

A Different View on Mobile Postcards

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Despite plain text being around for centuries, it has evolved into many new forms. The newest and most artistic form is interactive mobile text. There are many ways that interactive mobile text can be customized. Whether it is using links, pictures, animations, or augmentation. It is a very interesting concept that can make plain text more interactive, attention-grabbing, and intimate depending on the context in which it is used. One example that uses interactive mobile text will be shown using [Artivive](#) to make an augmented reality postcard to analyze the features of such creative text.

[Artivive](#) is an augmented reality platform for artists. It allows users to create art that has various dimensions and layers of video, pictures, and sound in the viewer's reality. Augmented reality is a way to add a layer of computer-generated content to the viewer's world. This can include various content that can be sensed by the viewer using any of their senses. In our case, we used Artivive to make two postcards. One with the front augmented and another with the back augmented to compare the differences between interaction and the feelings that the viewers may experience based on how the content is organized and used.

There is a unique feeling from augmented reality media, such as a postcard, used as a communication tool. There is a great example of how interactivity is explained and compared to other researcher's ideas found in an article by Stromer-Galley:

Interactivity, Rafaeli contends, is a "natural attribute of face-to-face conversation," but can also refer to mediated interaction between people (p. 110). Interactivity is not simply a reaction, but rather reciprocity, wherein participants in the exchange can turn-take and reverse roles freely: "It is a process-related construct about communication"

(Rafaeli & Sudweeks, 1998, p. 175). Rafaeli's (1988) conceptualization, then, that interactivity is not a characteristic of a medium. (2004, p. 392)

In our case with an augmented reality postcard, there is interactivity between the actual augmented content on the postcard. There is also interactivity between the postcard creator and the person who viewed it and may respond to it. Although it is mediated as a postcard it can feel more personalized than a static postcard sent through the mail. The goal for the postcards created for this project was to make the viewer feel like they are present now with a feeling of intimacy than there is with a static postcard without interactivity.

The topic for the first postcard with the augmented front, "A Different View on Larry the Cat", was to help a family member feel like they are fully present with one of their favorite pets. It is meant to highlight the full intimacy and presence that can occur with an interactive augmented reality postcard. If this was a normal static postcard it would be plainer and still be very warm and welcoming but would be missing the additional media that can be added. These features were added to the postcard inspired by a quote by Milne, "Although the privacy of traditional forms of epistolary communication was in some sense compromised by the postcard, this did not entail the loss of those other epistolary virtues: intimacy, immediacy, and presence" (2010, p. 113). The epistolary virtues can be seen in this postcard and the concern about privacy can be mitigated by using [Artivive](#) augmented content. If the viewer does not know to use the Artivive application, there will be fewer privacy concerns than all the content is open for anyone to view. Within the augmented view on the front, there are two videos of different depths of the favorite pet. Using different depths makes it feel much more realistic. On the back, the text written is meant to highlight how a person may feel by viewing the

postcard and the different feelings that may come along with it. The stamp added to the back was also customized to add a personalized feel to it.

The second postcard with the augmented content on the back of the postcard, “Vacation in Nature”, was more of an advertisement or invitation to visit and support your nearest park. It is meant to highlight the beauty of nature and entice the viewer to take an action shown on the postcard. It would be much harder to capture the actual scene shown in the augmented portion of the postcard if it were only a photo. The front has a picture of a fall day on a path within a park. The back has a video and sound of a stream that is also meant to make the viewer feel as if they are there in the moment. It is much better at convincing the viewer by invoking stronger feelings than a static photo. The text on the back is more like what you may usually see in an advertisement trying to get someone to go on a vacation to a specific place. It is meant to show the difference between what is normally seen on an advertisement postcard vs an augmented reality postcard. The stamp is also a picture of nature to add as much information about the beauty of nature.

The changes that were made during the expansion of these postcards for the final project made them much more eye-catching and interactive. Both postcards were updated with augmented fronts and backs. If the original postcard had one side that was already augmented the other side was augmented with images and small icons/stickers. Both postcards still used matching content and some custom-designed stickers using a simple paint program. To add the transparency effect, I found that using a .png image with the background removed worked just as well as using the Artivive transparency effect.

The postcard “A Different View on Larry the Cat” update included making a collage on the back with images and transparent paw print stickers. The front of the postcard with the videos also had the layout reorganized to move the two portrait videos line up on the sides of the postcard. Some viewers were having issues with viewing both and noticed they were not lined up correctly. I also added Larry’s name to the front of the postcard to help everyone understand the title better.

The updates for the postcard, “Vacation in Nature” also had some stickers added to the back of small green trees. These trees were also created using paint and removing the background and saved as a .png image for the transparency effect. The background color of the postcard on the back was also changed to green with small tree icons under the stamp area. The front of the postcard was also changed to include augmented content. Two images of a blue heron and another bird were added to the sides of the postcard. The text, Greetings from Nature, was also added to the front to make it look like a proper postcard when viewed in Artivive.

The difference between a simple postcard advertisement and the one I created was brought up as a comparison from when postcards were first created and were worrying people who preferred more formal letters. Nowadays I do not think there will be much argument about whether an augmented reality postcard will threaten the original paper postcards, but it is still interesting to compare both in the ways they can be used to persuade the viewer. The conflict between the original formal letter and the postcards is mentioned by Milne showing the issues in the following quote:

In the early years of postcard communication, some countries would not permit them to be sent across their national boundaries. In Britain, for example, postcards bound for other countries were returned to the sender, crossed with a red ink stamp declaring that they were “not transmissible to places abroad.” (2010, p. 115)

Society back then was just that upset and fearful of losing their letters for many different reasons that may have also included just selfishness at times.

The negativity towards new types of media was not limited to this time. Many more instances of fear have been associated with new forms of media becoming popularized. Another classic example of this was the introduction of the e-reader. It seems like the same emotions from fans of traditional paper books were also invoked by the advent of the e-reader. These fears have proven to be inaccurate in this case as well. There seems to be a coexistence between new forms of media and the old. As Ballatore and Natale stated in *E-readers and the death of the book*:

As e-readers become ubiquitous and their presence has proved to accompany rather than to substitute paper books, numerous academic and journalistic writers have increasingly followed this approach. This has resulted in shifting the debate towards a more nuanced consideration of what the ‘end’ of the book may really mean. (2010, p. 2385)

There may be a split between what each individual prefers, but these media forms do not disappear. In the current day, there does seem to still be a split between various media forms, but most people still use them interchangeably and still have benefits to help advance society in a positive context.

The postcards that were created helped showcase how interactivity and augmented reality can invoke different and stronger emotions. They can also show how privacy and additional information can be controlled without needing to change any physical features using mobile text and augmentation. The reality aspect of any media that is created using [Artivive](#) can help increase the viewer's perception and presence in the topic being shown. There are many useful comparisons between an everyday advertisement on a postcard and an augmented reality postcard as an advertisement. New ways of creating mobile text and interactivity can benefit in many ways, including commercial and personal uses. The various ways interactivity can be enhanced is important to understand which may include augmented reality, mobile text, or any other interactive mobile media.

References

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