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## he Week in Review

Our week fifth week started with affirmation and a plenty of questions as we launched our first playtest and faced the faculty in Quarters reviews. By the week's end, we used this feedback to improve our plans for a first full build.

Our playtest, which we ran Sunday afternoon at the Carnegie Science Center, gave us confidence that we were on the right track. Over two and a half hours, we took fifteen kids in our target demographic (and a few younger), through a paper version of our interactive storytelling kiosk. We found that most enjoyed the experience and had little problem engaging in drawing and choice making activities that let them personalize their stories.

Still, we found making an analog version of an experience that was designed to be digital wasn't ideal. Animation had to substituted with drawing, which gave a misleading impression of what the final experience would be like. Additionally, we sensed that the markers and paper approach made our experience seem more like an art project, which more readily attracted girl playtesters than boy. We hope that moving from paper to screen will attract more boys to the experience, but are keenly aware of the challenges of designing for a mixed audience.

Before we had even had time to digest our data from our playtest, we were busy preparing for faculty questions about our progress to date on Monday. Generally, they liked what we were doing: kids love stories that they can personalize, they told us. Their questions proved invaluable: At the end of this experience, what



*Paper playtesting at the Carnegie Science Center proves our concept and poses questions.*

will we have done for kids? What, exactly, were we building physically? How were we going to draw a whole family into an experience controlled on just one screen? They also offered some great advice, pointing us to the more durable ELO industrial-grade touchscreen in place of the off-the-shelf model we had planned on using and suggesting we include more specific silly options for things like the talents kids could have in their story, instead of the more generic ones we had used in our paper playtests

From all of this feedback, we developed a plan for a playable demo that would include all the major features, which we will have ready before halves. We worked out a system for a four frame animation style that gives our characters life, while still being manageable for customized characters. We listened to faculty calls for "bone simple" design and started sketching out the user interface that would control our system. Finally, we found the screens and speakers that would bring our stories to life in the museum.



## Week 5: Feedback

Feb. 11 - 15, 2013

Who Are You?  
[Choose body parts from the list below]

Scientist    Ninja    Knight

Ballerina    Pixie    Pirate

Princess    Robot    Wizard

Once upon a time, I used to think everything was boring.

What Talent did the helper teach you?  
[Choose an action from the list below]

Fly in the Sky    Karate Chop    Dance

Fix Anything    Use Magic    Backflip

Make Friends    Call A Unicorn    Sing

Along the way I met the helper, who taught me how to...

Above: Pages from our first paper prototype.  
Below: Our team holding our drawings of our alter-egos.



## We Suggest

- Cissy's Magical Ponycorn Adventure ([ponycorns.com](http://ponycorns.com)) is an interactive story as told, drawn, and narrated by a five-year-old and programmed by her dad. Seriously, go check it out.
- Teams looking for a space to test their projects where they can reach both kids and their parents should give the Carnegie Science Center a call.
- For playtests in public places consider having highly visible rewards to attract young playtesters' attention. Balloons worked wonders for us.
- On that note, Ballonatics in Squirrel Hill offers a fair deal on balloons by the dozen.

## The Week Ahead

On Monday afternoon, we fly down to San Antonio for two days of work with our client (and a needed break from the snow).

- We'll tour the museum where our machine will be playtested for the next year.
- We'll also have a chance to playtest an improved version of our paper prototype three separate times (twice at the museum and once more at the local elementary school).
- When we return, we'll pick up where we left off, developing tech, art assets, and designing our physical space.

