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Designs of Meaning: Tools for Digital Storytellers

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DESIGNS OF MEANING: TOOLS FOR DIGITAL STORYTELLERS
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We tell digital stories all the time.

Designs of Meaning is a toolkit to help tell them better.

It asks both the *how to* and *why* questions.

It's for makers and doers. It's for storytellers, craftspeople, and designers alike.

EXPLORE CARDS NOW

Why?

What makes a great digital story, and what are the necessary tools? Whether you are a journalist, writer, designer, academic, marketer, or social media manager, you have no doubt encountered digital stories that are engaging and artful, while others fail to engage the senses, make an impact, or have an effect.

In this interactive toolbox, we show you how to create meaningful interactions for your audience using platforms such as WordPress, Twitter, Instagram, Vine, Cowbird, and Medium. The tools we offer pull together theories and best practices that can be applied to any story to create meaning.

To build our toolbox, we drew across disciplinary borders - from rhetoricians to social theorists, to artists and interaction designers.

Our mission? To empower you to create more meaningful and engaging stories. You'll find techniques that apply to text, audio, image, animation, video, and interactive content.

How?

We offer 16 story cards (tools)—each one represents a foundational concept. Explore them, and you'll see how there are multiple pathways to engage your audience. Each card is labeled with a verb, representing an act or action on the part of the storyteller. The colors on the cards signify one of four key themes in digital storytelling. These themes are as follows:

Aesthetic Experience

SENSORY-BASED MEANING

Sensory experience is a fundamental part of story composition and new media studies. When you study the story cards, you'll gain an empirical, sensory-based understanding of how the aesthetic can be applied to a variety of contexts and fields, including multimodal composition, transmedia storytelling, visual rhetoric, GUIs (Graphical User Interfaces) infosthetics (the visual representation of information), the teaching of composition, new media art, gaming, electronic music, cinema, and digital cinema - to name a few.

Story

ENGAGEMENT IN AND ACROSS PLATFORMS

Digital stories combine several modalities including sound, image, and user interaction to create immersive texts that often "[unfold] across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 95-96). Our story cards focus on the nature of transmedia, namely, how media interact and intersect, as well as ways we can use them— both individually and together— to create engaging stories. As Pratten (2011) importantly notes, a successful transmedia story often involves "a degree of audience participation, interaction or collaboration" (p. 1).

Interaction

CREATING PARTICIPATORY CULTURES

We make and connect in a "participatory culture"— "rather than talking about media producers and consumers as occupying separate roles, we might now see them as participants who interact with each other according to a new set of rules" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 3). These cards examine how we interact with digital texts and each other in a participatory culture.

Design

INTEGRATING FORM AND CONTENT

The design cards help us to achieve a rhetorical awareness of key formal design principles and call attention to a few valuable design methodologies that you can employ in developing and implementing digital stories.

We are constantly rewriting, remaking, and reevaluating in the digital space, and we invite you to contribute to the dialogue. Media are always being made; meanings are always changing.

Let's View the Cards Now

Hyperlink

Perform

Space

Envision

(Be)aware

Color

Compose

Balance

Feel

Define

Coauthor

Perceive

Allegorize

Traverse

Affect

Design

Interaction: Hyperlink

How does the use of hyperlinks influence the narrative path of your story? Do hyperlinks invite your audience to learn? To explore? To play?

Hyperlinks create meaning and knowledge by serving as narrative representations of how we think, explore, and play. The hyperlink and QR code— a physical form of the link— reinforce these characteristics through what Lev Manovich (2001) calls an aesthetic of "spatial wandering." Manovich writes, "The hypertext reader is like Robinson Crusoe, walking across the sand, picking up a navigation journal, a rotten fruit, an instrument whose purpose he does now know; leaving imprints, like computer hyperlinks, follow from one found object to another" (p. 78). Hyperlinks move and inform us— they create meaning beyond an initial reading or observation, allowing for immersive texts and experiences that rapidly disseminate information. We learn. We explore. We play.

Wikipedia serves as an excellent example of the possibility of hyperlink technology. The free-content encyclopedia uses links in its entries that connect topics and terms to more specific entries within the sites database, creating layers of knowledge. This technique can be used anywhere on the Web, such as in blog posts to share more information, an article, or a photograph.

The public radio documentary **"Back of the Bus: Mass transit, race and inequality"** by Andrea Bernstein and Nancy Solomon, with Laura Yuen and Casey Miner employs hyperlinks to connect the audience to a variety of media artifacts pertaining to the main story including photograph slideshows, transit maps, infographics, and legal documents.

Screenshot from WYNC: Back of the Bus: Mass transit, race and inequality, December 15, 2014.

When designing digital stories, Whitney.org suggests that "adding hyperlinks allows you to tell your story in a non-linear way. Using hyperlinks you can web your story into a spiral or start a story that has multiple endings. You may want to sketch out the directionality of your story before you begin to add hyperlinks. You may also wish to hyperlink other objects such as pictures."

⟳ Frank Rose suggests the possibility of hyperlinks as narrative representations of the way we think in *The Art of Immersion*.

Aesthetic Experience: Perform

How can your audience engage with your story aesthetically—via their senses?

When we refer to the senses in digital storytelling, we are referring to physiological means of perception including sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch. And when we say perception, we are discussing the act of regarding, understanding, and interpreting something through the senses. This allows us to understand the aesthetic *performatively*, that is, through lived experience. The aesthetic is, in essence, a how and not a what; it is not located in an object of perception, but in how the aesthetic is actually perceived through the senses. For instance, the aesthetic is not located in a song or a website, but in how that song or website is perceived by the audience.

The **Maester's Path**, a 2011 alternate reality game that was part of the marketing campaign for HBO's *Game of Thrones*, relied heavily on sensory engagement. Fans of the series solved puzzles and challenges that engaged each of the five senses.

Game of Thrones - NYC Moot. CC Photograph by Campfire

- First Puzzle: Scent. Fans received a medieval-looking crate containing a map, symbols, and glass vials filled with the scents and spices of Westeros.
- Second Puzzle: Sound. Fans listened to conversations held at the Crossroads Inn to identify clues.

- Third Puzzle: Sight. Fans had to take on the role of a member of the Night's Watch and look out from The Wall for wildlings in the forest.
- Forth Puzzle: Touch. Fans had to track the temperature charts of Westeros to solve a puzzle.
- Fifth Puzzle: Taste. Los Angeles and New York City fans located Game of Thrones food trucks to sample the fictional foods of Westeros, including roasted rabbit, squab with hot spiced wine, and venison with baked apple and barley.

TODAY'S COMPLIMENTARY DISHES

Today's Menu

Squab with hot spiced wine, nutmeg, raisins and leek black bread pudding

Sweet corn fritters followed by Lemon cakes

Please check with your server if you have any food allergies.

Tuesday's menu. CC Photography by Steven Leung.

Design: Space

How can you experiment with empty space in your project? Notice how the empty space works to bring balance and clarity to the form and content.

White space, or empty space, is a compositional technique that reduces clutter to help achieve readability, visibility, balance, and contrast. When setting type, organizing information, or designing for print or web, you can use empty space to establish harmony and clean compositions that better organize and treat your content.

In the early 1960s Julian and Helmut launched an ad campaign for Volkswagon's Beetle that identified the car company with a modern and functional brand ethos. Their advertisement "Think Small" used two colors, a simple Swiss inspired three-column grid, modest sans-serif type, and white space to achieve a powerful statement about VW and their new compact car (Cramsie, 2010, p. 251-251).

Think Small. Image from Wikipedia.

On an off white background a VW beetle rests as if off to the distance, creating a sense of depth. The words "Think Small" as well as a short list of some of the benefits of owning a small vehicle sit on the bottom of the page set to not disrupt the grid. There is nothing superfluous about the advertisement. The content— or lack thereof— speaks for itself, while the design contrasts with the baroque and luxurious designs that were associated with automobiles and car advertisements of the time.

⌐ For further resources reference Mark Boulton via **A List Apart**; Garr Reynolds via **Garr Reynolds**; Think Brownstone via Think Brownstone; and Ellen Lupton via **Ellen Lupton**.

Story: Envision

How can digital stories escape the flatland and suggest new ways of seeing in space and time?

Defining the constraints of a medium help you to develop a storytelling strategy (i.e. which media outlets best suit your story and engage your audience); breaking them, however, make for a highly enduring effect that stirs things up.

In *Envisioning Information* (1990) Edward Tufte argues that the essential task of the information designer is to escape the "flatland." The static two dimensional, surface restricts and confuses. Designing beyond the boundaries, escaping the "flatland," of a medium makes content unique and lasting. Creativity is rewarded, and people talk, post and share; the relationship between form and content re-emerges anew. As Marshall McLuhan (1964) writes in *Understanding Media*, "the medium is the message" (p. 7).

Prior to the relaunch of the New Museum on Bowery in December of 2011, designer Ji Lee created an advertisement campaign that reimagined the "flatland."† Using the distinct architecture of the New Museum as an influence, Lee designed a billboard with a Calvin Klein ad and dripped pink paint. The paint, which was applied on an existing billboard display over the course of a few weeks, created a stencil shape of the new sleek, modern, and geometric building. Although indistinguishable, random drips at first, the paint eventually created a clean outline (with copy finally added) in the latter days of the campaign — a new lens to look at the now defaced Calvin Klein ad. Just as the new building, as Lee describes, functions to reframe and showcase contemporary art, the stencil provided a new perspective on the billboard. By defying the constraints of the medium in an innovative way, Lee created curiosity, rumor, and discussion, which led to a highly effective advertisement.

[New Museum. Image from the website of Ji Lee](#)

C Lee discusses his work for the New Museum in his [Creative Mornings](#) talk, March 2011.

Aesthetic Experience: Be Aware

Does your project combine elements of *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos* to communicate your underlying purpose?

A rhetorical awareness of how we combine media for persuasive effect can help designers communicate with their audience. We especially like Anne Wysocki's approach (in *Writing New Media*) when she says that texts are made by composers who are aware of a texts' materiality; the various materials of a text contribute to how it is read and understood. She's saying that media (or mediums for that matter) are not static objects that function independently of how they are made and their contexts. Media are always being made; meanings are always changing based on time, place, and audience.

When designing digital stories, there are a constellation of possibilities for meaning making. To be sensitive to a variety of possible interpretations, we recommend paying attention to three classic modes of persuasion: logos (what an audience thinks), pathos (how an audience feels), and ethos (what an audience believes). A project that is designed to touch the audience in these three ways has a better chance of achieving its underlying purpose.

The Pulitzer Prize New York Times article **"Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek"** by John Branch effectively employs logos, pathos, and ethos to tell an effective story.

While multimedia elements can be immersive and engaging, they can also sometimes overwhelm or disrupt the flow of a story. It is also important to consider the variety of ways an audience might make meaning from your project that you as the author did not intend. Could your project be misunderstood? Could it possibly offend someone or a group of people? Try to take account of the many possible interpretations your project might have.

↻ **Comments on Snow Fall** from Pulitzer Committee, speaking to how it resonated with readers.

Design: Color

What is the meaning behind the colors (or lack thereof) in your digital storytelling project? Explore **Kuler**, **Color Scheme Designer**, and **Design Seeds** for effective combinations.

Understanding the rhetorical effect of color is an important part of the design process. How does color influence the audience? What meanings does your audience attribute to different colors? Color includes the hues and tones of the text, the background, and the graphics. Color should enhance the interface and contribute positively to its appearance. The contrast of colors is also important. For example, the stylistic emphasis on black and white (and the highly selective use of color) helps to make Martin Luther King's speech come alive in the digital story **Freedom's Ring**.

by the content of their
character. I have a dream
today.

EQUITY

OPPRESSION

PATRIARCHY

OTHER
NEOLIBERALISM

DISCRIMINATION
MATERIALISM

ABUSE

PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX
ENVIROMENTAL RUIN
SEXISM

(applause)

Warm colors: Active colors which advance

Red, and colors in the red family (like hot pink), are attention-getters. The color gives the impression of confidence and passion. Vibrant colors like red are used most effectively as accent colors, to draw attention to a key element. Orange(s) is a bold, vivid, and friendly color. It is worth noting that bold colors like red and orange,

when overused, can be too bold and overpower the overall composition. While the intention might be bold and spirited the effect can instead be brassy, loud, flashy, harsh, or showy. Yellow(s) is bright and stimulating. This color often gives the impression of happiness and cheerfulness. While it is a sunny, fun color, beware of yellow text, as it is difficult to read.

## Cool colors: Colors which appear to recede

Green(s) is often associated with life and rejuvenation. Green easily relates us to the natural world. It can be an inspirational color with harmonious, balancing effects. It is a restful color for the eye. Blues connote calm and trust. Blue is also a color associated with technology. It's a color we associate with blinking wireless Bluetooth gadgets, data streams, and bone-conduction relays. Blue(s) is also a color of choice for corporations like Microsoft, IBM, and Facebook— entities that desire to seem professional and hi-tech. In the design world, there is a heavy reliance on "business blue." Beware of being cliché. Purple(s) is the combination of blue and red. Rich in hue, the color connotes wisdom, royalty, and luxury. Creativity, play, magic, imagination, and higher consciousness are all associated with the color purple.

Story: Compose

How can you best employ the concept of compositionality to tell a story across multiple media platforms?

A transmedia (or multiplatform) storytelling experience involves the central idea or story arc and how it engages the senses and creates meaning through the combination of its form and content. Transmedia is compositional; the meaning of a text depends on the meanings of its subtextual parts and how they're arranged and woven together.

We can think of transmedia as exhibiting compositionality. Individual parts of the narrative and their overall arrangement across platforms affect the experience of a text and often help shape a story or brand identity. For instance, **Charity:water**, a non-profit founded by Scott Harrison that works to bring clean and safe drinking water to developing nations, uses media compositionally.
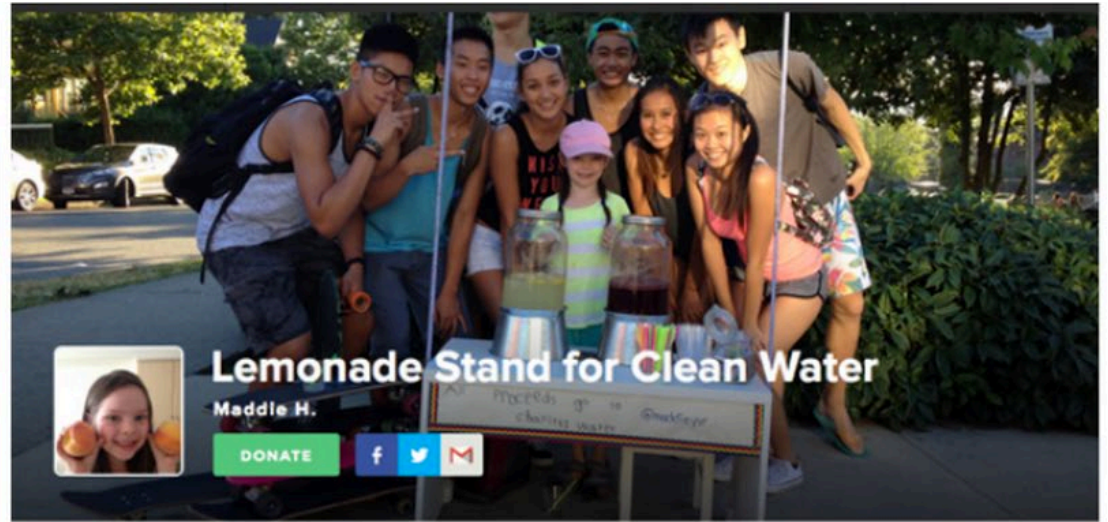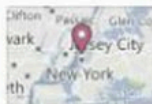
Screenshots from Charity:Water Twitter and Facebook and Instagram, December 15, 2014.

Charity:water shares their simple yet important mission through various media— Facebook, Twitter, a Website, YouTube, Vimeo, Instagram, and Pinterest. Each media element on each platform tells a slightly different story, while connecting to the organization's larger theme to reinforce their overarching mission, attract supporters, and make people aware of their humanitarian efforts.

Interaction: Balance

How does your project balance acts of doing and not doing?

Multimedia stories often involve an audience in the creation of the story. A successful digital story uses integrative and immersive interactions to engage an audience. Here are two examples that literally involve the audience in the experience of the story:
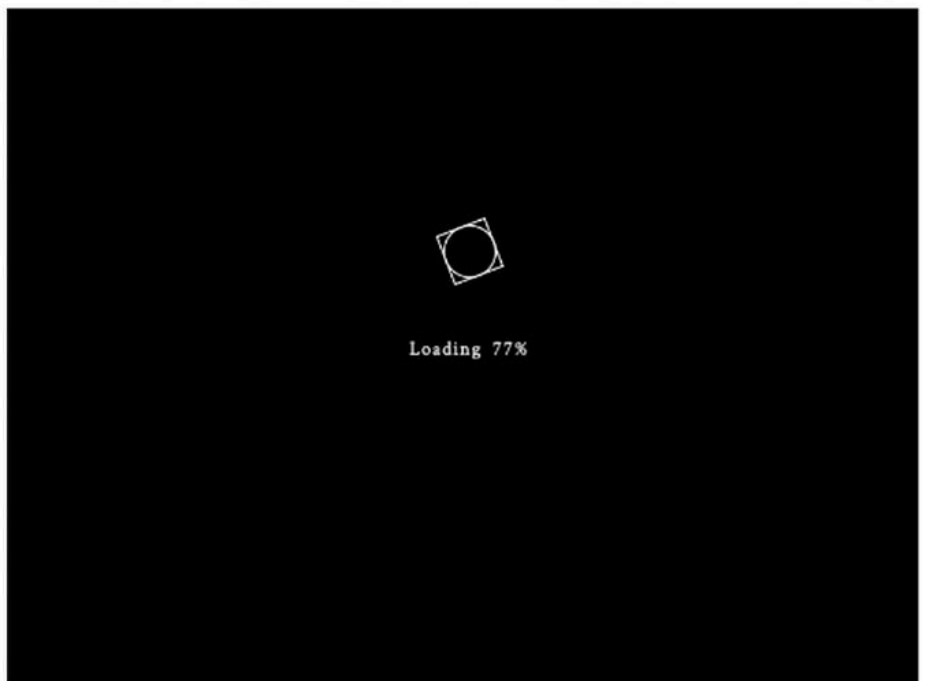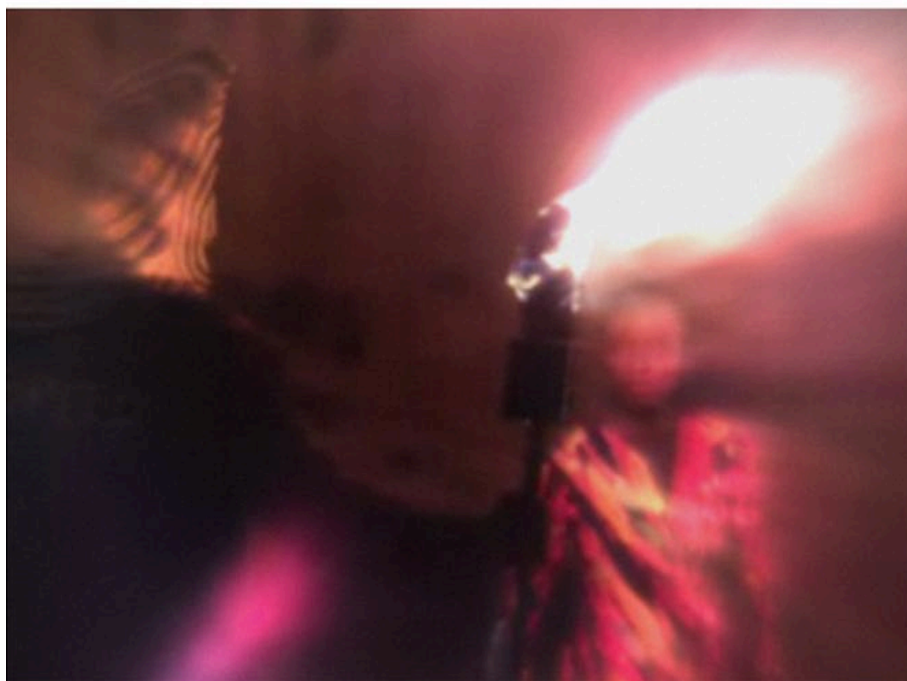
General Electric's Smart Grid website uses sound, moving and interactive infographics, and augmented reality to create a multimodal story that uses different media forms. The site explains the benefits and possibilities of using Smart Grid applications, while emphasizing the role of the user in making the Smart Grid possible. The site balances both high and low material interactions to engage—though not overwhelm—the user. While text, narration, and moving graphics help visualize and tell a narrative, small prompted interactions better allow the user to learn and engage complicated data.

One interaction in particular is highly effective. The user can use a "solar panel marker"—a print-out— and a webcam to create and actually hold a digital hologram of Smart Grid technology. They can alter the hologram by moving the "solar panel maker" from side to side and blow into their computer's microphone to spin the blades of the virtual wind turbine.

Testing the hologram.
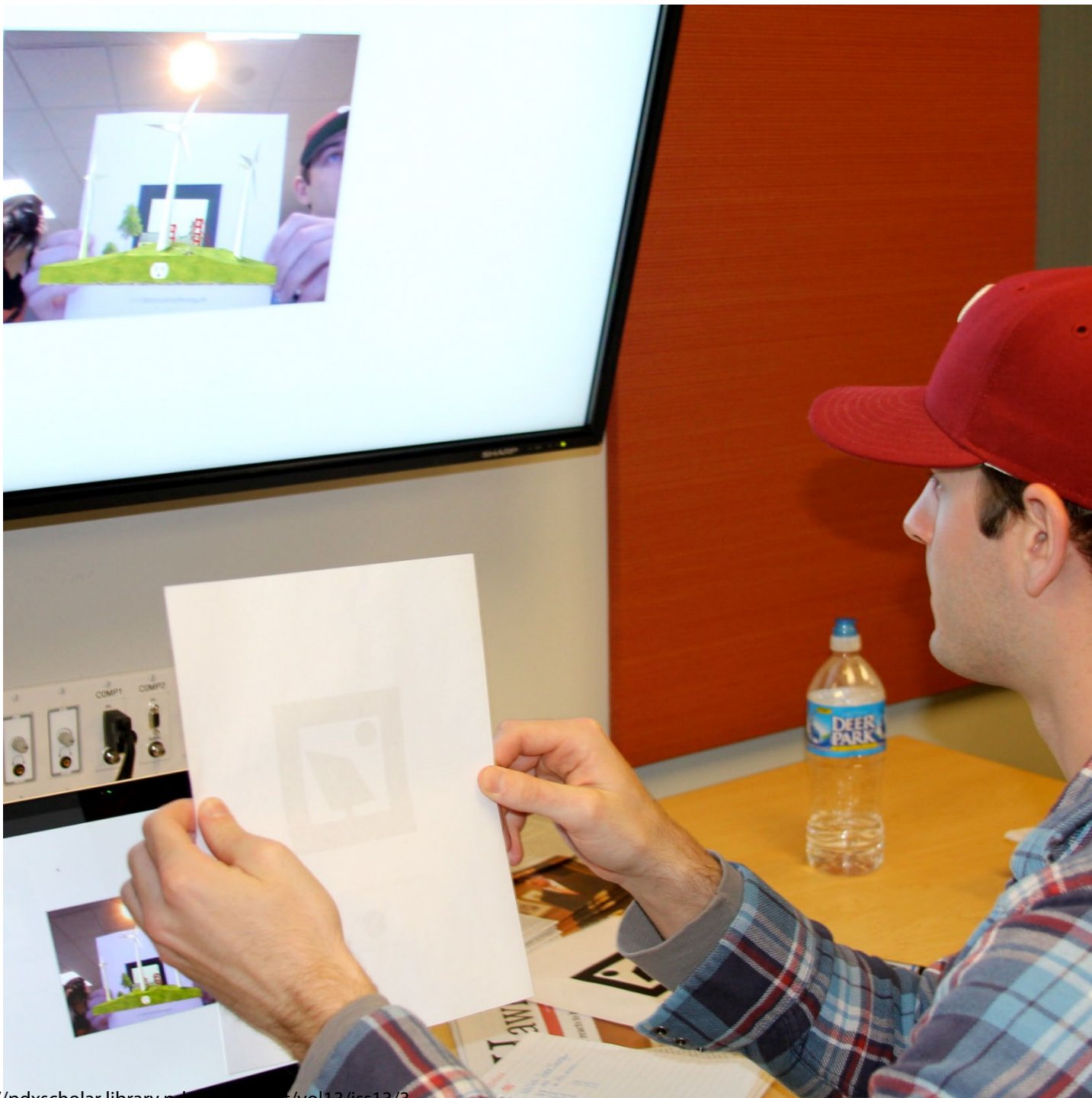
Photograph by Aimée Knight.

Another example of interactive media is Arcade Fire's video Reflektor, which the audience can affect via a mobile phone. Go to **www.justareflektor.com** to interact with the video.

JUST A REFLEKTOR uses your webcam and
smartphone or tablet to interact with the film.
To activate your webcam, please click ALLOW above.
Webcam imagery will not be stored.

*No phone? Use your mouse.

Loading 77%

Screenshots from Arcade Fire's video Reflektor, December 15, 2014.

It is good to keep in mind, however, that sometimes such active participation needs to be balanced with periods of little interaction or moments of passive undergoing (such as reading, viewing or listening). These moments can facilitate important periods of reflection and engagement that other more dynamic interactions do not afford.

⊑ The balanced relationship between doing and undergoing creates meaning (Dewey, 1934, p.46).

Design: Feel

How does your story promote connection with others on an emotional level?

Effective digital stories appeal to emotion (pathos), or what Aarron Walter (2011) calls emotional design. Emotional design "uses psychology and craftsmanship to create an experience for users that makes them feel like there's a person, not a machine, at the other end of the connection" (p. 2-3). For an example of emotional storytelling, look to the video titled "The Great Abyss," featuring composer/filmmaker/artist Salomon Ligthelm. This intimate piece by The Music Bed showcases Ligthelm's family and surroundings in an easy to connect to way while he discusses his personal views on the creative process.

[The Great Abyss](#) from [Music Bed](#) on [Vimeo](#).

Another example of emotional design is Amit Pitaru's Handwritten app.
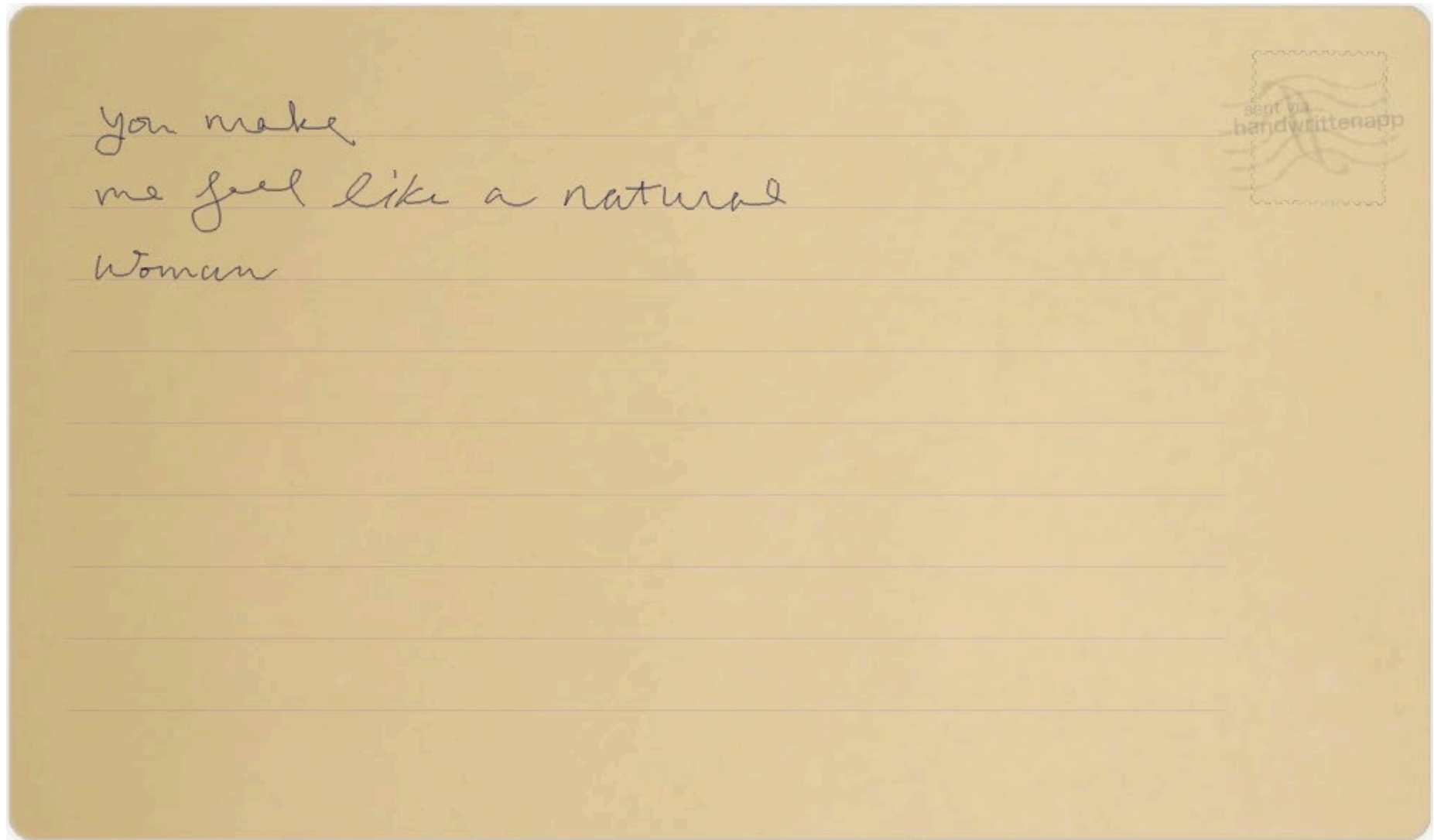
You make me feel like a natural woman. Image created with Handwritten.

Turning the digital space into something warm, human, and personal, the app allows the user to create a handwritten postcard on an iPad to send via e-mail. Rather than the standard depersonalized, rapid messages we receive on the web everyday, these letters act as "gifts," something unique to share that takes time and energy to make.†

[C] Frank Chimero discusses the relationship between Pitaru's Handwritten App and gift giving in his talk *Do Things the Long, Hard, Stupid Way* at DoLectures.

Story: Define

What are some of the constraints and conventions of your chosen storytelling platform? How can you find the freedom within the form?

Define your constraints and situations. Think of storytelling platforms (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Youtube) as designed apparatuses or networks. They come in different shapes and sizes; some have specific goals and features (i.e. constraints), while others are more general and flexible. Knowing these conditions can help you better develop a storytelling strategy and know which platforms best suit your story and audience.

It is important to know the appropriate tactics for each platform; each one has a unique means to form, tell, and deliver stories. This is known as storifying. As a digital storyteller, knowing these conventions helps to storify (to form or tell stories). For example, Twitter is primarily text-based. Short, text-based entries of 140 characters or less are the culture of the platform. Facebook has a culture of sharing videos and images. Going with the flow, according to the culture of the platform, can help to engage audiences.

Long-form storytelling platforms enable introspection and meaningful storytelling that creates impact (Jonathan Harris, July 2011). A medium or environment that houses, distributes, and facilitates stories that help individuals learn, reflect, and empathize is "long-form." This differs from platforms like Twitter, where information, more ephemeral and short-form, accumulates, trends, and eventually disappears.

A long-form example would be Jonathan Harris' website and storytelling platform, Cowbird (2011), an online "community for storytellers focused on a deeper, longer-lasting, more personal kind of storytelling." Cowbird works as a social network and digital archive of photographs, timelines, sound maps and text; here, users post stories that help shape and share the human narrative to tell their collective story.

The design of Cowbird promotes this and forces the user to contemplate via their connections. The homepage of the site invites visitors to explore; stories, indicated by a central photograph, cluster on the page like Polaroids scattered on the floor. You can navigate them through people - a tagged audience - and how they identify with others, as opposed to a feed (or stream of information) that devalues long term content.

Screenshot from Cowbird, December 15, 2014

Defining the constraints of a medium helps to develop a storytelling strategy (i.e. which media platforms best suit your story and engage your audience). Breaking with conventions, however, can make for a unique effect that stirs things up; interesting and unexpected things can happen when you go against the culture of a platform.

Interaction: Coauthor

How is your digital storytelling project shaped and co-authored between yourself and your audience?

Value your audience as authors of your story, turning media consumers into actors and participants. Current storytelling platforms allow for a unique relationship between creator and audience, where they both create works in "collective action," or what Pierre Lévy (1997) calls an aesthetic of "collective intelligence":

Rather than distribute a message to recipients who are outside the process of creation and invited to give meaning to a work of art belatedly, the artist now attempts to construct an environment, a system of communication and production, a collective event that implies its recipients, transforms interpreters into actors, enables interpretation to enter the loop with collective action" (p.123).

Johnathan Harris' and Sep Kamvar's (2006) applet **We Feel Fine** exhibits Lévy's ideas as it exposes human emotions by uncovering hidden narratives in the blogosphere: "We Feel Fine is an artwork authored by everyone. It will grow and change as we grow and change, reflecting what's on our blogs, what's in our hearts, what's in our minds." The application collects "emotions"— which are marked on blogs by the phrase "I feel" or "I am feeling"— in an interactive Java application, where feelings "float" as dots, or sized dust-like spheres. Users can interact with these emotions through a variety of interfaces and infographics (or visual representations of data) that explore Web users' emotional landscapes. The audience is as much a part of this work as the designer telling the story.

In Khoi Vinh's essay "Conversations with Networks" he similarly implores designers to embrace a sensitivity towards the user in creating digital environments:

Designing for social media is an exercise in negating the designer's authorial privilege. Experiences that hope to reap the rewards of rich social interactions must be incredibly modest in demonstrating the storytelling skills of the designer, because they are very much in the business of creating the conditions under which these rewarding conversations can happen. They must allow the narrative to recede and the behaviors of the system to come forward (p. 131).

Every time we like, comment, share, or remix a work we are influencing the work through our feedback and insight. By attempting to more naturally allow "behaviors of the system to come forward," the designer provides the user narrative agency, and further immerses the user in a meaningful storytelling experience.

Aesthetic Experience: Perceive

How does your project engage the senses? What meanings will your audience perceive based on their sensory experience?

It is generally accepted that the ancient Greeks supplied the original notion of the aesthetic, from the verb aisthanomai (I perceive) and the noun aisthetike (sense perception). The Greek aesthetic originally encompassed perception through the senses. We find this definition useful. (Interestingly however, the Greeks were not concerned with the knowledge gained from sensory perception outright; they were also interested in codifying that knowledge into a hierarchy of the senses. That is not our agenda.)

When some people talk about the aesthetic, often they are talking about how something looks. But it's more than that. When we say "aesthetics," we have something else in mind besides the philosophy of beauty or fine art (which by the way, has fallen out of favor in the last 20 years or so as being belletristic, superficial, or worse).

When we speak of aesthetics, we are talking about lived sensory experience and the meanings that can be made through that experience We need to keep a rich, flexible, human-centered definition of the aesthetic because people tend to connect a wide array of meanings to their aesthetic (sensory-based) experience. We need to understand the aesthetic as a concept that can account for all of those possibilities of sensory meaning-making.

An aesthetically engaging project called **"Sound City"** allows the user to explore the sights and sounds of cities such as New York, San Francisco, and Stockholm through maps, interactive stereo sound, and 360-degree panoramic images.

Screenshot from Sound City, December 15, 2014.

Another similar project titled "Night Walk" allows the user to "walk" the streets of Marseilles, France, to "explore the sounds, streets, and soul of the city." Digital stories like these rely on aesthetic, sensory-based experience to create meaning and value for the user.

Story: Allegorize

Do you employ media allegories in your project? What do they communicate to the audience?

Media allegories are often textual or digital objects which represent something abstract. Allegories communicate a hidden (or less tangible) meaning through symbolic representation. A well-known allegory is ancient Greek philosopher Plato's Allegory of the Cave. Media allegories within a transmedia text call attention to the relationship between sub-textual parts, namely the relationship between different media and how each medium interplays. A media allegory can be a visual cue, a narrative arc, or even directions on how to move from one medium to the next.

Media allegories create relationships between texts and blur the boundaries between media, creating connected and fluid experiences for the audience.

Interaction: Traverse

How can your story employ cross-media for rewarding user interactions?

Consider what Christy Dena (2007) calls "cross-media interaction design," or interaction design concerned with "designing for movement across modes," when crafting a transmedia experience (p. 4). Namely, we must take into account how to prompt someone from one medium to the next when designing across media.

Dena defines a successful movement between media platforms as one that both happens and "contributes positively to the experience of the work" through a holistic "three phase process of 'Call to Action' (CTA)" (p. 4-5). One must prime, refer, and reward an audience, "or prepare and motivate the audience to act," "provide the means and instructions and when to act," and "acknowledge and reward action" (p.5).

Dena's framework can be thought of in terms of a simple tweet on Twitter. 1) A question or interesting statement prior to a hyperlink primes a reader to act— to navigate the link to a new platform or web page. 2) The hyperlink, a visual cue, provides a means to act and explore. 3) The linked website, blog post, article, photograph, etc. rewards the audience with content for traversing the hyperlink.

The 2012 transmedia campaign for Total Recall integrated transmedia tactics, including the use of billboards. The first billboard, placed on a street corner in Manhattan's Upper West Side read: "Tell us your fantasy. We'll make it real."

West Side Billboard. Photograph by Aimée Knight.
A second billboard situated in Greenwich Village read: "Beware of Rekall: Don't Let Them Blow Your Mind." Each billboard directed audiences to a different website.

East Village Billboard. Photograph by Aimée Knight.

The second billboard is reminiscent of the Internet Blacklisting Bill campaigns – featuring a dot org url and a censorship theme. Here, audiences were targeted in a smart way with regard to the billboard placement – certain neighborhoods in New York definitely evoke a certain ethos. This is about knowing the audience and creating multiple rabbit holes – or entry points for them to follow. Transmedia campaigns employ multiple media platforms to deliver a message – each adding a unique contribution to the development of the story. It's about engaging the audience, drawing them in, and rewarding the curious and loyal.

Aesthetic Experience: Affect

How can your audience experience your story affectively?

A focus on affect places emphasis on bodily and sensory experience. While developing your story, pay close attention to ways your audience can experience ways of knowing that include perception, sensation, emotion, and feeling. Emotive experience can engage your audience on a deep and sometimes even unconscious level.

The hugely popular National Public Radio podcast **Serial** by Sarah Koenig used multiple media to both involve and make an impact on her listening audience. Koenig enhanced her storytelling with a website which served as an archive for listeners of the podcast to dig deeper into the artifacts and primary documents that were referenced in each podcast, such as hand-written notes, photographs, legal documents, hand-drawn maps, and cell phone call logs.
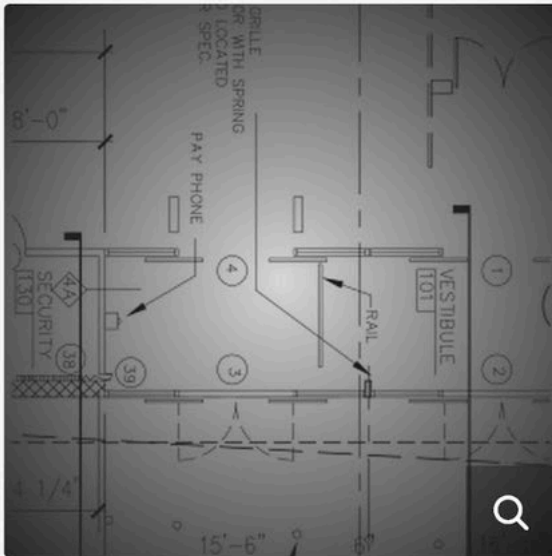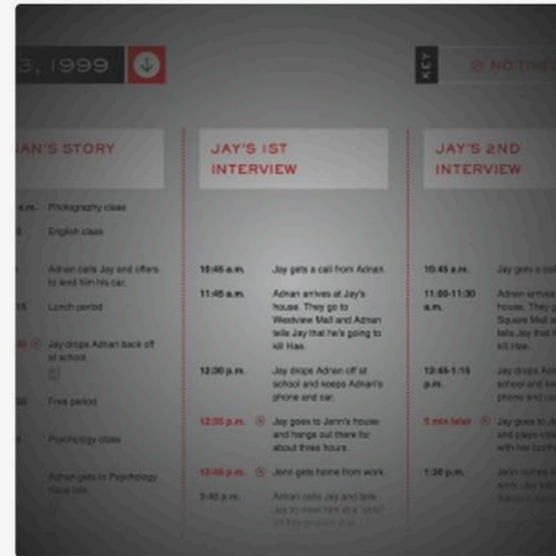
42

Screenshot from Serial Episode 1. December 14, 2015.

Design: Design Thinking

How can your digital story employ a design thinking methodology to effectively integrate form and content?

Design thinking is a human-centered innovation process that applies a designer's sensibility and methods to problem solving (Lockwood, 2010, p. xi), It's more of a methodology—a theory on innovation—than a tool or technique. Design thinking centers around developing empathy, or products, brands and experiences that people care about.

A design thinking methodology helps to:

- Understand what is meaningful to users
- Discover users' unarticulated needs and desires
- Imagine the world from the user's perspective
- Connect with users around what is meaningful and valuable to them

"Designed" digital stories facilitate more meaning and connectivity. Storyboarding and prototyping with others can help better problem solve and strategize to target content and experiences that matter. To see projects that employ effective design thinking visit **Ideo.org**.

Our design thinking process. Photograph by Austin Starin.
As pictured above, this toolkit also used a similar methodology to develop and design its form and content.

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