The Birth of "Another Alice"

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Abstract

"Another Alice" is an experimental fiction video story, designed solely for a new mobile media platform, M-views. The M-Views platform includes an iPaq based PDA, a GPS receiver, an 802.11b wireless card and software agents. Optimized for video, the device facilitates location-aware story making and playback. Compared to any traditional media platforms, such as TV, Cinema, and Streaming Media, M-views has two unique features: (1) it knows the viewer's location, (2) it can receive streaming video from an established 802.11b wireless network. M-views provides story creators an opportunity to construct location-aware mobile video stories. In order to trigger the stories, the viewer needs to become more actively involved either by going to the location of the next clip or activating an object.

The production of "Another Alice" explores three main ideas:

- How can a simple location-based mobile fiction story be designed and produced?

- What kinds of impact does it have on both storytelling/making and viewing?

- What are other possible forms of storytelling, which are suitable for mobile media systems, such as the M-views?

"Another Alice" is a story in which the viewer is the investigator. There are a number of characters that the viewer can follow throughout the story. The viewer must literally go to the location where the next clip takes place in order to trigger its playback. Since each character is telling the story from their perspective, each narration is different. The viewer can go back and play the story again, following a different character until the entire story is told. The most interesting part of this production which sets it apart from the standard "choose-your-own-adventure" stories is that time is a limiting factor. The viewer must get from one location to another within a certain time in order to catch one ending of the story. If the viewer does not make it to the location in time, a different ending is shown. This means that the creator initiates the story but the viewer completes it by his/her actions.

The lessons from this production are the impact of text and props. Because the video clip and the dialogue are the only things that the viewer has access to, every word becomes important. But there must still be enough text to create a rich story. Every phrase, movement, object must contain something that reveals more about the character or subtly instructs the viewer to go to the next location.

What are other possible forms of storytelling? The first approach we are taking is to invite different people to create co-existing stories in a certain location, such as the MIT campus. We would like to explore how the viewer can interact with multiple stories at the same location. What are the boundaries between one story and another story? The other approach is to create stories that allow multiple viewers to play collectively. These approaches create new opportunities and challenges, and overall enhance the fun of story making and viewing.