

## the open space in a story

Feb. 25 - March 1, 2013

### The Week in Review

Thanks to faculty input, this week we leapt over an obstacle that might have put us in a lose-lose scenario, helping us lock down other design choices and putting us on track to have a prototype ready for half-way presentations.

To meet our client's goal of having kids feel inserted into the stories they've created, we had planned a design with a lot of moving pieces: there was to be sections that were animated based on kids' choices, sections where kids could draw or write their input, and sections where kids could have their faces mapped onto onscreen characters' heads.

Juggling these moving parts turned out to be a challenge. In Week 6 we discovered that our planned sprite sheet animation was not going to work with our facemapping feature. We knew we couldn't drop animation, since we felt made kids' stories come to life. We knew if we invested time in finding some way of making facemapping work with sprite sheet animation we wouldn't be able to invest it elsewhere—we would have to do fewer animations, which meant fewer options for kids, and we might have to limit how we let kids draw or use free input. This seemed like a necessary, but less than ideal, compromise.

Then, a ray of hope: on our adviser's suggestion, we approached ETC faculty member Ruth Comley with our challenge. She suggested we switch from 2D sprite sheet animation to a 3D paper doll-like system that would look 2D, but more easily map player's faces to character heads. Some of the time we would lose by switching from a less demanding four-



*A sample from our storyboard demonstrated our vision for a final product as we worked on a prototype.*

frame animation style to a more demanding 3D style could be made up by the fact that characters did not need to be individually animated, but could be mapped to a common skeleton.

As this was going on, we finalized our physical design for client approval, allowing us to give the designs to Ben Carter from the School of Drama to order the parts and build. We also used general UI examples we had shown earlier to create a storyboard of the whole user experience. This helped us firm up the scene structure so our programmers could continue building the skeleton of the system. This is particularly important, as our design involves networking between a client-side touchscreen monitor and a server-side big-screen TV.

At week's end, we presented our progress to our client, the San Antonio Children's Museum, and their advisor Argyle Design. We were able to walk them through the whole experience and even demonstrate a prototype of facemapping and animation. This let them share final input before we continued our march towards a full-feature prototype.

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## Week 7: Over Obstacles

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Above: A demonstration of our proposed drawing input user interface

Below: An example of expanded free input, as kids draw what characters say



### We Suggest

- Ever wanted to be a backflipping princess? Come by our office (2420) to check out a demo of our facemapping feature.
- If you've never heard or read it before, Kurt Vonnegut's lecture "On the Shapes of Stories" (<http://youtu.be/oP3clh8v2Zq>), be sure to check it out. It offers a great visualization of the structure of some of the most common stories.
- There's no immediate application to our work, but the MYO Gesture Control Arm Band is too cool not to check out ([getmyo.com](http://getmyo.com)).

### The Week Ahead

In the week ahead, we'll be getting everything prepared to meet our goal of having a fully functional prototype ready for halves. We'll be:

- Finishing character art and environments
- Improving our drawing and facemapping systems and implementing them into the build
- Creating animations for more interactions
- Building a mock-up of our kiosk for halves

