

Facebook Destruction

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ABSTRACT

This paper thematises the origination process of the team project “Facebook Destruction” accrued within the Interaction Design Master’s Degree Programme at Malmö University, in the field of Embodied Interaction Design in terms of archiving, open data and memories. With the project we try to come up with a physical approach to manipulate digital data and delete it more easily in a physical expressive way, more suitable and natural for the action of destruction.

Keywords

social network, memories, digital archiving, distortion, embodiment

1. INTRODUCTION

Thinking of archives and archiving, maybe the first that comes to mind are pictures of libraries, museums, rows of file cabinets or in a smaller more private setting photo albums, family video cassettes and diaries. Images that represent the preservation of memories, history, literature etc. in an “older” and kind of romantic way. Eventually also Wikipedia came to mind when thinking in the direction of digital archiving. When we are looking at digital big data storages with an abundance of traced, tracked, collected information the picture of archiving gets a bad taste to it. Once data is uploaded it seems to be nowhere and everywhere at the same time. Through the lack of physicality it is easier and faster to copy and reproduce, that it is assumable that a unimaginable amount of copies of all data uploaded with additional meta and usage data exists multipresent. Questions about privacy as well as property rights and copyright become harder to answer. Probably the most prominent example people are using nowadays to fill digital data storages willingly and unwanted is facebook with 1.11 Billion users in March 2013 [6]. As mostly facebook is used to keep in contact with family and friends but also used as kind of shared diary or notebook for memories an emotional layer is attended to the pure use of facebook. Among adolescent there is even a high level of addiction visible, related to narcissism, self-esteem and loneliness [3] the accompanying emotional level brings certain dangers with it. They would feel lost and socially isolated without facebook and with increasing dependence the carelessness about uploaded,

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shared data and privacy decreases. It is no surprise that it comes to regret to have content uploaded when it happened more impulsive and careless. Deleting uploaded content should be then just as easy as uploading and sharing it but it is not. It can be even hard to delete digital data from your own personal devices without some knowledge and the right tools. How difficult is it then with uploaded content e.g. to facebook? It is known that the data collected over facebook is almost impossible to destruct as profiles can not be deleted permanently it can just be deactivated. Thinking about the impossibility of simply deleting digital data makes a lot of people feel kind of helpless, frustrated or even angry. Deletion should be easier and especially when it comes to sensitive personal data it can encourage to express related feelings through a physical approach.

With the project described in this paper we try to create a tool to destroy digital data easy and in physical way.

2. PROCESS

2.1 Research

As the field around archives, open data and memory is a very wide and hard to confine area, we undertook our research in several steps using different methods.

2.1.1 Brainstorming

Through first brainstorming sessions and team discussions we tried to get a feeling for the boundaries and intersections between archives, open data and memory and ascertain our common interest as team.

We came up with a satisfying amount of design openings mostly in the range of the relation between archives and memories, distortion and alteration of memory and memory triggers.

2.1.2 Diary

As memories are in the main a quite personal thing, varying in its kind and triggers to activate them from person to person, we gave some people the task to make a memory diary to figure out possible patterns. Over a period of 3 days we asked them to write down everything what triggers a memory or feeling with a personal connection to an event or time as soon as possible as it happened. We let them the choice how abstract or precise and detailed this event is noted, on paper, digital or typed in in an online form we prepared before. The kind of trigger (e.g. picture, smell, sound, touch, certain place, etc.) and memory (e.g. image, moment, time, feeling, etc.) and the situation and or place just had to be included.

It turned out that the task was not formulated in the best way or just too loose from our side as well as the way of submitting the collected information could have been more reconsidered. Offering an online

form led to misunderstand the task in the way of just filling it out once with just one memory experience. Nevertheless through all answers we can pick out that the strongest trigger is smell, followed by sound.

2.1.3 Workshop

To dip in deeper we organized a workshop where we were interested in non-visual triggers, the representation of memories and the questions of how a memory could be altered or reinterpreted. In advance we asked the participants to bring an item which means memory to them. We have chosen this rather vague formulation, so participants could decide on their own whether they understand it to bring an object related to a specific memory or something that represents the definition of memory in itself for them.

In the beginning of the workshop we asked the participants to place their brought objects in a common box. Then we gave everyone a random item out of the box, which was additionally filled with objects we prepared ourselves and asked them to explore it blindfolded. After every participant received a memory they were asked to express this memory by building something out of a range of different materials we prepared or anything else in the room convenient to represent the memory. As next step all participants were requested to present their build up objects and the related memory as well as showing the before explored item and tell about what exactly triggered the memory. Last step was to tell us the story of the item they have brought with them, after everyone in the group of participants could make a suggestion.

The workshop was helpful to confirm our assumptions and earlier outcomes related to memory triggers. It was very interesting to see that the harder capable senses are the strongest triggers but when it comes to represent the triggered memory, largely just the visual aspect of that memory will be reproduced.

Generally it would have been better to set up such an workshop later in the process with a more specific question to research as in this early stage we could not tap the full potential of it.

2.2 Concept development

Beginning with another brainstorming session to come up with more design openings based on our research outcomes, it became apparent that the field of memory triggers as a very personal one with a individual wide range, strong related to feelings, is one hard to arise actual concept ideas in an embodied matter. We took a step back, looking at all openings and concept ideas we came up from the start. Based on the method 635 we narrowed it down again and developed our favourite ideas further. It emerged that the field of distortion and alteration was still a common group interest.

During our research we additionally debate on the question when experience become memory. According to Kahneman [1] our memorising self is a storyteller “We don’t only tell stories when we set out to tell stories, our memory tells us stories. That is, what we get to keep from our experiences is a story.” and “ We tend to confuse memories with the real experience that gave rise to those memories.” So you can say memories in itself are alterations, distortions of experiences. Having that in mind we tried to transfer the whole point from memories to archives. Archiving stands in the meaning of collecting, tracing and preserving information, things, memories etc., so why not turning that around and going in the direction of anti-archiving as distortion can be seen as destructive. In terms of digital data storage

the question of how you can distort or even destroy data becomes a very interesting question.

As Facebook is one of the biggest social media platforms nowadays and nearly everybody has to say something to it, our concept targets the ambivalent relationship to Facebook most users have and the known problematic or rather impossibility of deleting data from the platform through a physical tool representing an existing profile. By treating and destroying the product, the profile will suffer the impacts.

2.3 Prototype

After defining our concept we started to build a first prototype to test the assumed role and reactions to the product.

Not only as a very obvious physical representation of a facebook profile we have chosen the form of a book but more in the way a book seen in a library is part of an archive as depending on the content is an archive itself, thus perfect to represent the personal data collection referred to a profile linked to the enormous data storage of facebook in total.

For the prototype we created a local fictional fake profile for it is impossible for us to directly influence an existing account. To represent the biggest, most addicted group of facebook users we created a profile page of an average teenage girl with friends, groups, daily comments and uploaded pictures.

There are three predefined actions/treatments on the physical book that influence the according profile page:

- The sides in the prototype represent the actual content from the profile such as friends, pictures, comments, groups. If you rip out a page the referred content on the original side will be deleted and disappears.
- By punching the book random parts on the page will get distorted and/or blurred.
- Stabbing the book with a big needle in predefined holes in the cover will form cracks

2.4 Additional research

With a first low fidelity prototype we tried to find out how people would react on such a product. If they really would destroy the book if it would be linked to their own profile. As we could just offer the created fake profile to destroy, the more important information we got from interviewing our test persons. The most positive aspect mentioned by our testers is to have something physical to change the digital. Of course also new questions came up, particularly concerning privacy. Is everybody allowed to order any book of any profile? How do you make sure you are destroying your profile yourself? Are the changes temporary or permanent? Over the prototype some people saw themselves confronted with questions on facebook they had never thought of before, so we decided to set up a quite comprehensive questionnaire with open questions as well as multiple choice options round about facebook (e.g. usage, level of addiction, privacy settings, feelings about different points etc.). the questionnaire was spread then over facebook, posted on the profile page of every team member separately. We did not had very high expectations on that questionnaire wherefore the result was surprising. Over a period of two weeks we got 85 answers, almost daily still answers coming in. The most mentionable results out of that questionnaire are:

- 92% check their facebook daily
- 20% are always on
- 60% have thought about deactivating their account

- 36% have thought of deleting it permanently
- 80% are concerned about privacy settings
- 100% like facebook for staying in contact with family and friends all over the world

Generally the results made an ambivalent relation to facebook visible. On the one hand facebook users appreciate the usage of facebook to stay in contact and communicate with people, on the other hand they are concerned about their privacy so much that more than the half have thought of deactivating or deleting the account. Among younger people the level of addiction is so high, that they would feel lost and social isolated without facebook

3. EMBODIMENT

From childhood on physical interaction is a need for physical and cognitive development to experience our surrounding and express ourself and our feelings. But with new technologies the range of “the physical performance of work has homogenized.” For example “... with a keyboard and mouse interface, the use of our bodies for writing a paper is the same as for editing photographs. And playing music. And communicating with friends and family. And anything else that one might want computation for.” [5]. Looking from that point in the future of interaction design interfaces could get “less expressive than a sandwich” [1] and if we don’t want to accept that we have to go for more tactile responses and physicality. A lot of things we do are related to feelings or can evoke these and different expressions and feelings need different actions. The way we act with digital devices and technology is in a physical way not satisfying enough. Because of that probably everybody has experienced the kind of frustration where you just feel like throwing your computer, mobile etc. against the wall. Deleting personal data or a whole collection like a facebook profile is a likely well-considered step that comes along with emotions that can not be expressed by only clicking a button, it needs a higher stage of physical activity to it.

4. EVALUATION

In the developed prototype only three predefined treatments are realized, more actions and tools for manipulation are wanted in a further step besides the connection to a real existing facebook profile. There are existing products like “My Social Book” [4] but with a contrary usage to our concept. We were thinking of presenting our project in an exhibition where people could get the chance to print their own “face-book”, treat it in several ways and see the changes on their real profile. The distortion and deletion of parts would then be just temporary.

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