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Publish Mobile Narrative Games with the PlayableMedia Story Builder

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Abstract

The hands-on demo of the PlayableMedia Story Builder, a free and open source game engine, allowed participants to quickly build and publish responsive narrative games. Workshop participants learned PlayableMedia's approach to rapidly developing narrative games with the Story Builder through modding an existing game in the engine, and iterating on the game's design to affect the experience and message of the game.

The PlayableMedia Story Builder

The PlayableMedia Story Builder is a narrative game engine designed for journalism and other serious game makers. The tool empowers digital storytellers to leverage existing multimedia skillsets, alongside newsroom and media resources, to create games for new readership and engagement opportunities. The first game engine designed explicitly to meet the needs of journalists in the newsroom, it seeks to simply demonstrate what games and journalism can do when brought together, and introduce a basic framework for narrative game design.

Learn more and sign up to use the engine at http://playablemedia.org. Story Builder repository on GitHub: https://github.com/User10/playable-stories

Workshop Description

The workshop began with an introduction to the PlayableMedia team, the team's approach to newsgame design and an overview of the Story Builder narrative game engine. Participants learned how to use the engine to build an engaging game and discussed possibilities for adding mobile game design to an informational and educational offerings. The session engaged participants in hands-on mobile game design, based on the PlayableMedia Story Builder, a free and open source game engine built with support from the Knight Foundation Prototype Fund.

Format Recap

Participants learned how PlayableMedia guides journalists in choosing game mechanics that achieve storytelling goals and leverage the Story Builder to make engaging and meaningful games. The group of 20 participants walked-through modifying a mobile game in the engine. Then, participants broke into teams of 2-4 to experience first-hand the engine features and to change a game's design and mechanics to affect the experience of a simple narrative game. Beyond this, we discussed *why* journalists and serious game designers should explore newsgames, and *how* newsgames offer possibilities for valuable data fountains and support valuable and deep dialogues with today's readers. The session ended with a debrief of the participants experience learning and using the engine.

Takeaways

The goal of our session was to walk our audience through the Story Builder tool, establish a common base understanding of games for journalism, and broaden the community of participants and collaborators leveraging mobile narrative games as a technology and practice for engaging audiences in complex issues.

Participants walked away with:

- Introductory knowledge of game design for journalism.
- An account in the PlayableMedia Story Builder game engine, including the modded demo game from the workshop exercise.
- The ability to design and release hosted mobile games using the PlayableMedia Story Builder.
- Workshop presentations slides including a core mechanic game design model and design tips.
- PlayableMedia contact information.
- Participants shared the following feedback during the debrief session:
- The engine was simple to use and friendly for new game designers.
- It would be helpful to include a model of the engine's story structure (non-linear with multiple choice outcomes).
- It would be helpful to add the ability to export playable pdf versions of games created.
- A participant shared the choice outcomes probability feature would be useful when teaching students this concept in the classroom.
- A participant shared ideas around creating engaging content to help college-aged students think about what it takes to jump into new experiences like taking courses online or studying abroad.

Conference Diversity

PlayableMedia is a majority minority, majority women-led team. We bring together innovative thinking and experience from journalism, game design, learning science, and entrepreneurship. In addition to our diversity personally, we deliberately seek to tell stories from alternative perspectives, using alternative formats games and virtual reality for journalism. We work to empower women and minority voices in

technology and game design to build and launch their own playable stories – benefiting the future of interactive, immersive, and mobile journalism.

Acknowledgments

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