



Multi-tasking

I think perhaps many times before in these stories, I have used the phrase 'I wish there were more than 24 hours in a day'. There are many possible projects that I would like to work on, and so little time in which to do so. Of course my printmaking work is enough in itself to keep me busy full-time, wearing as I do multiple hats: publisher, designer, carver, and printer. But there are so many more things I want to do over and above that work!

This 'A Story a Week' is just one example. Now these little stories aren't very complex or deep, so they don't take all that long to prepare. When you add in all the peripheral work though, such as editing, working on the vocabulary, recording the audio versions, and preparing the printed books, it sure starts to add up.

But the other day I had an idea. You may remember that I recently wrote in one of these stories about my new digital audio recorder. I have been using it to make soundscapes, and that has been fun, but it occurred to me that there might also be a way for it to help me handle some of this 'extra' work. Why not try dictating some of the 'Story a Week' stories into the recorder while I am carving or printing!

Now that is not as crazy an idea as you might think! My basic printmaking work - although it may *seem* complex and difficult to an outsider - is actually kind of mindless. Don't misunderstand, I don't mean that it takes no *intelligence*; I mean that it doesn't require much *active* thinking. Printing and carving work proceed much more smoothly if I don't think too much while I am working. You may not believe that, but let me illustrate the point by pointing out that the same sort of thing happens in your own life too.

One obvious example is the process of driving your car. This is a very complicated task, and yet you probably do it without 'thinking' at all. Another very complicated job you do many times a day is to eat a meal. Using your chopsticks (or your knife and fork) to convey the food to your mouth is actually a very intricate procedure, and yet you do it best when you don't think about it. In fact, if you actually *try* to think about it, you will probably become confused and make a mess of what you are doing.

So it seemed to me as though it might be possible to 'write' some of these stories while I work at my printing bench. I took my new recorder down to the workshop, set it next to my cushion, clipped a small microphone to my lapel, and gave it a try.

It was very strange at first, and I felt quite self-conscious, talking out loud with nobody around. The first thing I found was that it was difficult to produce a smooth flow of ideas. Normally, when I sit at the keyboard to write one of these stories, I'll type one or two sentences first, then think for a while about what I will say next. But when the recorder is running, one feels pressure to continue without pause, so it is important that you have a pretty clear idea of what you want to say - something that is not always the case with me!

Over the course of the morning's work, I made a number of attempts to get something sensible recorded, erasing the data any number of times to start over again. Bit by bit, it became easier to do, and after a couple of hours of practice, I started to become more relaxed and a bit more fluent.

David Bull
Seseragi Studio
Nagabuchi 8-4-5 Ome City
Tokyo Japan 198-0052
<http://astoryaweek.com>

How did it turn out? Well, I can report at least partial success. The printing work - I chose a relatively simple job for this experiment - came out as normal, no problems there. As for the 'story', I cannot report complete success. Writing a story by sitting at a keyboard, and 'writing' it through dictation, obviously require two very different skill sets, and I can see that I will need quite a bit more practice before I will be able to do this smoothly and effectively. I'll have another try tomorrow morning!

I see also a possible problem with this idea. My neighbors know that I live alone, so what will they think when they start to hear my voice coming out the window at all odd hours of the day? I think I had better let them know about my experiments, because if I don't, they'll soon be calling the men in the white coats!

But perhaps that's just a matter of time, anyway!

David Bull
Seseragi Studio
Nagabuchi 8-4-5 Ome City
Tokyo Japan 198-0052
<http://astoryaweek.com>