“Stories are the shortest distance between two people,” says Soundararajan. They are ubiquitous forms of communication and those engaged in narrative praxis conclude that they are, indeed, the most important unit of social change. Through story we know ourselves, we connect with others and we build a shared vision of the world. We are all storytellers and the richness of the tradition in Appalachia is long and proud, but the need to be heard is found in all of us. We can use stories to reexamine frames, mediums, values and use appropriate genres to do so.

**Meet our Visiting Scholar:**
Thenmozhi Soundararajan is a singer and Transmedia artist who in 2003 was featured in Utne Reader as One of the Top Visionaries Under 30. Growing up as an Indian Untouchable, she was driven to tell the stories of marginalized communities, which led her, upon graduating from UC Berkeley, to found the international media training organization, Third World Majority, for which she taught in the U.S., France, Tunisia, Venezuela, Brazil, South Africa, and India. She also spent time in residence at the MIT Center for Reflective Community Practice, writing about storytelling, diversity, and future technology, and that research inspired her transition to narrative filmmaking, and enrollment in USC’s School of Cinematic Arts. Since then, Soundararajan’s work has been recognized by the Producers Guild of America Diversity Program, The Museum of Contemporary Art, The Annenberg Innovation Center, Slamdance, MIT Center for New Media Studies, The Sorbonne, The National Center for the Humanities, International Children’s Festival, The Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles and The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. Currently, she’s directing her
Public Events:

Community Voices Presents:

*Story: A Unit of Change*

**FEBRUARY 28, 2013, 7:00 pm, The Lyric**

Thenmozhi Soundararajan will share an evening of digital stories from her work with communities and digital storytelling around the world. She will lead an interactive dialogue with song, digital stories, and audience participation about the purpose of story in community building and explore the links between identity, narrative, and community change. Of special focus will be her work with co-collaborator and research faculty at Virginia Tech Holly Larson Lesko and their emerging New River Valley Narrative Praxis Collaboration funded in part by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

VT Learning Technologies Present:

**FDI Digital Storytelling Workshop**

**MARCH 12-14, 2013, All Day, 1140 Torgersen (Innovation Space)**

*(Sign up at http://tinyurl.com/VTDigital)*

Student and instructor engagement and hands-on learning opportunities are critical to every discipline offered at Virginia Tech. The digital storytelling tool offers promise for instruction, evaluation and reflection for students, professors and staff. A digital story is a short, three-to-five minute video that is pieced together from the found material (i.e. video, photographs, letters, news clippings, etc.). This workshop will support participants in learning and utilizing the technological tools to build a digital story as well as the story and personal reflection processes necessary to effective and impactful storytelling. By creating a space and process for personal and group development in the digital storytelling workshops, participants have an opportunity to develop and hone not just their artistic and technical skills, but to truly claim their voice around pertinent issues as well as claim their unique wisdom and knowledge in their realms. Workshop participants will each complete a digital story as part of the program and have the opportunity to view and share these artifacts with their workshop mates and others in their field of study.

ICAT & CIDER Co-Presenting:

**What is the Role of Digital Narrative Praxis at Virginia Tech?**

**MARCH 26, 2013, Noon – 2:00 pm, ICAT Studio**

The community digital storytelling effort highlights local voice and sharing through an individual’s lenses (perspective and actual camera and video lenses). Thenmozhi Soundararajan and Holly Lesko will guide a roundtable discussion and provide elements of practice and examples from their work and research in digital narrative praxis. This is an opportunity to learn more about work in this field, share areas of expertise and interest, and develop concepts for utilizing narrative praxis tools in the classroom, the community and research. (lunch is on your own)
**CIDER, ICAT & IPG Co-Presenting:**

**Digital Narrative Praxis As a Classroom and Research Tool**  
**March 27, 2013, Noon – 2:00 pm, ICAT Studio**

Student and instructor engagement and hands-on learning opportunities are critical to every discipline at Virginia Tech. There are many current applications of narrative praxis already underway on the campus, and CIDER is a strong supporter of reflective and story-based processes for teaching and learning. To further the conversation, Thenmozhi Soundararajan and Holly Lesko will lead a lunch seminar to provide elements of practice and examples from their work and research in digital narrative praxis. Faculty and graduate students are invited to participate in a brown bag lunch seminar to discuss the value and opportunities for incorporating digital narrative praxis tools and processes in research, teaching and learning design and methods. This is an opportunity to learn more about work in this field, share areas of expertise and interest, and develop concepts for utilizing narrative praxis tools in the classroom, the community and research. (lunch is on your own)

If you would like to support Thenmozhi’s documentary film (**Touchable: The Journey from Untouchable to Dalit**), please visit her crowd funding site: [http://www.fracturedatlas.org/site/fiscal/profile/?id=4948](http://www.fracturedatlas.org/site/fiscal/profile/?id=4948).

For more information about these events and other opportunities to engage with Ms. Soundararajan, please contact Holly Lesko at the VT Institute for Policy and Governance ([hlesko@vt.edu](mailto:hlesko@vt.edu) or 540-231-6775).