

Guest Editor's Section — *Spiritual Stories*

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Kansas City: NSN's New Home

Manifesting Your Own Creation Story: How to Start A Story Swap

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You say there are no swaps in your area? Or that the time and location of existing swaps conflicts with your schedule? Consider forming your own Story Swap. It’s not as hard as you think.

Here are some basic steps for launching and growing your own Story Swap, a regular meeting of storytellers and listeners who support each other as they improve, stay sharp, brainstorm, network, and critique each other supportively.

In the Beginning...

1. The right location is key. Yours should be available and accessible at the same time and place each month. Ideally it’s a private room at a venue with ample parking, near public transportation, and inviting to participants. Check libraries, cafés, museums, community centers, school campuses, and affordable restaurants.

2. Pick a time and day that doesn’t conflict with other local swaps or nearby farmers markets, flea markets, or civic events.

3. Create a compelling name for your swap! This gives it an identity and may also explain who you are or where you meet. It also entices people to attend. Examples: *Delta Word Weavers*, *South Coast Storytellers Guild*, *Mixed Bag Storytellers*, *Aesop’s Fables*, *Tales & Tellers*, *Sing, Say or Play*, *Monterey Bay Talespinners*.



Santa Rosa CA’s Do Tell swap founder Kenneth Foster divides the duties of swap administration and growth with co-founder Elaine Stanley.

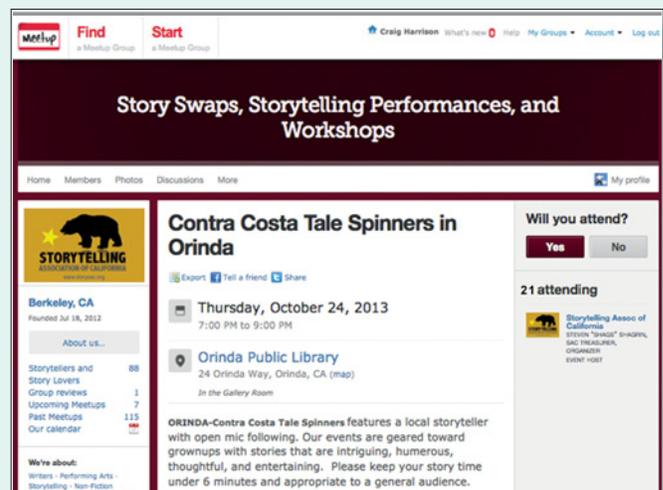
4. Consider creating a logo. Use this artwork on all of your collateral materials (flyers, brochures, website, business cards, etc.) to build your brand.

5. Create a flyer, brochure, poster, and business cards or postcards to spread the word.

6. Think locally: walk the neighborhoods and talk up

your swap, inviting one and all to attend.

7. Go social: Give your swap its own website. WordPress sites are free, as are Facebook pages, YouTube channels for video, and Twitter accounts to tweet about your swap. Link to existing story sites and online community calendars like craigslist.org.



For \$72/6 months Meetup.com offers an online home to promote upcoming meetings, post photos, videos, and even build a list for e-mail announcement.



Mixed Bag swap's flyer on local bulletin board.

8. Next go global: Post materials at libraries, recreation and community centers, city hall, on bulletin boards and telephone poles, list for free in local newspapers, and with other association and guild publications (print/web).

The Art of the Start

9. Snail mail and email a press release to announce your swap. Follow up by phone to ensure coverage. Submit a public service announcement to be read on radio. Offer to write an article about your new swap.

10. Partner with one or more local swaps to spread the word; show support and solicit future guest tellers.

11. Build a snail mail/email list of interested parties to keep apprised of your swap's progress and promote coming attractions and special events.

12. A website with photos, audio, and video from your swap's consenting members will capture the spirit of your swap and document its development. Include the URL on all your material.

13. Use a guest book to capture guests' names, phone numbers, and email addresses to follow up and promote future events.

14. Get help! Storytellers Kenneth Foster and Elaine Stanley used guest books and lists to co-found and build *Do Tell!* in Santa Rosa California. Build your team and divide the labor: mailing lists, programs, promotion, historian (think long term!), etc. Cross train to cover each other's absences.

Swap-Talk

15. Host an inaugural Open House (and again annually). Make it festive with food and a special program. Then promote future swap meetings with flyers on hand.

16. Showcase guest tellers, theme meetings, and tie-ins to local events to build buzz.

17. Contact local papers to request a feature story about storytelling for adults and what's unique about your swap.

Cultivate relationships with members of the media.

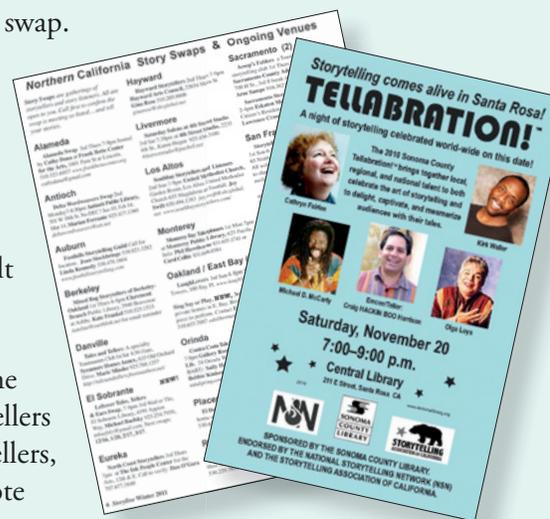
18. Contact local senior centers, adult schools, recreation centers, and civic groups to spread the word. Offer storytellers for their events. Tellers, in turn, can promote your swap through their performances and flyers/brochures they leave behind.

19. Keep the faith! Los Angeles teller and leader of "The Griot Workshop Swap," Michael D. McCarty, reminds us to "have patience and persistence." Michael used blogs, special events, slams, and more to build his swap over time. Your swap could coalesce in three months or take closer to a year to build momentum, but it should flourish over time.

20. Stage an annual super-swap where local swaps join forces for a tour-de-force event to support each other and attract new members. Focus on local annual festivals and conferences and your own Tellabration!™ event.

Now, celebrate your swap's success. Tout all its anniversaries and tell the story annually of how it came to be!

Berkeley based storyteller and leader **Craig "Hackin Boo" Harrison** has created special interest groups, clubs, events, communities, and even inspired a movement. Share your swap creation stories with him through www.HackinBoo.com.



Newsletter directory listings for swaps. Adult Tellabration poster.