

Interface, Design and Visual Indexing

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ABSTRACT: Each of the panel are working in related ways in the context of this session, to address the storage and retrieval of the stories of a modern oral and visual culture. Four distinct projects will open out the approaches and thinking being pursued and the overlap that exists between them. We have become aware of one another's work over the last nine months, have been working on our separate projects for varying periods with and without budgets, and also have in common development cycles of from 5 – 10 years.

These short presentations will each highlight the specific problem encountered or theoretical concept being tested and why the outcome of the project could be of wider social value.

KEYWORDS: interface, indexing, interactive, hypermedia.

PAPER

Whatever the origin of our representations.....they must all, as modifications of the mind, belong to the inner sense. Kant

Introduction

Descriptions of Human Computer Interfaces rely heavily on visual metaphors developed in the mechanical machine age – the printed page, the desktop, the map, the graph paper, the soundtrack dubbing cue sheet.... These have provided models towards HCIs which in the transitional sense complement the workings of human memory but which largely fail to stimulate the individual users imagination upon becoming 'immersed in knowledge', or other risks associated with the computer-mediated experience.

Random access in the computer as opposed to the book, is capable of extending the usefulness of the written word and delivering, on-demand, the spoken word, sound and picture. Though the means of achieving this is currently in technical development the general purpose interface capable of delivering indexed sound and image beyond the notion of 'the thumbnail' image set in a key word context, is an area in need of further research. Whilst resources have been invested in the imaging of data for systems management, (in finance, security, aviation etc), little has been expended in the expansion of tools for the humanities and the development of human consciousness that appeal to the intuitive mind or the curious spirit.

Whilst the coding options within the literate society has recently undergone rapid extension – email, hypertext, server messaging, SMS - the rediscovery or reinvention of an interactive oral culture using text, graphics, moving images and sound delivered over high-speed networks will be unable to produce similarly fundamental outcomes without access to indexing that avoids the use of one coding system – text – in order to access another – images and sound. Whilst we acknowledge the impact of computer-mediated gaming, the financial imperatives that have driven this development has eclipsed the possibility of advancing in areas unrelated to entertainment.

We will each speak to our printed position statements for 5-10 minutes, as the focus will be on comparing each of the models we are working with in order to clarify the ways forward, during a concluding discussion, in the more universal adoption of the computer-mediated presentation and reception of knowledge and experience.

Visual Indexing and the Language of Gesture

Chris Bowman:

Since the invention of cinematography motion pictures have undergone continual advances in both technology and content. Now, with the introduction of interactive technologies, the conventions of storytelling through motion pictures are being challenged and reshaped. Primarily, a place is being constructed for the viewer to 'enter' the story and effect change, making choices and seeing the consequences in real time. Given the basic limitations of the computer as auditor, the creative effort of interactive content developers, designers and artists becomes focussed on how to build worthwhile options and how to fashion sympathetic responses. Visual indexing in this context works to move beyond the dominant theory of film narrative to explore intuitive storytelling in terms of mediation, gameplay and meaning.

Currently, I am exploring the rich terrain of visual indexing through the Orpheus Project. Orpheus, a work in progress, will be a modern film interpretation of the immortal story told through the symbolic artistry of Sankai Juku, one of the world's most outstanding dance ensembles. In the world of interactive possibilities Orpheus proposes to use a three part system of navigation to enable the viewer to enter the story. I propose that the three part system will consist of discrete forms of visual indexing to facilitate viewer participation in the following manner: