
Designing from a Narrative: Leveraging the 6 Point Story Method to Facilitate Interaction Design in Digital Humanities Projects

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One of the many challenges facing Digital Humanities projects today is how to design for alternative approaches to traditional close reading. Many of the current interface mechanisms for representing text are drawn from their print counterparts and are directly reflective of the analogue. These mechanisms rely upon traditional representations of text and typically structure content using techniques that have been leveraged by print for several centuries. However, these various mechanisms are designed to support traditional close reading techniques and often fail to consider digital reading methods. As digital content has become more ubiquitous and commonplace, a demographic shift has occurred, migrating readers towards alternative methods of reading and engagement with text, alternatives which seek to augment the traditional close reading approach. Previously conducted research shows a decline in traditional close reading techniques when moving from print to digital (Hayles, 2012; Mangan, 2008). This, along with other factors, has led to the emergence of new methods of reading and textual engagement, such as hyper reading, radial reading, and distant reading (Hayles, 2012; McGann, 2012; Moretti, 2013). However, finding metaphors or interactions which support these different modalities can be challenging, and the methods for discovering how users leverage content can often be inconsistent.

In an effort to increase user experience within the Digital Humanities space, the field has turned to interaction design techniques in order to better understand how the user leverages these types of projects (Ruecker et al, 2011; Pierazzo, 2014). Traditionally, interaction design has borrowed from social science in an effort to create focus groups or

usability studies which provide insight into how the user interacts with the software in question. Various techniques—such as ethnography, surveys, and interviews—are often leveraged with the goal of understanding how the individual engages with the software. However, these techniques typically fail to consider why the user may engage with the software in question. This assessment, otherwise known as the “emotional impact” of the software, can have tremendous impact upon the reader’s interaction with the content. Studies have shown that the subjective experience often has a strong impact upon metacognition (Ackerman & Goldsmith, 2011), leading readers to demand more than just efficiency and usability from a platform: they also require emotional engagement (Shih and Liu, 2008). This poster proposes the “6 Point Story Method” as a framework which can be used to assess not only how the reader seeks to interact with the content but also why.

The “6 Point Story Method” is a psychological method developed by Alida Gersie. The method is primarily used by psychologists as a therapy modality to assist patients by framing stories which often have subconscious meaning and acting as an assistant to uncover issues requiring further therapeutic intervention (Dent-Brown and Wang, 2004). This poster proposes that this method can be adopted for use in the early stages of interaction design with the goal of facilitating idea generation in a group setting in order to further understand: the goals of end users, what challenges the users may face when navigating a software system, and the driving motivation behind the use of the platform (thus forming the emotional component of the analysis). This poster will discuss the use of the 6 Point Story Method within a focus group setting whose primary goal is to further explore how users wish to engage with Digital Humanities projects from non-traditional engagement methods (e.g. in support of reading modalities outside of traditional close reading). The methodology, including the demographics behind the focus groups, will be illustrated and the results will be explored in order to highlight the advantages of adapting the 6 Point Story Method to support traditional interaction design techniques.

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