

Texting glances: Ambient Interludes from the Dublin Cityscape

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Summary

This paper concerns a system, *texting glances*, that can create ambient interludes, moments of entertaining interaction in public urban space at which people gather such as a bus stop. The system proposes to introduce a personal yet sociable and visual activity into urban "waiting" spaces. Personal, because the input device is a cell phone; sociable and visual, because people can work together to co-construct a visual narrative. As people wait, they text to the system; the system responds to their texting by providing an image; as more people text the sequence of visuals plus text forms a multi-authored narrative. *Texting glances* is an ambient "waiting" game in which transient audience participants use SMS texting to evolve a visual story on a large display which is installed in a public space such as a bus or train station.

Introduction

Waiting for a bus or a train can become a source of tension or boredom or it can provide a moment for imaginative play and storytelling. We would like to make this later state more concrete and palpable. We therefore propose a system that provides a private/public game scenario for waiting spaces. *Texting glances* uses everyday technology, a cell phone, as a tool which we can use to modify the city scape. By texting to the system, the cell phone in partnership with a database of images acts as an expressive device. Will texters cooperate with other texters to bend a story in a particular direction? Will such a system serve as Paul Matisse's Pythagoras, Kepler, and Galileo [1] serves to bring waiters to an enjoyable and watchable moment of co-creation?

Previous work

Texting Glances uses everyday technology, a cell phone, as a tool to act upon our city, an expressive way to keep track of our fictional stories about the city. *Texting Glances* is a system that retrieves, and displays images, from analyzing text messages sent by cellular phone. It is inspired by a previous work that annotates images in order to retrieve them within a specific context [2] and it extends the concept to the making of stories with the cell phone. Previous work on mobile and context-aware stories [3] has shown that not only this new stories form creates dialogue between users by watching each others collected stories, but it also encourages them to revisit their stories. Based

on our previous research on the improvisation of movies using a personal database [4], in this piece we have created our database of Dublin city to be recalled while someone sends a SMS-story to our server (see Figure 1.).

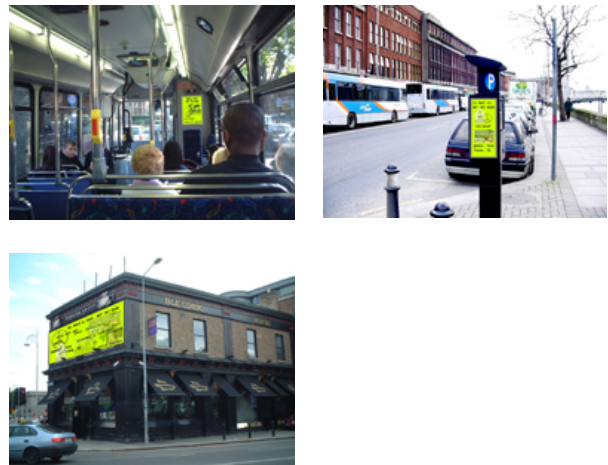


Figure 1. The database consists of pictures about Dublin city

Description

Textable Glances retrieves picture segments in a specified database, from analyzing SMS text input. It loads and plays them in real time while the text is received. Consequently, a novel series of pictures gets created and generated in a transparent and easy manner. The system can easily be connected to any personal picture database, and simply requires a text file with a series of descriptive keywords for each picture. For example, the following short keyword sequence [forest nature tree wood leaves Yosemite] could describe a personal series of pictures of the Yosemite park forest. The personal labeling is important as it allows the user to give the medium his/her own meaning.

Discussion and Future work

Texting Glances has been presented to, and experimented with cell phones by tellers at an open house of the Media Lab Europe in Dublin, and has engaged them in various stories about the city space. The direct, and instant relationship between SMS and pictures seems to be quite inspiring, and fun.

We hope to network several *Texting Glances* sites in the city zones. We imagine *Texting Glances* has a network of

sites in the City. The moving audience interacts with the sites as they go about their daily lives. Audience can become author by adding to the image content of the system. Images 'live' in the system and are triggered into making an appearance, at any time and at any place by other users. An image can go undiscovered for months unless exposed by the audience. Audience can also become collector and download passing images. The city becomes a hiding place for images to be uncovered and collected. *Texting Glances* could affect changes in behavior as people move to different city spaces to find new images and stories.

Acknowledgments

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References

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