

CMNS 3450: Exegesis Proposal

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Introduction

‘PK Camp’ is a fantasy multimedia website that aims to build an online community for Pastor’s Kids in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. Created to promote the annual PK Camp, this captivating interactive website will be a hub of entertainment and communication. It is comprised of five cinemagraphs, a minute-long YouTube introduction video from the camp directors, a 30 second advertisement for the camp, a scoreboard widget to keep campers updated on team activities, and three community message boards. The website infrastructure will be created with the website builder tool Wix and third party widgets like Blogger and ScoreStream. The project’s emphasis is on the creation of high quality content to engage users in a state of online flow, which has been found to evoke positive affective responses towards the nominated brand (Noort, Voorveld & Reijmersdal 2012).

Project Roles and Previous Experience

This is an individual project that entails a variety of tasks, the coordination of which is best described by the title of website designer. As opposed to a web developer whose job encompasses coding, a designer’s role is to ‘develop and maintain websites’ by configuring an interface, creating an accessible navigation system, generating multimedia content, and structuring the website’s information architecture (Abdi, Partridge & Bruce 2013, p. 2). Patrick McNeil attests that ‘the goal of blog design is to capture new users while rewarding repeat users’ through the synthesis of relevant information and effective presentation modeled to fulfill the users’ needs (2008, p. 4). I developed a sound understanding of website usability whilst creating a Wordpress blog in Introduction to Digital Communication. This experience with a website builder tool will assist in constructing Wix templates and the overall site architecture.

The content of this design project requires a lot of video and special effects editing, which I have experienced in Media Production courses such as Screen Drama and

Music Video. In these post-production capacities, I became familiar with the ways in which pace and tone effect the audience. Techniques like continuity, rhythmic, and montage editing will be incorporated into the project to elicit a sense of excitement in camp participation and encourage interaction with other campers on the site. By emotionally engaging users in the content and increasing their time in the site, these editing skills will contribute directly to the users state of online flow, which is described as a ‘complete immersion in an online activity’ (Hoffman and Novak 2009, cited in Noort et al. 2012, p. 3). This strategy works congruently with the maxim that ‘editors direct the film as well’ by arranging the content to meet the needs of the users thus retaining their attention (Cohen, Salazar & Barkat 2009, p. 170).

Outside of these academic commitments, I have continually experimented with animation in Adobe After Effects and have generated a small, online portfolio of work available on Vimeo. These skills will be essential to the creation of the cinemagraph series. However, given that all ‘technical and logistical activity... should serve the filmmaker’s creative vision’, I have also pursued the art of visual storytelling in short courses like AFTRS Writing For Television and Griffith University’s Screenwriting: Drama (Hurbis-Cherrier 2013, p. 17). I believe this range of experience will enable me to harmonise the technical and narrative elements of storytelling across a range of formats to produce an integrated online experience.

Exegesis Topic

During discussions with the clients about their aesthetic approach to the website, it was apparent that they relied upon examples of other media to communicate their ideas. My exegesis will investigate how novel works can be generated in this working relationship, where the client’s terms of reference are based on the existing cultural symbols and codes. The focus question is therefore: how do creative professionals work with clients to formulate novel productions using the structures of the domain? This research will apply the Systems Model of creativity to examine the interpretation and renegotiation of existing domain structures between the field and the individual. The broad approach of this model views creativity as ‘emerging from a complex system with interacting subcomponents’, which is particularly appropriate for a multimedia project that draws on a multiplicity of domain structures, from user-generated content to animation (Kozbelt, Beghetto & Runco 2010, p. 13). The study

will incorporate a wide range of literature, including that of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi who contends that a true understanding of creativity arises from the interaction between the individual, their domain and field (McIntyre 2008).

Patrick McNeil proposes that ‘the biggest challenge for blog designers is to create a fresh, new design that isn’t stuck in a basic blog default template’ (2008, p. 4). A Practitioner Based Enquiry (PBE) methodology will be used to document my familiarisation with domain structures in the form of a learning journal. Grounded in constructionism, this process denotes the systematic self-reflection through the collation of artifacts and observations from the researcher’s experience (Murray 1992). I will include prototype interface templates, cinemagraphs, and website testing notes in a work in progress portfolio to supplement the journal observations, and ‘extract generalisations which will be of further use’ (Cowan 2006, p. 36). This PBE approach will complement the Systems Model analysis in order to provide ‘a holistic understanding of the enculturation process a creative individual goes through in the acquisition of domain knowledge’, and the subsequent reformulation of these structures into novel works (McIntyre 2006, p. 9).

References

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