

## **MoMed (Mobile Meditations)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The Goal of MoMed is to create an interface in which the framework asks the user to interact with the interface on a mobile internet enabled device in a sort of treasure hunt. The goal is for the user to retrieve media within a localized space in the order they choose thus creating their own version of a nonlinear documentary film. The framework of the interface is made to ask the user to interact with the interface and the physical space in order to create a richer experience than a traditional documentary film.

### **APPROACH**

I approached this project with the idea that traditional forms of documentary films relied heavily on the space in which they were filmed. In order to evoke emotion and interest in their subject the filmmaker must first introduce the viewer to the space or location in which it takes place. They must transport the viewer into another space in order to create the sensation of experiencing the same feelings as the subjects. A good example of this is in the film High School by Frederick Wiseman. In this film the focus is the teachers and administrators and their use of disciplinary tactics on students. The goal is to create tension and give the viewer a sense of what the students go through at the school. A good portion of this film is dedicated to exploring the physical space and showing the ways that the students and teachers interact within the space. My idea sprung from this concept. If we place the user within the space in which the documentary film takes place they can already begin to acquire information that could otherwise not be shown in a film. They can smell the smells and hear the natural sounds. They are experiencing the space and not just viewing it. By forcing the user to uncover content within the space I am able to direct the user to areas of interest and cause them to focus on the areas that I deem important while allowing them the freedom to explore other areas of interest. Traditional films only show the viewer content they deem important. The interface is placed on a mobile device in order to take full advantage of the exploratory sensation of a treasure hunt. After all, watching it as a film in the building would not exactly create any stronger of a connection with the space during the experience.

## DESIGN

I decided that the best device to implement the interface on would be Apple's iPhone. This device would allow the user to use a rich web browser that could handle streaming the content in a reliable fashion. It is light, portable, and most importantly made to offer up media to its ever-growing base of users. The original concept was to use the application creation software that is offered to Apple App developers. Due to difficulties with submitting the application through Apple and difficulties using the new coding language the choice was made to implement the interface through a website using HTML. Upon investigating the backbone for offering up large amounts of quality streaming video the obvious decision was to create the program using HTML. This offers up a wider user base that would include all web enabled devices. It also bypasses the problems associated with trying to force the user to download a large data package. Safari on the iPhone does not support flash based websites so the ubiquitous nature of HTML lends itself to reaching the maximum number of users. It also allows the user to access the main website as well. Graphically MoMed's interface reflects the floor plan of the physical building acting as a rough map. Future iterations could also offer GPS location to guide the user around the space and further the interaction within it, but time and monetary restrictions did not allow for this feature. Two different versions of MoMed were created. The mobile version requires the user to locate and input the name of the subject being interviewed and a password located at the room the interview occurred at in order to access the footage associated with that location. This causes the user to explore the space and search out content. Room numbers were not used in an attempt to create an exploratory experience and avoid using numbers which invoke a sense of order that the progression of numbers implicitly imply. Originally using room numbers to help users locate the hotspots it became obvious that trends were beginning in which users without prior knowledge of the building immediately investigated the lowest room number forgoing the closest hotspot. Following room numbers in order would take away from the sense of exploration of the space and create trends in which groups would follow the same course instead of finding their own way of piecing together the footage. This is aimed at creating different experiences for different users. As for offering up the video content YouTube works great, (chosen for the web based version) but was required by the iPhone to be opened up in a separate application in an Apple based platform. In the end, embedding the video as quicktime files within the HTML allowed me to create three different renders of the same footage and link them with a reference file that will deliver the content in one of three qualities that correspond with the type of connection the user is using. If they are connected to the wireless it will stream the best quality video without interruption. If they are connected to the 3G network it will stream a more compact version. If they are connected to the much slower EDGE network they will get an even lower quality video, but still be able to access the content. This worked well as a delivery concept allowing the footage to gauge what data rate would be best

for the user. The web based version of the interface was created to allow users who were not physically able to be present to still have access to the content. This will of course create a less complex relationship to the space, but was deemed necessary in order to allow for more people to gain interest in the work being done and allow them to participate in a detached experience.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

After implementing the project and using it firsthand I decided that the user needed some way to offer up responses to the content being delivered. Knowing that the footage was on YouTube as well as embedded in the website gave me the unforeseen advantage of being able to link the users to the comments page where the footage is stored. Users are encouraged (in the About Video) to create their own content and upload it to the comments page. This can either be in written, photographic, or video form. This allows the users to fully interact with the project and become contributors themselves. Another part of the interface allows the user to access content through more mobile forms of communication. For instance the user can select to “email” Lisa while walking around between hotspots and access footage of her talking about email, or select to “connect” to the Georgia Tech Wireless Network to hear Ken speak about early forms of networking. This does not really give the user the ability to “email” Lisa, but rather allows access to the footage of her discussing email in general. This allows the user to have content between hotspots and keeps the experience from being fragmented. Again this is aimed at keeping the attention of the user and creating a more coherent experience.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

MoMed is a mobile interface designed to immerse internet enabled mobile device users within a traditional documentary by using location based footage. The use of the interface forces the user to explore the physical space, while learning about the space and media through an interface containing a non-linear form of documentary film. The goal is to force the users to think about and explore the physical and virtual space in a “cyclical” manner and create an attachment with the space that normal forms of media lack. With the specific goal of creating a “cyclical” thought process we are making a connection between the users the medium and the space both virtual and physical. The users are using a mobile device, navigating a physical space in which interviews about mobile technologies were filmed, and are using a virtual map on their mobile device to guide them through out the experience. This creates an obvious connection between the mobile user, the mobile device, the physical space, and the discussion of mobile technologies

in a virtual space. The occurring “cyclical” experience is used to create a more complete occurrence and is reinforced by the context of the interviews. This connection the user experiences within the space is one that cannot be attained through merely watching. It requires participation and allows the user to experience a traditional medium in an entirely new way enriching the experience. MoMed is locally based on the third floor of the Skiles building on the campus of Georgia Tech. This is where the interviews were filmed and is the space intended for the user to interact with the media. Future iterations would include more content and more spaces. Time and content being limited, the location chosen was limited to this space to allow the user to easily navigate on foot throughout the space without being overwhelmed by the scale. The reliance on the connection to the wireless network in the Skiles building was also a factor in this decision, but the implementation of 3G wireless in most modern devices in the next year would allow a constant connection to high speed networks in the future. The interface is designed to be rather simple and easy to operate and navigate. Hyperlinks and other distracting information are intentionally left off of the interface. This decision was aimed at the need to capture the user’s attention and keep them concentrated on the relationship between the physical and virtual space.

## CITATIONS

### Writings

[1] Kittler, Friedrich A. *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*. Stanford University Press, CA, 1999.

[2] Mirchandani Rekha. “[Postmodernism and Sociology: From the Epistemological to the Empirical](#)”, [Sociological Theory](#) Vol. 23, No. 1 (Mar., 2005): 86-115, Publisher: American Sociological Association, Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4148895>

### Films

Albert & David Maysles – *Salesman* (1968)

Ellen Hovde & Albert Maysles – *Grey Gardens* (1975)

Frederick Wiseman – *High School* (1968)