Matthew Blackburn

Moving Words
AMS317 Documentation

*Moving Words* is a work of electronic literature created by Matthew Blackburn. It tells the story of a young woman from the time of her first love to her old age—all described by the maturation of her words in each stage of her life. In essence, the piece seeks to show the imagined coming-of-age of words.
How would your words sound if you were depressed, desolate, and all alone? How would they sound if you are happy, content, and filled with confidence?

This piece is about constant change and development, a theme of transformation that it hopes to emphasize through the vacillating border colors as well as through the movement and change of the words themselves.

If you look away for too long or do not read quickly enough you may miss a part of the story's progression—just as in real life. While the piece is slow and methodical, there is no way to re-read words once the piece is in motion. Of course, also as in real life, not everyone meets every person at all stages of their lives so feel free to look away and come back later to read a different part of this poetry. Be warned though that looking at different tabs while the piece is running can effect the timing of the elements and cause them to jumble up (who says that life isn't messy!), so do not toggle between tabs if you want a clean viewing experience. Hopefully, one can take as much from each individual poem segment as one can learn from the whole.

Much like a movie, Moving Words is very much about presentation, a feature that is quite prominent in and important to electronic literature. The entire piece was done using CSS3 and HTML. Although the code used was fairly repetitive and thereby time consuming, it was not hard to do. I hope others are able to see the power of CSS3 and HTML and realize that there is a lot that one can do without much coding experience and without having to use a What You See is What You Get (WYSIWYG) interface. For this entire project, I used very few coding techniques and simply tried to be as creative as I could with the little techniques that I knew.

I did not use a single snippet of JavaScript in creating this piece. The hardest part to make was probably creating the "About Moving Words" dialog box, for which I am very grateful to Webdesigner Depot for giving me a basis for the code. I would also like to thank W3Schools.com for giving me the idea to use multi-colored boxes, and I would like to thank animate.css for helping me learn some other animations, such as scaling and translation, to make the words that I used move in different ways.
For my project, I decided to rewrite the classic novel *Emma* by Jane Austen through the medium of social media. The novel’s plot is centered around mere gossip: who is interested in whom, and who is going to marry whom, and who is invited to what party, and who dances with whom at the party. I thought that these kinds of issues and social relationships would easily translate into modern day social media because the whole point of Facebook and the like is to put this very gossip and these very relationships online. In my project, I used the main character’s use of the social media sites Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, as well as the popular website BuzzFeed to tell the story. The creation of the project was also somewhat collaborative in that Emma’s Facebook page was a real page in which she interacted with people in the Princeton community, and thus the community determined much of the material that is seen in the video.

What struck me while doing this project was how easily translatable *Emma* is to modern day life. I put Emma into my own world, and it was effortless. I made Emma a junior at Princeton and a member of Cottage Club; she is very pretty and popular, and she clearly comes from a very wealthy family. After creating the modern-day characters, I translated all the events of the novel to how they would happen in my world. On one hand, my version of *Emma* is a caricature of today’s social scene. Some of the language is exaggerated and is making fun of how people act
online. On the other hand, however, it is a very real reflection of what happens. Some of the
dialogue I have taken straight from real conversations that my friends and I have had on
Facebook.

What I have realized from this project is that the social scenes and relationships that Jane Austen
wrote about in the 1800s are not at all different from what we have today. Today, however, many
of the encounters and gossip about the social scene happen online through social media. This is
why one girl’s activity on social media makes a perfect authoring software for the modern day
version of *Emma*.

**Stephanie He:**

*Motivated Me: Interactivity and Productivity*

Documentation
1 Motivation

Poetry is in many ways the reflections of a person’s innermost thoughts. As an undergraduate student, I spend much of my college time consumed with academics and how to most effectively be productive and to get work done. However, I can be easily distracted, like many people in today’s age of technological immersion. I find that multitasking, usually by playing a video or music in the background while doing work, causes me to be much less effective at getting work done, and it also prevents me from really understanding and thus enjoying the material I am working on. I want this piece to reflect both my fluctuating motivation, and how being “in the present” enables me to more fully enjoy the work that I am doing and to do a better job overall.

This piece is a continuation on my midterm generative poetry work, which questions how interactive generative poetry can be and attempts to create a piece of literature showing that it is possible to allow the user to direct the flow of the poetry. I retained elements and modules from my previous project, including ones that impacted the content of the text by scrolling through different options as well as modules changing the poetry’s canvas by altering font choices. Motivated Me also takes the concept a much larger step forward, in that the user's actual presence has a significant impact on how the poem is created and visualized. This final project extends the boundaries of what interactive poetry really means with the use of HTML5, a relatively new technology that has not even had a full W3C recommendation, which indicates the technology is in a stable, mature stage of development. Similar to work by Camille Utterback, it takes into account user actions through video to direct how the poetry is generated. HTML5 allows the use of canvas, webcam and video elements, thus enabling taking video using a computer's webcam and then drawing frames of that video onto a canvas. By embedding webcam elements in the page, this final project takes in information about the video and does face detection in order to determine whether or not a user is actively present at the computer.

The final product is a piece where lines are generated that represent my thoughts, ranging from what I should be working on, what is distracting me and inspirational quotes to keep my motivation up. The font changes based on whether or not a user is detected. If a person is there, the colors are bright and vivid to reflect how actively being present and focusing on the work will yield better results; on the other hand, if the webcam is unable to detect a person, the text will be gray, there will be gaps in the timing of thoughts and the experience overall will be dulled and slower. The contents of the poem change as well: if a person is no longer detected, there are gaps in generating the poem, and my poetry will no longer be inspired to randomly generate motivational quotes.

2 Implementation

The HTML file includes controls to modify the classes to focus on, the confidence level and the font. It also includes a canvas to display the information the webcam fetches.

- index.html: The main HTML page that needs to be opened. Contains the code to enable web visualization
• generate.js: Used to generate the poem

• waypoints.js: JQuery library API for selecting elements (used to create dials)

• video*: Folder containing JS to enable face detection. The implementation uses Viola-Jones’ network for object detection using Lienhart’s optimizations for real-time detection speed.

• dist*: Folder containing JS, CSS, fonts for front-end formatting

2.2 index.html, Face Detection Code

In Motivated Me, face detection works by using the library made available by Eugene Zatepyakin. It uses the Viola-Jones framework for real-time face detection, with optimizations made by Rainer Lienhart in extending the feature set and improving the classifiers. The script sets the global variable PERSON_DETECTED to be the number of rectangles detected. Note that later when this variable is used in generate.js in an if statement, the number 0 is considered to be the Boolean value false, whereas any positive number of detections will be considered the Boolean value true. As a result, if there are multiple face detections, the program will treat it as if a single person is detected and continue normally. The variable PERSON_DETECTED is initialized as true, because if the program is opened and the webcam is not accessible, the program should run as if a person is being detected. In other words, there can only be a lack of people detection if someone has already been actively detected by the webcam.

3 Acknowledgements

Thank you Professor Malloy for introducing me to generative poetry, encouraging me to try new things, and for a wonderful AMS 317 class. Thank you to my parents for looking over this project and providing new ideas on what the poem generates. This project would not have been possible without all of you!
Will Howard

The Unfiltered Life

AMS317 Documentation

Instagram is all about choices. When you choose a black and white filter for the shot of you and your girlfriend holding hands on the train tracks, what are you trying to say that the unfiltered picture didn’t already? Did you really just want it to look “cooler?” If you just wanted it to look “cooler,” then why did you decide on a black and white filter instead of opting for Antique or Vignette? For professional photographers working with analog film, these sorts of editing techniques involve very deliberate and effortful decisions. Editing and altering analog negatives requires expensive film, dangerous chemicals, and hours of skilled labor. Before he made any changes, an analog photographer had to carefully consider what he was trying to say and how the alterations he was making would affect how his photograph functioned as a piece of art. While Instagram makes such alterations the work of a moment, I believe that the same sorts of artistic considerations are still being made, albeit much more hastily, even subconsciously, and whimsically, every time a preteen slaps a filter on a selfie. When we pick a filter we are picking a story, inflecting an image with added layers of emotion and implication. If a picture is worth a thousand words, a filter is worth at least a few hundred more.

To capture the narrative power of photographic filters, and explore their role in storytelling and identity generation on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, I devised a conceptually simple but technically challenging creative writing exercise. First, I would take a generic photograph of a friend or group of friends. Then, using this picture as a prompt, I would write a brief fictional story—really more of a scene—that contained within its arc the instant when the photograph was supposedly taken. I marked this instant in the story with the bolded, ambiguous word **shuttersound**. I liked that this marker could be interpreted either as a diegetic and onomatopoeic word marking the fake camera shutter noise which iPhones are, by default, programmed to make whenever they take pictures, but also alternatively as a nondiegetic narrative cue, solely for the reader’s benefit, to anchor the photo in the text. Then I would compose a caption, complete with hashtags, that I thought fit the photograph and the narrative I’d written, if the characters I’d just created to explain the story behind the photo were actually to upload it to Instagram. To appreciate one of these stories properly, it should be read from the beginning up to the **shuttersound**, at which point the reader should take a moment to look at the corresponding picture and read its caption (see the Website Mockup section for an illustration of how this could be encouraged in an online gallery).

After I finished with the photo, I would use iPhoto’s built in editing software, which replicates most of Instagram’s filters and features but is easier to use for technical reasons, to apply a filter to the photograph which I felt would substantially alter the story the picture was trying to tell. For example, a warm filter might turn a mundane story about a quiet breakfast into a glad meal among friends, while a cold filter might make the same photo suggest an excerpt from an exhausted, early-morning pity party. Once I had found a satisfactorily powerful filter, I would write a new story, this one channeling the emotions and narrative suggested by the new filter. I repeated the exercise with a variety of different photos and filters, and was extremely satisfied with the resulting pieces of fiction.
Website Mockup/Viewer

The homepage for my gallery would consist of only the viewing module, which is roughly modeled below. The viewer would be displaying a randomly selected version of one of the photos in the database in the “picture” box in the center when the user arrived. The short narrative that corresponded to this particular filtered version of the photograph would be displayed in two parts, flanking the image. The first half of the story, up to the **shuttersound** moment, would be on the left, the second half of the story would be on the right. The image’s corresponding caption and hashtags would appear below it. Scrolling vertically would cycle through the other possible filtrations of the same picture. Changing the filter on the picture would also cause the other windows to change, in order to display the story and caption that corresponded to the new version of the photograph being displayed.

Cycling horizontally would move on to a new photograph, the filters and stories for 1st part of which could then be scrolled through vertically as before.

“Rubber percussion of an eraser against the tabletop. Staccato clatter of keyboards. The pallid electric light seemed to emanate from all sides of the room evenly, so that the precarious stacks of untouched library books on the table cast no shadows in any direction.

‘It’s not like we haven’t been here before.’”
What is this?

The idea behind the project is to use social media to create art that is impossible without it. For this project, I explore the art of acting as two characters simultaneously.
Okay, I'm intrigued. Go on...

In the real world, we can only act as one character at a time. But using Twitter, I have adopted the personae of the two main characters in *National Treasure 2: Book of Secrets*. Using screen caps from the movie and tweets, I have constructed simultaneous trains of thought that progress throughout the entire movie. Essentially, the goal was to adopt two separate and simultaneous inner-monologues, to be spelled out in words, 140-character (maximum) tweets at a time throughout the course of the movie, such that a reader of the tweets could see two separate accounts of the same series of events.

One last clarification I should make is that the tweets are meant as an inner monologue, rather than as a series of literal tweets. Obviously, during the movie, these two characters are not sitting on phone apps as they hunt for treasure, and I wanted to deal in realism, so the tweets represent inner thoughts inside their brains, rather than actual tweets.

**Molly Stoneman**

*A "Cure" for Inefficiency in the USG*

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After being elected as Vice President of the Princeton Undergraduate Student Government, I began to notice that most of the resources for USG members were spread out across various websites and email chains, with many members being unable to find the resource that they needed efficiently. The best example of this is the USG Reservation Calendar, a shared Google Calendar that is used to reserve spaces in the USG office for various committee meetings, study groups, and student organization meetings. This calendar was buried in the bottom of member inboxes, rendering it obsolete and unused - a wasted resource. This inspired the idea to create a website shared with every USG member that aggregates all of the available resources into a searchable, navigable site with a clean interface. Hence, the Consolidated USG Resource Engine was born, also known as the "USG CURE."

The Home page is simple, with a short description of the site and the latest USG holiday photo. On the right sidebar is a search bar that members may use to quickly find what they are looking for on the site, as well as a miniature version of the scheduling calendar that shows upcoming USG events; this sidebar is present on every page of the site, in addition to a social media toolbar at the bottom of each page to share information. The site contains a current projects list (including which USG members are working on each project) and an idea list of compiled project ideas from various meetings, retreats, and campaigns. The reservation calendar is
available for members to check which spaces are available, and a reservation form is included so that members can easily add their reservation to the calendar. An updated contact sheet provides information for every USG member, which has not been available in USG for a long time. The "grocery list" tab solicits suggestions from members, asking which office and food supplies need to be replaced in the USG office, and the "feedback" tab solicits anonymous feedback to improve USG inner-workings.

A few sections on the website specifically aim to help new members adjust to the pace of USG. The "How Do I...?" section provides specific instructions for how to complete project tasks such as requesting funding or organizing a committee meeting. The "Helpful Links" section provides links to the websites that USG members use most often for projects, particularly on the USG website and ODUS website. Finally, the "USG 101" tab contains compiled versions of informational PowerPoints about USG, which have been used in the past for new members training sessions and retreats.

Over intersession, I plan to send the finalized version of the website to each USG member for the Spring 2014 term. I hope that this website will help create a more comfortable and efficient USG experience for members, and particularly for new members. Though the website is currently up-to-date, it is a "living" site that will grow and change with the membership, and will be continuously updated to maximize the productivity and accessibility of the USG.

Gerardo Veltri

Work and Text
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I began thinking about an artist’s website in the context of what other people in the past had done. Did I want this website to be a window into what I do? Did I want it to be a piece in itself? I ended up working between these two questions, and the title of the page was written to reflect that. *Work and Text* is both a reference to the real-world existence of my work and a presentation of my work from a very different angle. It can be seen with materials provided by the artist in the hopes that it will create some sense of my process. J.R. Carpenter’s *Entre-Ville* was a huge influence on the way that I envisioned an artist’s online representation of a workspace. The note-pad with the click-able images gives the audience a chance to explore the webpage. While my HTML/CSS is not quite good enough to pull that off yet, I was able to format my website in such a way that I could juxtapose images of (and surrounding) my work with disparate pieces of text.

Curating the text was probably the most critical part of this project. In each case, it could have either been didactic or completely unrelated. Because it is quite difficult to understand what “Anywhere Klub” is without actually having the book in front of oneself, I included a brief description of what it was, but then I chose to make that description part of a sales-tactic. Each text-section has its own unique relationship to the work that is portrayed in the pictures, and my hope is that a viewer would not directly understand the content but rather get a sense of some of the ideas and materials I am working with. I do not see my job as controlling the reading of my work but simply to present the materials and the product for the viewer’s reading.

The technical aspect of the website was, in fact, quite fun. Having had a little experience with HTML already, CSS proved to not be too difficult, and I was delighted to get the domain name workandtext.com. I expected to have some of my computer science friends come help me out, but for this project, a few online tutorials helped me get the CSS formatting down.

One of the best parts about having made this website is that friends have been able to give me really interesting feedback on my work from this angle. A friend was talking to me at dinner about my notes for the Klub, and she found them utterly pretentious and alienating. Surprisingly, I was delighted to hear this because it hits a critical point in my work: the alienation of the academic life. I also enjoyed her comment simply for the fact that she was able to really engage with what I was doing because it was presented in a format that is accessible.

I’m very happy with this project, and I’m excited to continue working on it. Other developers have come up to me suggesting certain changes to make to the layout and have told me about interesting options and features I could add to the website now that I have a basic framework. I look forward to also further developing the idea of the engagement of viewership, and hopefully one of these additions can be a comment board of some sort.