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Postcards that Speak for Themselves

In “Interactivity- as- product and interactivity- as- process,” Stromer contends, “we must be cognizant that interactivity as a term refers to two distinct phenomena: interaction that occurs between humans, and interaction that occurs between humans and computer or networked systems. Because these are distinct phenomena, theorizing about individual and social effects must take such distinctions into account if we are to produce research that has any hope of being valid and reliable” (Stromer, 2004, p.394). I believe that augmented reality postcards enact both forms of interactivity in that the user is able to interact with another individual, albeit not face to face, but remotely through interactivity- as- process. The users can share images and messages that can be geolocate or temporal in nature in that postcards are intended to capture a moment in one’s life.

A postcard also has its drawbacks, as we discussed in class, in that the messages conveyed via postcard are public when compared to other types of communication— even other types of communication via mail such as letters which are protected by an envelope. Anyone between the sender and receiver could read a postcard with little hassle and lack of consequence. By using augmented reality, we’re able to remedy the privacy issue, while incorporating the other form of interactivity: interactivity- as- product. In order to access the true meaning of the postcard, the user has to interact with their mobile devices. With every new form of technology, there is a barrier to entry. When describing the printing press and its impact on the spread of knowledge, Deibert states, “Printing helped reorient the bias of communications away from speaking and

hearing to silent reading and visual order. Without the standardization of printing and the gradual increase in literacy that accompanied the mass distribution of printed material, the overwhelmingly oral- aural bias of the medieval period might never have been dissolved” (Deibert, 1997, p. 104). In a similar way, augmentation allows media the opportunity to reach more people who then have a chance for the message to resonate with them. I could foresee this kind of technology being particularly well suited for mail sent to small children who don't know how to read yet, so that they could experience the excitement of receiving mail while being offered the independence of being able to understand the letter on their own through augmentation.

For my project I created two related augmented reality postcards. The first is a postcard written from the perspective of having just graduated highschool and is addressed to my future self. The second is written from the present day as I'm about to graduate college and is addressed to my past self as if the two are corresponding with one another. On the postcard from the past, I augmented the back (which I consider the side with the message). When scanned with Artivive, the back of this postcard reveals the hidden text message in the postcard, which I created in Adobe Photoshop and then animated in Adobe Premiere using masks. I chose to augment the back of this post card to convey the tone of speech in the message. For the present day postcard, I augmented the front (the side without text). Once scanned with Artivive, the front of the postcard reveals a video walkthrough of what my 'past self' can expect in college. I chose to augment the front of this postcard for a few reasons. First, in theory, I liked the idea of using photos and videos as a snapshot into the “future” for my past self. I also included audio to walk my past self through what to expect in the coming years. More pragmatically, I also chose to augment the front of this postcard because I simply have

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more photos and videos from this time in my life, so it just made more sense to augment this side of this postcard as compared to the “older” one. I also struggled to find photos from my time in highschool that didn’t include people with whom I no longer have a relationship. One small issue I ran into making this project was simply that I kept having to re-export the backs of my postcards because I would realize I wanted to change something after I had already uploaded it to Artivive or used it to make the animation. That’s fully my fault though for not double checking my work prior to exporting.

My main artistic goal in the making of this project was that I wanted to make a commentary on not just the mobility of geolocation, but of time. I wanted to use my augmented reality postcards as a time capsule of sorts. The message on the back of postcard one only reveals itself once scanned, which means there is a barrier to entry so that only people ‘in the know’ would be able to access the true meaning of the cards. Beyond the augmentation, the cards are interactive in that the user is able to interact with my story on a greater level than they would if they had simply read the same message on a postcard. I hoped to play into the nostalgic aspect of legacy media, while also incorporating the cutting edge of emergent media through augmented reality. In “E-readers and the death of the book: Or, new media and the myth of the disappearing medium,” Ballatore and Natale state, “Nostalgia for print books is inscribed in a general sense of, as Turner (1987) put it, ‘a historical decline and loss, involving a departure from some golden age of “homefulness”’ (p. 150)” (Ballatore & Natale, 2015, p. 2383). In this quote, they are of course describing print books, not postcards; however, I think the sentiment still applies. I made sure to incorporate not only photos, which could have been presented on the front of the postcard, but I made sure to incorporate my voice and animation. The animation helps the user sink into the media while my voice wraps

them in a blanket and welcomes them home. This incorporation of emergent media does not indicate a departure or death of the legacy media of the postcard, but rather enhances it.

Overall, this was my favorite project this semester both in terms of the assignment itself and in terms of the content I produced, and I definitely think I will be doing a revision of this project for my final. Prior to receiving feedback, I already know that I want to re-record the audio on my audio interface. Keeping in the theme of 'mobile media,' I recorded the audio for both postcards on my phone, but I found that sometimes when I listened back to it with Artivive, it sounded a bit crackly which was strange. I also want to take the time to find music to lay under the voice over, but I had just spent four hours at work this past week sourcing music for a video, so I just didn't have it in me to manage that for this version. If I have time for the next revision, I'd also consider adding some movement into the photos to make it a bit more engaging, but overall, I'm really happy with how my work turned out.

Revision Notes

The only thing I changed for my final revision of my postcards was that I moved the augmented content closer to the original content in 3D space, and scaled the augmentations down by 0.03 in the x, y, and z, axes so that they present as more within the original postcard design per professor feedback. I made this change after I finished the documentation video, though so it won't show up in that unfortunately. I did this in this order because I knew I was happy with my original piece and wanted to prioritize the documentation video since less of it was done. I read all the feedback from my peers and I think having the presentation video assignment to receive that feedback was really

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helpful. Though I know there are other things I could change, I feel like I owe it to myself on this one to leave well enough alone. I'm proud of the work I've done so far and while I may revise it more thoroughly to incorporate the changes I'd like for my portfolio, for now, I think this is definitely good enough. Between school, TUTV, and the internship I was accepted to mid-semester at MOD Worldwide, I've been working seven days a week since September. I'm really hoping that this internship turns into a job offer, so in the interest of doing the absolute best I can to make that happen, I'm going to turn this in, so that I can get a full night of sleep before work tomorrow morning. Thanks so much for everything Professor Zaylea and Dr. Shaw! Your class has been an absolute blast and I hope to stay in touch :) Go Owls



References

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