A photograph of a monk wearing a dark brown hooded robe and a simple woven headband. He is looking down at a black smartphone held in his hands, which are resting on a surface. The lighting is dramatic, coming from the side to illuminate his face and hands, while the rest of the scene is in deep shadow.

Volume 2, Number 1, 2013

ISSN 2324-6375

Orality Journal

The Word Became Fresh

**Scalable Experiments:
Bible Translation, Church Planting, Disciple
Making in the Digitoral Era**

**Gravelle • Arlund • Moon • Taber • LeFever • Evans
Terry • Rye**



THE LOGO

... a movement ... reaching the unreached
... engaged in all domains--including Church, Business and Education
... continuous ... multi-generational ... Spirit-led

Our new logo expresses the multi-disciplined and multi-faceted nature of the orality network.



... BLACK
represents the lack of light (*lack of the knowledge of our Triune God*) among the people groups.

... SILVER represents the message of bringing the Gospel through oral teaching.

... RED represents the blood of Jesus. It is the act of salvation represented by Christ's blood/sacrifice.



... GOLDen globe symbolizes the utmost value of people everywhere. We recognize people groups—not political boundaries.

The choice of the side of the globe represented is in recognition of our emphasis on the 10/40 window where most oral preference learners live.

These elements represent the ethos of the International Orality Network.

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Orality Journal

The Word Became Fresh

Volume 2, Number 1, 2013

ISBN 962-7673-24-2

ISSN 2324-6375

Cover Photo

The Levant Arab peoples include several clusters of Arabs: Jordanian, Palestinian, Iraqi, Arabic Jewish, Chaldean, and Syrian Arabs. Levant, meaning East of Italy, covers a geographical land from Eastern Mediterranean to Greater Syria. Levantine Arabic is considered a language with urban and rural dialect distinctives. Daily oral Levantine Arabic usage has witnessed the pre-printing era, the printing age, and now welcomes the digitoral era. Cover Photo courtesy of A. Steve Evans; also known as 'babasteve' on the popular photo sharing site flickr.com.

The Lord GOD has given me
the tongue of those who are taught,
that I may know how to sustain
with a word
him who is weary.
Morning by morning he awakens;
he awakens my ear
to hear as those who are taught.

Isaiah 50:4 (ESV)

Orality Journal

The Word Became Fresh

Orality Journal is the journal of the International Orality Network. It is published online semi-annually and aims to provide a platform for scholarly discourse on the issues of orality, discoveries of innovations in orality, and praxis of effectiveness across multiple domains in society. This online journal is international and interdisciplinary, serving the interests of the orality movement through research articles, documentation, book reviews, and academic news. Occasionally, print editions will be provisioned. Submission of items that could contribute to the furtherance of the orality movement are welcomed.

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Editorial Email: oralityjournal@gmail.com

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National Christian Foundation
A/C 429666
1311 Tijeras Ave. NW
Albuquerque, NM
USA 87102

ISBN 962-7673-24-2

ISSN 2324-6375

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Editor's Notes

Samuel E. Chiang

In the inaugural issue of the *Orality Journal*, we noted that the “Gutenberg Parentheses” is now here. We might recall that academicians have labeled the period from the fifteenth to the twentieth century the Gutenberg Parentheses which was anchored to the printing press. Thus, it would appear that there is a vacuum, an interregnum.

Filling the Vacuum

The business sector has been quick to fill in the interregnum and have in fact started to label this era as the rise of the “digitoral” era. Googling “digitoral” yields 6,870 search results in 0.44 seconds. Clearly, “digitoral” is nascent in its usage. But is it fitting? Could it be used to describe the next chronos period?

In a book published by Harvard Business Review Press¹, noted speaker, author, and businessman Jonah Sachs seized the opportunity to describe this compound word:

$$\text{digit} + \text{oral} = \text{digitoral}$$

Sachs suggests that in oral traditions, “ideas begin in the mind of a creator, but their path to their audience is far less prescriptive. Instead of being processed through an elite device that replicates and delivers them directly, orally transmitted ideas must replicate themselves, passing from the mind of one listener to the next.”²

In fact, Sachs further asserts how ideas get transmitted is through “meme”, which is commonly described as a “unit for an idea, behavior or style that spreads from person to person within a culture.”³ This unit of information might mutate and the core message will be forgotten—or it may survive even though it might have been tweaked or adjusted. The best unit of information survives because it is memorable, compelling, and adaptable.⁴

Unsurprisingly, Sachs came to the conclusion that the “memes” which survive are stories, and that each one of us hold a worldview which is a collection of stories.⁵ Establishing the “oral” tradition of the second half

of the word “digitoral” is not difficult, but what about the first part of this compound word?

Digit, amongst various meanings and usage, can denote part of a limb (finger), a number (in mathematics or science), or a unit of measurement. Sachs captures the meaning of digit well in the context of social networks. In the swamp of indiscretion, the messages sent through social media may get adjusted, tossed, twisted, rated, commented, shared, and perpetuated. Like the oral era, “ideas today are never fixed; they’re owned and modified by everyone. They move through networks at the will of their members and without that activity, they die.”⁶ (Sachs is not shy to suggest why the “broadcast” era is not working.)

Conversely, in the twenty-first century, with social octane through networks and fuelling through 24/7 technologies, each powerful story may go viral with digital platforms sustaining and immortalizing the story.

From an idea-transmission perspective, and how a story gets moved along, a powerful combination of the spoken and hearing (oral) catalyzed with the technology that tethers social networks together, and ‘digitoral’ was birthed.

Rise of the Digitoral Era

One doesn’t need to go far to taste the digitoral era. Ample antidotal experiences affirm the emergence of this era. For example, some time ago Sunday School teachers in the Philippines initially complained about kids in classes who were being disrespectful by sending SMS messages during teaching sessions.

In fact, some teachers were so ill-at-ease about this that they thought the kids were bullying the teachers through SMS messaging. While some of their suspicions might be true, little did they realize that the kids were talking about what they were learning in the class. The kids were passing on stories they were learning and the stories were alive because they were passing them on. My reinforcement of this story is also digitoral.

Another example is a group of congregants in a church in the United States who were really enjoying the sermon preached by the pastor. However, one

of them opened his iPad to check on a small detail of the sermon during the worship service. To this man's surprise, the pastor had spoken the entire message from "Sermon Central." As good as the message was, the digitoral story that got passed along was not the sermon, but the pastor who had taken the entire sermon from someone else. My reinforcement of this story is also digitoral.

Or who can forget Mitt Romney, 2012 U.S. Presidential candidate saying, "They brought us binders full of women" or "Oppan Gangnam style," the signature line from PSY, the Korean megastar's hit song with over a billion views on the Internet. The oral-visual effects were self-reinforcing and passed along and sustained on multiple platforms. Both items quickly went viral, with the video story of PSY continuing unabated.

Finally, I shall not soon forget the retired Bishop William Tuimising from Kenya who was addressing participants at the launch of the East Africa Orality Network. As he took his place at the podium, he jovially asked everyone to take out their mobile phone and switch them to 'on', noting how many people actually have the Word of God in digital form on their cell phones. The bishop read from his cell phone and provided a sermon. Participants not only SMS messaged a portion of his message, but also spoke of his avante garde method of keeping the cellular device in the 'on' position when most pastors would insist otherwise.

In this issue, we examine powerful experiments which are working and are scalable. Gilles Gravelle leads off with the implications of social networks in the work of Bible translation in the digitoral era. Pam Arlund looks at church planting through orality. Jay Moon describes one of the disciplines of orality and the use of powerful rituals in discipleship. Clyde Taber follows with calling the Church to consider visual media in the context of storytelling. Marlene LeFever continues in her column of how an oralized curriculum is working in India, and Steve Evans joins us with a column to remind us to "Mind the Gap." We are pleased to have the veteran storyteller extraordinaire, J.O. Terry, describe ten mistakes people often make. Tara Rye concludes with an insightful book review.

Orality Journal is the journal of the International Orality Network. Since the network is based on the voluntarism of individual and organizational

members, this journal is your journal. This journal is online in PDF and also in audio format. It is available bi-annually, with provisions for printed editions. We aim to provide a platform for scholarly discourse on the issues of orality, discoveries of innovations in orality, and praxis of effectiveness across multiple domains in society. This online journal is international and interdisciplinary, serving the interests of the orality movement through research articles, documentation, book reviews, and academic news.

As a preview, our next issue fully features “The Seven Disciplines of Orality” and is due out in September 2013; we will also introduce ‘laboratory’ section to journey along those who are experimenting and implementing orality. We welcome submission of items that could contribute to the furtherance of the orality movement for future journal publications. We also welcome your comments, questions, and suggestions! Send your feedback to: oralityjournal@gmail.com.

On the journey together,

Samuel E. Chiang
From Manila, the Philippines

¹ Jonah Sachs, *Winning the Story Wars: Why Those Who Tell—and Live—the Best Stories Will Rule the Future*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2012.

² Ibid, 17.

³ See en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meme. Accessed January 7, 2013.

⁴ Ibid, 17.

⁵ Ibid, 21.

⁶ Ibid, 19.



Inside-out Stories

Marlene LeFever

Marlene LeFever is Vice President of Educational Development for David C. Cook Global Mission. She developed the orality unit mentioned in this article. For a free copy and to receive updates on this initiative, email her at marlene.lefever@davidccook.org.

What I like best about learning to tell Bible stories directly from the Bible is that they work on children (and adults) from the inside-out. A few months ago over one thousand orphans in Christian club programs in India studied the story of redemption. Each of the twelve story segments was a part of God's amazing, big, Bible story. Children heard the story, told the story to each other, discussed the story, and then told it to someone who didn't know the story.

Club leaders let the stories speak for themselves, never telling children, "This is what you ought to learn from this story. This is what you need to do." Through the work of the Holy Spirit, children heard for themselves what God was saying to

Club leaders let the stories speak for themselves, never telling children, "This is what you ought to learn from this story. This is what you need to do." Through the work of the Holy Spirit, children heard for themselves what God was saying to them.

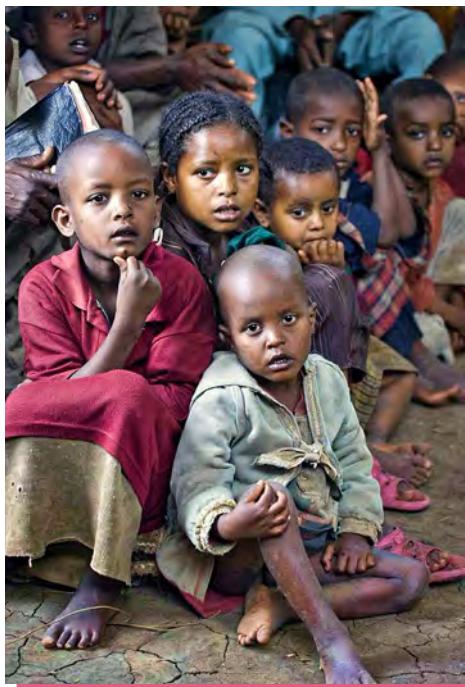
them. They changed from the inside-out. We knew the unit would be powerful. We had no idea how powerful.

In the last issue of this journal, I shared what happened during this orality unit. More and more stories keep arriving, so this is a story update.

Inside-out! It's the amazing result of learning God's story and allowing the story to become personal, living truth.

SHIRISHA: AN INSIDE-OUT STORY

Experience taught Shirisha that when she copied from someone else's paper during a school test, her grades improved. She was only 8 and already a skilled cheater. When she inevitably got caught, she was embarrassed; however,



her response never wavered: “It’s not wrong. It’s not my fault. How do you know he wasn’t copying from me? It’s his fault. I didn’t do anything wrong.”

However, in club Shirisha heard the part of God’s story titled “Bad Use of Free Will.” It was the story of Cain and the choices he made. She realized that, like Cain, she was making terrible choices. “I cheated,” she confessed to her club leader. “God doesn’t want me to be a Cain. I promise God I won’t cheat again.”

A few weeks later her club leader checked with Shirisha about her resolve. Shirisha responded, “I

wanted to cheat. I could have. I almost did. But I didn’t. I got my own grade. It’s not a good grade, but I’m proud of it. God is, too.”

RAJENDRA REDDY: AN INSIDE-OUT STORY

“She hates me,” Rajendra Reddy shared with his club leader. His mother had put him in an orphanage after his father left and married another woman. “She loves my brother. Why couldn’t she love me a little bit, too? Nobody loves me.”

In club, Rajendra Reddy learned and told the stories of Jesus’ birth, death, and resurrection.

As he shared God’s loving plan for redemption, something inside him changed.

“I think I believe it,” he told his club leader. “My father, my mother, my brothers, my relatives—not one of them loves me. But Jesus does. He loves me enough to make up for everyone else.”

Recently this 14-year-old boy found out his mother was very sick, likely dying. Instead of gloating and thinking she deserved her illness, Rajendra Reddy began visiting her and doing his best to show love to her. “It’s not my love,” he said. “It’s really Jesus’ love.”

ARAVIND: AN INSIDE- OUT STORY

Aravind's mother was forced to marry her maternal uncle even though neither felt any love for the other. In an attempt to get rid of her, her husband threw her into a well. Amazingly, this Hindu woman was rescued; however, she was paralyzed from the waist down. Aravind's father disappeared. A local pastor brought Aravind's mother to Jesus and also got Aravind into a Christian orphanage.



There, the boy learned the story of a Father who loved him enough to make a plan for them to always be together. Like his mother, he found the story so compelling he had to accept it.

“My relatives w o r s h i p many gods,”

Aravind says. “My job is to learn everything I can about the true God who will never desert me. Then, I’ll go home and share with them.”



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ISBN 962-7673-24-2

PRINTED IN HONG KONG