

The Everyday Collector

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the conceptualization of the Everyday Collector as a bridge between the traditional physical collection and the growing digital one. This work supports a reflection on the collection impulse and the impact that digital technologies have on the physical act of collection.

Author Keywords

Collection, video, mobile phones, environment, storytelling.

ACM Classification Keywords

H5.m. Information interfaces and presentation (e.g., HCI): Miscellaneous.

INTRODUCTION

I gather artifacts. They recall my experience. They are a proof that something existed. This sense of appropriateness of my history through the act of collecting allows me to realize that my past is not gone, and exists in part through the process of recollection. I discover someone else's history when I play with antique toys. The pleasure is immense in reading, witnessing, guessing another person's life, her struggle and hope invested into objects. I create a story for the existence of each object that has one day been possessed and cherished.

Objects gone from their context can be reinserted through memories. Integrated or abandoned from their original surroundings, they can be organized, labeled, reinserted in their period through analysis. The collector looks for cues in the world to witness a story or to make sense of one. The collector visualizes, records, and plays back moments from her or someone else's history to reflect on it and be immersed in experience.

The scope of the digital is growing and fundamentally transforms our lives. Materiality is being technically extended. The digital offers another variety of artifacts that impact remembrance. The experience of digitally capturing the everyday and making sense of it through the physical

act of collection could be combined. The digital could inform the physical, the physical could ground us deeper in our surroundings, and they both could exist independently from one another.

THE EVERYDAY COLLECTOR

I propose the conceptualization of the Everyday Collector as a bridge between the traditional physical collection and the growing digital one. This work supports my reflection on the collection impulse and the impact that digital technologies have on the physical act of collection. The key to bind the physical act of collection and the digital opportunity of representation is metadata. Imagine a scenario where the object discovered grows references beyond the thing held, and the thing seen. The digital world can tie to an infinite number of features of the object, only limited by the technologies used to analyze and link the data. However, even simple features gain new meaning through tagging to the collected object. I investigate metadata such as location, temperature, and personal tagging on gathered objects.

As an example, the Everyday Collector allows users to collect temperatures - from the heat of the sun to the cold of the ice, invited to capture more complex temperature such as the soil that is associated with metadata, visuals and auditory samples. The participants retrieve the data per gathered items in their physical and digital laboratory.

The system encompasses the experience of the collector and invites the creation of an associative memory of textures, smells, temperatures, locations, places and objects. Value is to be found in both the collection of the object-digital relationships, as well as the unique opportunity to re-visit the world represented by this type of tagging and exploration. Individuals collect samples from their environment and connect them to their digital collection. The digital metadata of the collected elements is retrieved in association with the physical keepsakes.

DESIGN

The Everyday Collector is envisioned as a valise that offers the carrying of technical devices that I develop for encoding the context of collected objects. From the frequency analysis of an object to a sound amplifier for an insect: a sound recorder's amplifier specifically captures the sound of the most minuscule creature encountered, the analyzed features of collected objects are translated into a

digital collection of features to accompany the physical object.

In addition to collection, the story of gathered elements is retrieved through its digital relationships, queued by features such as the weight of an object. Self contained, the valise allows both the capture of digital media and objects in context with one another and the audio-visualization of these media, driving the explorer into an experience without separation between physical and digital opportunities.

The workshop will allow me to observe how urban elements are captured, gathered and collected both physically and digitally.

DISCUSSION

“I was on the beach recently and saw a woman walking with her Scottie dog and he had a rock in his mouth. And I

said, “That’s so nice that your dog is bringing a rock back from the beach for you.”. She said, “oh, this is not for us. This dog collects rocks.” And she said he would spend fifteen of twenty minutes on the beach looking around for a rock that resembled the ones he already had, which were roughly hamburger shaped, and put them under the bed. – Charles Randall Dean *In The sensibility of the collector*. 2006. Philoctetes”.

The impact of this work is to challenge the exclusivity of digital and physical opportunities of interaction, and rather, provide an experience where the physical process of collection is completely married to contextualization via digital means. I plan on documenting how this physical and digital opportunity leads to new processes of discovery and wonder in the primitive act of collection.