

Digital Reflexivity through Media History

The project's thesis is that appropriating media to understand media offers particular inroads into processes of reflexivity. Reflexivity is the main notion, and the project aims to demonstrate the relations between creativity with media and reflexivity on media. This is done by studying young people in the ageband 12-20 as they engage with creative digital media in the museum, publishing their productions in-house and online, debating and sharing information face-to-face and online.

The project also aims at designing and implementing new innovative digital learning resources developed in partnership with the museum and its commercial players. This is an iterative process, so the user research and the design tasks are both seen as important co-existing parts of the research project, parts that complement each other from start to end. Cooperation with a project partner means that especially the design tasks cannot be planned rigorously ahead but must be flexible according to the changing economic and organizational circumstances of the museum. The project can be seen as action research in the sense that the researcher and the museum professionals cooperate in designing and introducing digital learning resources into the museum.

At the end of the project, two results will have been produced: 1) In-depth knowledge about users, their potential learning outcomes and how they reflect when using creative digital media in a media museum; and 2) One or more digitally based learning resources that are functional to and implemented at the museum. In addition, valuable knowledge will be made about designing and implementing such resources for museums. These results will be published in a monograph PhD-dissertation.

Case Study: The Sound Box

The Sound Box is one of the installations that the museum's new media experience centre will be featuring and that is currently being developed through this project. It is a creative collaborative activity where one-three users take the roles as foley artists making their own audio for a short animated cartoon.

The Sound Box itself is a sound-proof booth containing all the tools for making foley sound. The recording process is computer-controlled so that the users are able to focus on the creative, social and communicative challenges in developing a sound design, cueing, spotting, cooperating etc. A video camera records the physical performance, which can be seen alongside with the animated cartoon. Outside the box, spectators can watch the performance through windows and listen in real time using external headphones.

After recording, users can edit their audio using custom-made light-weight editing software, and when they are satisfied, they can publish the finished video in-house (on screens in the exhibition) and online on the museum website and on social network sites.

The sound box will be constructed with collection of research data in mind. The internal camera is a valuable tool that will produce video for later analysis. In the same vein, the external spectator's position is an ideal spot for doing unobtrusive observation. When leaving the Sound Box, users can be interviewed about their experience. Audiovisual editing is done in an open museum environment where users can be observed, interviewed or asked to "think aloud". The actual editing and publishing (or non-publishing) of videos is logged on the server, and hence any given production can be followed from (before) its creation and all the way to online social networks.

Like the box, the animated cartoon will also be designed with both learning and research in mind. The animation should have certain ambiguous visual and

narrative elements in order to promote reflective thought. Still, the animation will also have a lot of well-known visual and narrative features in order to promote links to popular media. There are no "easy" or "right" solutions, and it is alright for users to be curious, puzzled, confused, or initially unable to resolve the task: That's the definition of a "problem"!

The themes to be researched are the interconnections between reflexivity, hands-on-creativity and web 2.0. In what ways does a historical media perspective induce reflexivity? What kind of references and resources do users mobilize (e.g. resources from the exhibition, online resources, references to known media productions, anecdotes) and how? In what ways do users discuss, use and reflect upon each others' productions?

Currently, the basic design plans for the Sound Box are finished. This includes specifications for connection to the user management system (electronic ticket) and website as well as physical specifications for the installation itself. But it also includes descriptions of learning objectives based on generic learning outcomes etc. Next step is physical prototyping with users.