Narratives in Photography

Geoffrey Bowker’s lecture at SIMS
- The Ideal of Perfect Memory …
  - Whatever doesn’t make it into digital form will be forgotten
  - Databases are used to store massive amounts of data
  - However, “…Database and narrative are natural enemies” (The Database, Manovich 1999)
  - If true, then the database needs to be modified to accommodate narrative, to enable a memory repository
  - Similarly, the saving and sharing of photographs need improvement so stories and memories won’t be lost

Physical Narratives

Online Albums and Photoblogs
- no narrative
- implicit narrative
- some narrative
- primarily narrative
1. **Timeline Interfaces**
   - *PhotoFinder*
   - *Fotofile*
   - *MediaBrowser*
   - *Timequilt*
   - *PhotoMesa*

2. **Tradeoffs of Existing Methods**
   - Face-to-face sharing
   - Remote sharing:
     - Textual annotation
     - Recording audio clips
     - Online albums and Flickr sets
     - Photoblogs

3. **Goals for PhotoArcs**
   - Interactivity in narratives
   - Multi-person narratives
     - Narrative balance: from one author to fully-shared
   - Cross-album narratives
   - Different versions of narrative
   - Intersecting narratives
   - Narrative histories and identity
   - "Ludic Technology" (Bill Gaver)

4. **Target Audience**
   - Photobloggers
   - Family photographers
   - Life-chroniclers

5. **Use Cases**
   - Co-narrating a shared event
   - Stories for those who weren't there
   - Finding others' narratives about the same event
Prototype – Initial Brainstorm

Prototype - Default view for returning user

Prototype - Default view for new user

Prototype - Starting the First Arc

Prototype - Photo Zoom

Prototype - Back to Our Default View
**Prototype - Viewing Other People’s Arcs**

**Prototype - Selecting a Photo on Another Arc**

**Prototype - Dropping Photo onto personal Arc**

**Prototype - Textbox Opens Automatically**

**Find Similar**
- Finds related arcs you might want to link to
- Restricts search by:
  - Similarity of photos
  - Similarity of arcs
  - By friends
  - By location?
  - By date taken?
- To Find Similar:
  - Select an arc
  - Choose “find similar” (context menu or main menu)

**Design Challenges**
- How much information does the user want?
  - Metadata
  - Time stamps
  - People linking to their arcs
- How much information should be visible to the user at one time?
  - Example: how many photos sets to show?
  - Own narratives / friends’ narratives / comments
  - The arcs a photo belongs to
- UI had to be designed along with vis – very complex scenarios and visualizations to match
Design Challenges

- Arcs that intersect multiple times
- Synchronous multi-author narratives

For Further Exploration

- Privacy filters
- Audio clips (for those who want them)
- Photo-browsing history
- Automatic PhotoArc creation
- PhotoArc ↔ photoblogs
- Enable playback of the construction of a PhotoArc

Questions and Discussion

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Information Visualization and Presentation
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