

## the open space in a story

March 18 – March 22, 2013

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### he Week in Review

For our team this week started with a big event: Halves. On Monday afternoon we presented our project, our work to date, and our plan for finishing on time with a great project to program faculty and other students. As one of only two public presentations of our work, it's kind of a big deal.

Since our project, an interactive story maker for kids, is all about telling a heroic journey, we structured our presentation as a story of our journey to this point. We talked about how the journey started, the heroes at the center of the story (us), the mentors (our advisors and the faculty here at Carnegie Mellon), and our allies (our clients, the San Antonio Children's Museum, the San Antonio Public Library, and Argyle Designs). We talked about our call to action, explaining how we went from our clients' initial goals, through rounds of brainstorming, to a concept we translated into a paper prototype. We talked about our first great challenges in paper prototype playtests and initial feedback from the faculty. To show what we're doing, we demonstrated the latest version of our story maker live. To explain how we got there, we looked at the key element of our production—physical exhibition build, art, animation, and programming—and talked about the challenges we faced and the solutions we've found along the way. Finally, we discussed our plans for the challenges ahead as we move closer and closer to our proposed ship date of April 26.

We had worked hard to get where we were. The preceding week had been spring break, but we had decided to stay in so we could get



*One day, our storytelling exhibit will live here as part of the San Antonio Children's Museum's redesigned building (opening in 2015).*

more work done and polish our presentation. In the end, we were glad we did. Faculty feedback was largely positive: they understood what we were doing and what the value of our work was. Faculty offered some useful feedback, suggesting ways we could polish (and shorten) our presentation. They also offered a few helpful thoughts about how best to fare the challenges ahead.

After Halves, we continued to work on finishing the first full playable prototype of our exhibit. The work we had presented earlier in the week was about one-third of the total experience. While it gave a good sense of what the experience was supposed to be, we wanted to make sure we left for California with a complete version of the experience to show our client. This would let us add as much content as time would allow over the next weeks while making improvements based on their feedback and the feedback we got from playtests planned for April.

Onwards to the next half!





## Week 8: Interface Iteration

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*More photos from a playtest of our second paper prototype in San Antonio.*

### We Suggest

- Dig deep into Google Docs spreadsheet application. It's free and, with a little work, can serve as a pretty powerful tool for project management and communication.
- Lego StoryStarter lets kids build scenes with classic lego toy sets and convert them into visual and textual stories using a storytelling software. For those interested in combining physical toys with software, this is an interesting contrast to Skylanders ([www.legoeducation.us/storystarter](http://www.legoeducation.us/storystarter))

### The Week Ahead

- Most of our team heads to California for the Game Developers Conference for the next week, but we'll still be at work. We'll be:
- Presenting a draft of the whole experience digital to our clients for the first time.
  - Creating more art assets so kids can go to more places and interact with more characters in their story.
  - "Softening" our prototype kiosk to make it more safe and kid-friendly so we can bring it with us for playtesting when we return.
  - Finding and casting two actors to perform voiceovers as the narrator and a "help" voice, who will assist kids in telling their story.

