to get their work done without a developer at their side. And of course when every side is custom-built, the inevitable maintenance issues only multiply.

This year, two platforms vied for attention. The U.S.-based [Zeega](#) [8] (named, adorably, for Dziga Vertov, the restless Soviet experimenter), has been evolving for years, and now seems almost ready

for the rest of us. It's the platform for "Reinvention Stories" and for reports like this one "[Inside the Nation's Gun Shows](#) [9]" on gun shows from PBS NewsHour. Zeega just joined the new accelerator Matter., hoping to attract venture capital.

[StoryPlanet](#) [10] has evolved in Europe, and similarly provides a rapidly evolving platform to do visual storytelling. It's been used by organizations such as [WITNESS](#) [11] and [18 Days in Egypt](#) [12]. It also hopes to attract venture capital, with investor Joi Ito on its board.

Both are useable now, for free, by someone with a little patience, and viewable by someone prepared for a few glitches or surprises.

### Guidance from the experts

Plenty of pithy advice was on offer. Zeega's Jesse Chapins reminded the crowd, "People don't want to make a lot of choices, but they do want to feel that they have choice."

IDFA's [Casper Sonnen](#) [13] (he coordinates new media there) made these points to creators:

- Interactive is like salt; use it sparingly.
- Story comes first.
- User participation is great, but don't forget--people think you are the author.
- It is time to embrace the "slow web," see it as a space to enjoy art

Chris Boebel, co-author of the "Exit Zero Project," while showing off an interactive map, commented, "On maps, the people are the most important thing. Interacting isn't just clicking." If the maps facilitate people telling and hearing stories, they succeed.

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### Links:

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[2] <http://www.exitzeroproject.org/>

[3] <http://www.reinventionstories.org>

[4] <http://airmediaworks.org/localore>

[5] <http://airmediaworks.org/>

[6] <http://www.jerusalemunfiltered.com/demo/>

[7] <https://www.facebook.com/BattleforJerusalem>

[8] <http://zeega.com/>

[9] <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/multimedia/gun-show/>

[10] <https://www.storyplanet.com/index>

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