

The Ghost Club Storyscape: Designing for Transmedia Storytelling

Hank Blumenthal and Yan Xu

Abstract — *One of the key questions about transmedia storytelling is how to design a participant's experience across different media so that it is connected and perceived as a whole. We extract four design connectors for building such relationships from current work in media studies, production literature, and practice. These proposed design components are mythology, canon, character and genre. The goal of these connectors is to create relationships that form a whole work from stand-alone parts. To test this approach we have designed and developed a group of connected digital media expressions, The Ghost Club Storyscape, to experiment with these four ingredients on multiple media.*¹

Index Terms — Transmedia storytelling, transmedia, cross media, interactive narrative, ARG, alternate reality game, augmented reality, webisodes, narrative, franchises

I. INTRODUCTION

Transmedia storytelling as a form has become increasingly significant to owners of intellectual property because distribution through complex franchises of stories, games and environments is required not only to return an investment on substantial capital outlay but also to compete as cultural significant works of art. The challenge to traditional media by these connected elements that are delivered through a profusion of media devices with unique 'affordances'[1] has grown as they are adopted. Growing revenues encourage experiments in this emerging story content model and creators can take advantage of the new affordances of digital media like participation, multimodality, and procedurality. These new affordances of story provide artistic and economic opportunities to create a new media form that relates stories, games, and environments but also requires a new design approach that can knit these elements together.

'Storyscape,' a term created by the authors to clarify the transmedia model researched here, are a recent development in storytelling concurrent with the rapid development of new and converged media. Henry Jenkins coined the term 'transmedia storytelling' to define the sum total of connected movies, games, and other works with the goal of being seen as one complete story by its authors. The commercial works he referenced were also designed consciously to extend a story across this tapestry by the creators.[2] Since then Jenkins and other media theorists have extended the definition of these connected stories and experiences to include television series plus their connected media, games with their extended story

expressions, and many franchises developed around a core story and characters.

We use the term 'storyscape' to limit the area of inquiry to a specific model of transmedia storytelling. A storyscape is comprised of stand-alone media including movies, webisodes, and games that comprise one story. This model represents a franchise approach to transmedia storytelling. Central tenets of this transmedia storytelling approach include multimodality, user participation, and often the blurring of the difference between the real world and fictional worlds.

In this paper, we use the term storyscape to define a model of connected works across multiple media with specific affordances to engage different ways of knowing and engage participants in a unified story. This conforms to Henry Jenkins definition of transmedia storytelling in *Convergence Culture*, "A transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole. In the ideal form of transmedia storytelling, each medium does what it does best – so that the story might be introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels, and comic; its world might be explored through game play or experienced as an amusement park attraction." [2]

In the emerging discussion about what constitutes transmedia storytelling and into what forms they may develop, there are disagreements. Transmedia storytelling definitions run the gamut from the term 'transmedia storytelling' denoting any story that has an app or a website, to complicated alternate reality games spread across media, to the authorial control exercised over the vast franchises. For example, one significant television series franchise extends to augmented reality games, videogames, puzzles, and more importantly spawned fan participation in solving puzzles, suggested plot corrections, and creating encyclopedia like wikis.

Scholars of the 'Alternate Reality Game' form have included this as a form of transmedia storytelling expression because it is multimodal, participatory and often spans several media.[3] An Alternate Reality Game (ARG) involves participants in stories that are relayed across the web, mobile devices, and in reality. They often involve collaboration and puzzle solving. Despite these shared features, in the storyscape design approach an ARG would only be one element because in an ARG the individual media elements do not stand on their own as games or stories. In the one television series example the ARG was a stand-alone story set between season 2 and 3. Smaller ARGs were used to bridge the hiatus between other seasons. Thus in this storyscape the ARGs were part of the whole but not a storyscape by the definition adopted here. While the design principles elicited here should be applicable to an ARG the focus is on understanding the relationship between stand-alone elements as part of a greater whole.

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Further confusing the discussion is the now common use of the term transmedia to describe any extension or adjunct to any story, advertising, or documentary work if that addition uses some form of digital media and in particular a smart phone or tablet. That is why the research focus defines the term ‘storyscape’ to clarify the form of transmedia storytelling that is investigated as whole made up of a sum of its parts where every part is a whole and there are multiple parts. The Producer’s Guild of America has defined transmedia storytelling as having at least three media of stand-alone media excluding adaptations. The definition of storyscape follows the same logic and excludes these simpler expressions across media.

With transmedia culture being adopted by a mass audience, designers face new challenges different from designing for each of the individual media. Besides the common connectors of plot and aesthetics, one example of a new connector is using a franchise based on a narrative card game. The rules in the game were expressed in the TV series in the third person as characters interacted according to the game rules. What are the other design elements that can be leveraged as link among different media? How can you design for these connecting elements?

To explore the answers for the above questions, we propose four story connectors as design elements: *mythology*, *canon*, *characters*, and *genre*. The goal is to create an eco-system for participants to transit from one medium to another while keeping the sense of integration within the context of a larger story. The relationships between the elements of a storyscape are what make it effective and compelling and that is why the connectors are significant. It merits investigation into what those connections are and how they connect into a cognitive whole.

To experiment with these four connectors, we designed and are in the process of implementing a transmedia storyscape of stories, games, and environments to explore the relationships and connectors between media. The system is called *The Ghost Club* storyscape, in which stories develop around a team of ghost investigators and the ghosts they encounter. It is composed of a movie, webisodes, websites, a mobile augmented reality game, and flash games. This system provides a platform for us as researchers to empirically study how participants construct a story experience from a transmedia storyscape. *The Ghost Club* is a case study of applying the four design elements to connect different components of transmedia storytelling.

The goal is to contribute to the research and practice communities by providing a starting framework and vocabulary for designing a transmedia experience. This framework includes the design elements that connect individual pieces of a transmedia storyscape into one unit. By drawing from the communities of theory and practice through a structural approach, we aim to elucidate basic principles for creating a whole story greater than the sum of its parts. This whole story will have an order of complexity greater than its individual parts and therefore capable of providing a better

story model and taking greater advantage of the new affordances of digital media. Our investigation of how to weave together stories, games, and environments is targeted to building more examples of the storyscape narrative model as cultural complexity matches story complexity.

II. FOUR CONNECTORS

In this section, we discuss the meaning and usage of the four connectors that can potentially link participants’ experience across different media. These connectors have been extrapolated from academic analysis and practical methodologies that have evolved in media research and transmedia storytelling.

Mythology – Mythology in the context of transmedia storytelling defines the symbols, cultural landmarks and conflicts, as well as the natural and supernatural rules that the author introduces into the fictional universe in the stories. Myths are commonly known as ancient or traditional stories that embody a cultural perspective or worldview by dint of their religious or supernatural explanations. This is a colloquial definition that has been expanded to include contemporary stories as myths. This point of view has been expressed by Joseph Campbell [4], Karen Armstrong [5] and others. Contemporary media theorists like Geoffrey Long [6] and Henry Jenkins [2] use the term informally to describe the narrative paradigm that stories create and live within. In the practice of transmedia storytelling by producers like Jeff Gomez, the creation of a mythology surrounding the different media platforms and elements is one of the pillars of transmedia design.

Examples of our use and refinement of mythology as a design term refers to the building of the elements of the story landscape to include main abstract oppositions like *religion against science* or *love against duty*. It defines the rules of the universe and the major characters that participate in founding myths (illustrative stories that define central themes or conflicts.) Further it weaves into the worldview symbols that are significant to the structure of meaning in the story. *The Ghost Club* uses investigations by Houdini and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (two main characters) and the conflict between skeptics and believers as mythic oppositions to drive participants across media. Our storyscape mythology draws from current transmedia storytelling practice and refers to the power of contemporary and ancient myths defined by Joseph Campbell [4].

Mythology is the key to the storyscape transmedia storytelling approach because the core conflicts and ideals that are designed provide the engine for the diverse experiences across media. We acknowledge the relationship between myth and ‘storyworlds,’ a commonly used term in transmedia to define the narrative space that the media artifacts inhabit, but focus on the mythic story, and in particular the oppositions and conflicts, as described by Roland Barthes Mythologies[7] and Levi Strauss[8]. In our approach a resonant mythology like this can animate the integration of meaning across

disparate media with different affordances. More significantly this approach posits a relationship between works that is not verbal or plot oriented. This mythology would connect works without distributing clues and plot points. In media where the mythology isn't specifically invoked then symbols and other connectors invoke it to make an integrated experience.

The central mythological design paradigm draws from Levi Strauss and Campbell in identifying a binary opposition that troubles cognitive or cultural models and creates a resolution through the story's explication and synthesis.[9] In Levi Strauss this forms a binary opposition like the *Raw and the*

Canon – Canon represents the official media elements of a fictional universe based on intellectual property rights or some form of consensual agreement to an authority by fans and participating communities. Canon specifically defines the events that have occurred inside and outside of the fictional world that comprise the history of that universe. Since there are multiple elements of a storyscape it is important to have a consolidated history and cosmology to reference. Canon is often used to describe the boundaries of official elements of media franchises as a way of reconciling contradictory storylines. Lindelof and Cuse, the show runners of one of the

TABLE I
DIFFERENT MEDIA AND THEIR IMPLIMENTATION ON FOUR DIMENSIONS

	Mythology	Canon	Character	Genre
Movie: The Ghost Club	Skeptic vs. believer; Club History	Main story events	Austin, Caitlin, Jimmy, Noreen, Parnell, Tab, Ghosts, Stanley	Ghost stories, Horror, Science Fiction
Webisodes: Ghost Club Girls	Club History Skeptic vs. believer	Prequel Back story	Caitlin, Noreen, Tab	Ghost stories,
Website The Ghost Club	Skeptic vs. Believer		Roles: Psychic, Archivist Sr. Jr. Technician	
Ghostpedia	Skeptic vs. Believer		Roles: Psychic, Archivist Sr. Jr. Technician	
Website: TGC The TV Show	Skeptic vs. believer; Club History	Main story events	Austin, Caitlin, Jimmy, Noreen, Parnell, Tab, Ghosts, Stanley	Ghost stories, Horror, Science Fiction
Flash Game:	Skeptic vs. Believer			
Flash game: Ghosts R' Us	Collection evidence and devices (FLIR, EMF) Apparitions, orbs, (not blood)	No canon	Character abstractions are used as cartoons and are consistent with the feature film.	Metaphors of horror genre.
Mobile AR Game: Ghosts vs. Club	Ghosts vs. Club Scientific Methodology of the Ghost club The EMF meter The FLIR camera	No canon (acting out of canon)	Roles are used: Leader, Psychic, Tech, and Scientist. These roles are consistent with the feature film.	Horror: ghost appearances and haunting

This table represents the specific components designed across the storyscape.

Cooked that extend through early cultural mythologies.[10] In contemporary times we are not so concerned with uncooked food but themes such as *Love vs. Duty*, are often the driver of modern stories.

One TV series was partly designed to express *science vs. religion*, with many characters adopting names and postures that highlighted that conflict. The show followed this theme to the conclusion where the series partially resolved around a supernatural overtly religious conclusion that left the more scientifically inclined participants complaining loudly about unresolved mysteries.

In our design approach we find mythology expressed through primary binary oppositions, stories that are referenced or told within the narrative that are symbolic parallels to the meaning of the story, and symbols that contain these meanings as a form of mythological visual code.

first television series to explore these connected works, often explicitly labeled some transmedia stories- webisodes, ARGs, and games- as canonical or non-canonical.

In our approach canon defines the boundaries of the storyscape and all that has occurred within those boundaries. Some of our work falls within *The Ghost Club* canon and some is determined to be outside. The table above represents this. The canon represents the history of the story world as written by the approved authors and also any canonical texts that are part of the storyscape. Because storyscapes extend beyond the media into the community there are non-canonical stories and communities that are not authorial design elements. The history of *The Ghost Club* goes back 160 years and include four main incarnations, characters and story threads including Gaslight/ Dickens, Diesel/ Houdini/ Doyle, WWII, and Contemporary/Reality TV.

The design of *The Ghost Club* was codified in a “bible” that documents all the background stories and events that take place in each element. The bible is a master document that explicates all aspects of the storyscape including any and all documentation related to characters, history and canon, mythology and symbols. This can include biographical sketches, designs, real and artificial histories, maps and anything else that is relevant. Creating a bible is a common practice among transmedia producers and writers. It evolved from the “series bible” which articulated some of the same concerns related to episodic television – character, back-story, setting, and story arcs. As the story bible evolved to chart out long arc serial science fiction stories it took on a form close to the evolving model of transmedia bibles where the story canon was mapped out in addition to the mythological and physical aspects of the world as well as the normal character bios and background.

Jenkins and other media theorists have written about Canon, Fanon, and what exists outside canon like fan fiction [11] Canon becomes a key aspect of transmedia storytelling because of the participation of the users in creating their own related stories and experiences. The canon connector is to reaffirm links to the canonical artifacts in the storyscape to maintain consistency across the fictional universe. The body of canon maps to the storyscape as the boundaries of a single unified story.

Character – Character refers to the “person” in the stories and the way that character has been a dramatic organizing force in stories and games. In our approach we recognize character as a major connector across media. Character as transmedia design element extends in three directions. There are embodied characters that are expressed as actors, abstract characters that represent the spirit of the character but not the specifics in look or history, and the archetypal character that represents the basic features of that social archetype.

Our three approaches to character – embodied, abstract, and archetypal are ways to represent a connection between different media. Some media, like games, deal with embodied characters with some difficulty. It is hard to fully represent a named flesh and blood actor in games because of logistic reasons that include the difficulty in recreating an actor’s voice or likeness and cost of licensing. Also a game may require a more abstract representation of a character in order to more easily create a first person experience. In any case the best connector of character is using the same embodied character across elements. In *The Ghost Club* storyscape some of the same characters are present in the movie and webisodes.

Abstract characters are another way to intrinsically reference a central story. In this case games can use characters that are loose abstractions based on embodied characters like the way the one video game based on a television show had characters that looked like actors from the show but were abstracted and unnamed. Roles are another abstraction that can connect distinct media. In *The Ghost Club* storyscape augmented reality game, you adopt a role coequal with characters from the movie and the mythology: Jr. or Sr. Technician, Psychic, or Archivist.

Archetypal characters represent the most fundamental aspects like hero, villain, healer, mystic, and scholar that correspond to the larger story schema represented in the storyscape and transmedia bible. If a story revolves around a conflict between science and religion then a priest and a scientist may connect the elements across media in a way to allow the user to perceive the combined participatory elements.

Genre – The genre theory we reference was developed in cinema studies to help define the rules and expectations of categories of movies. The film approach is a refinement of literary and other genre approaches to define and categorize similar elements across stories. In our conception, exactly like film genre studies, these genres create a series of explicit expectations and rules that can be merged with other genres or subverted but still exist as a skeleton of narrative and game expectation that enhance connectivity through consistency across media. As in film studies genres act as container to define a construct of meaning within stories and define what is legitimate. This approach to genre is the same as contemporary media theories approach to genre. An example would include the study of Science Fiction in film[12] where genre rules set up expectation, structure, and define bounds of believability.

The importance of genre is that it brings a pre-existing model of the world and expectations of what is allowed into contact with the mythology of the world to create a more complete and therefore more connected and immersive world. The genre is the macro worldview that suffuses a storyscape and allows immersion to come from any part through meaningful context. Breaking the genre, like breaking the mythology, in different story/game elements undermines the connection and wholeness.

Summary - These four connectors – *mythology, character, canon, and genre* - provide an infrastructure or skeleton to connect the different affordances provided by stand alone media stories that are part of the storyscape. These connectors allow participants to project stories onto non-story media and embodied environments onto third person media experiences. The effectiveness of these connectors correlates with the perception of the work as a whole. This structural design approach works because the core meta-story, the storyscape, radiates out from these connectors to the different media and their affordances.

This contrasts other design approaches such as designing for negative narrative space. Geoffrey Long talks about designing for negative space by leaving story gaps to fill in and places that are unexplored in one work can be explored in another.[6] In the storyscape approach, the negative space is a natural byproduct of the design process and not a primary design goal. Extending and elaborating a story by hinging negative space to connect other media expressions is a peripheral connector whereas this design approach focuses on the engine of the connected story, the primary conflicts and elements that unite a story across media.

III. DESIGNING THE GHOST CLUB

In the storyscape of *The Ghost Club*, we crafted a mythology with central conflicts like skeptic and believer, a history of great events like the investigations of Harry Houdini and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and the rules of the universe. We constructed roles and characters that could translate as abstractions across media. We developed a canon of events that took place beyond the stories and media but was explicitly expressed in certain works like the movie. Finally we situated ourselves within genre conventions to frame connections across media with consistency of expectations.

In our design work we have planned movies, webisodes, Twitter-novels, Twitter characters, a Ghostpedia, connecting websites and a smartphone augmented reality game. What we discuss below is the work that has already been created to test our design approaches. Work is in different stages of completion but everything listed below has at least a working demo.

Much of the design process was drawn from the individual media fields but the overall design of the storyscape was planned in advance to take advantage of the four connectors to create stand-alone elements that explicitly or implicitly referenced one another. Within the design process of each individual component the team brainstormed how to best connect and express the central mythology and other connectors while simultaneously looking for a design that maximized the most effective model of that platform. We were looking for not only plot connections and visual brand expressions that would normally be part of an additive extension of a franchise but also ways to extend the mythology and all levels of character while serving canon exposition and genre parameters.

Once the connecting design elements were described for each platform they were recorded as part of our documentation and constantly reexamined to determine maximum confluence. This implementation was considered down to the procedural bias of the code as a storytelling medium.

Other theoretical approaches to transmedia storytelling place different emphasis on the type of connections and the completeness of the individual works. Since this approach explores the connection between stand-alone works we have put aside the ARG approach of ubiquitous games as insufficient to test our connections against more discrete media. Further Christy Dena's approach to transmedia storytelling focuses on the term *distinct media* to "encompass a variety of media beyond the traditional notions of television, cinema, books, and so on; and to likewise differentiate these practices from multimedia within a media platform." [3] This differentiates it from the research of structural connectors used in a unified design process. Henry Jenkins often references the plot or extended story of a transmedia story and while *The Ghost Club* designs follow Jenkins's definitions closely part of the goal is to define relationships that are intangible and connect affordances and media that seems unconnected. Representing a further remove, some critics like Brian Clark refer to transmedia storytelling as simply "additive" by providing adjuncts to central texts and not being a new model or whole and occupying a transitional place in the evolution of an interactive storytelling model.

A. Movie: *The Ghost Club*

The first movie in *The Ghost Club* Storyscape is *The Ghost Club: Spirits Never Die* about a team from *The Ghost Club* that investigates ghosts on a (fictional) reality television show. After returning to the investigation they get more than they bargained for and are confronted by ghosts. The movie is in postproduction with expected completion in 2012. The advantage of doing a feature film is that it helps elaborate a large set of mythology, canon, genre, and character that follows previous transmedia practice.

The movie articulates many of the aspects of the storyscape connectors. The mythology of skeptic vs. believer is elaborated, referred to and acted out. Symbols and main themes are introduced. The embodied characters are introduced with roles that we would abstract in other media. Canon is included through the exposition though only so much of the storyscape canon can be touched on in the movie. The movie also defines a large body of canon through action and serves as a canonical reference for the other works. Further it situates itself within two explicit genres the science fiction/horror genre and overlapping subset of the ghost hunting reality television show.



Figure 1. In this scene actors are seen having embodied encounters that can be duplicated in other embodied media.

B. Webisodes, *The Ghost Club Girls*

The first webisodes are a prequel web series that follows the three principle female characters of *The Ghost Club* starting a year before the movie. In the sequence of three webisodes comprising *Interviewing a Psychic*, two women from the movie meet the third team member for the first time under odd circumstances.

The webisodes are coequal with the movie in that they share the same mythology, canon, genre and some characters. The webisodes extend the approved canon through the literal extension of the movie's story thread. It gives additional information that may enrich the movie experience. The webisodes were intended to be seen in advance of the movie and introduce the female characters. It is the first, or origin story, in which we meet Caitlin the psychic lynchpin role of the movie. Another canonical plot complexity is introduced as we hint that one character may have another agenda or is about to betray the team by exposing them as frauds. In the webisodes clear correlations between connectors and causality were designed into the story.

C. Mobile AR game *Ghost vs. Club*²

The goal of the augmented reality (AR) game *Ghost vs. Club* is to allow participants to enact the narrative paths that are outlined in other fictional and game narratives. Participants can take on the roles of *The Ghost Club* and use their own mobile phones to investigate an augmented reality world that blends physical space that we live in with digital ghosts.

The characters designed for mobile AR game are the roles in the team, including leader, psychic, tech, and scientist, which are consistent with the feature film.

The AR game is about implementing a physical reenactment of iconic events that occur in the movie and historical ghost club investigations. It draws on roles and asks for participants to connect with devices related to their roles. The Psychic interface, chosen at the beginning of the game, will have a *B-Chan*, an invented psychic sensing device that illustrates the mythology, while a technician will have a variation on FLIR meter, a real thermal imaging meter, that allows them to cycle through color filters to reveal virtual ghosts. The participants form ghost-exploring teams, hopefully outfitted in Ghost-Punk clothing to reflect the brand aesthetic, and proceed to locate ghosts. Proceeding from one haunted location to another using GPS co-ordinates with the tools described in the mythology and canon they attempt to capture evidence and hear a story of how these ghosts ended their lives. Certain genre qualities like spooky places and surprising jump scares further connect this experience. It should be noted that these genre qualities and rules have been documented in the mythology to encourage immersion as a whole system. For example, vampires are out of place in ghost stories unless the mythology has taken account for how their histories and supernatural interactions complement the story model.



Figure 2. Design of the wireframe for the mobile AR game. (Top). Choosing the role in the game. (Bottom). The screenshot shows hunting the ghost in the wild. It uses real-time video taken from the camera as the background.

D. Flash games: *TGC I* and *TGC II*

Two versions of a flash game were developed. Addressing the four connectors the design focused on finding ways to integrate the four connectors into the experience of a genre of goal directed games. The narrative lived outside the games, but was referenced through our design.

There were two games developed into a demo mode. The first game, *TGC I*, involved teams of Ghost explorers investigating game levels of a haunted house. They were searching for the tools and devices used throughout the ecosystem and defined in the canon of *The Ghost Club*. The player acts as a ghost throwing cold spots, hot spots, and orbs (part of our mythology) at the ghost explorers, exhausting their “health”, and stopping them from collecting devices that help the investigation. These devices included real tools like an EMF reader and a FLIR heat camera but also included our made up devices like the B-Chan that measures psychic ghost emanations. These devices were represented as abstractions and the goal of the ghost explorers is to collect the devices and use them to get “evidence” of the ghosts and win the game. In addition to providing mimetic experiences that echoed the narrative actions in the stories key symbols and indirect mythology are consistently evoked. Ghost explorer design echoes the archetypal physical characteristics of characters in the movie and the mythology of the haunted house is clearly invoked. The *TGC I* flash game gives users the ability to place themselves in opposition to the Ghost Club and use the affordances of the level and health based game genre to engage the core story elements expressed through the four connectors.

The second flash game demo (*TGC II*) was based on an investigation model flash game where characters go through static rooms and ask questions of characters to solve a mystery. This echoes the mythology of *the Ghost Club* that hinges on discovery of why a place is haunted, how it ties in with objects, and discovering evidence. The mythology of the Ghost Club is connected to the game by exploring an archetypal mansion that is set during the Ghost Club Diesel era. This is to explicitly connect to Sir Conan Doyle and Houdini who act as archetypes of the skeptic and believer



Figure 3. The interface of the flash game *TGC II*

E. Websites: *Ghostpedia The Ghost Club, TGC on TV*

The websites for the Ghost Club storyscape represent examples meant to encourage user participation and take the fictional aspects of the storyscape and connect it to a non-canonical user model.

² The Ghost vs. Club mobile AR game currently runs on a Smartphone. It was built on Argon, an augmented reality browser.

TGC on TV is a website that is a version of what the fictional TV show's website would look like. It has direct feeds from the actor's twitter feeds, updates from the fictional show, fake episode guides, and other canonical links such as the webisodes and TV show clips (from the movie.)

The Ghost Club website is about ghost explorers meeting in the real world to do investigations as groups and posting the evidence they collected. It allows individual and group pages as well as posting of evidence. Integration with the popular social networking means is pending, which may support the online community for enthusiastic participants.

Ghostpedia is meant to contain all non-fictional ghost information about haunted places, evidence collected by the club, and general ghost related supernatural information. It is a resource that intends to overlap the interests of the participants with the storyscape to engage the users.

IV. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

This paper introduces a transmedia storyscape system, *The Ghost Club* that is composed of a movie, webisodes, a web-based flash game, and a mobile augmented reality game. The goal of the design for this system is to create a holistic participant experience across multiple media. The sub-systems are designed with four connectors – *mythology, canon, characters, and genre*. While we are still developing these systems, we plan to study the transmedia experience using empirical methods to further understand the effects of the four connectors.

During the spring of 2011 there was informal user feedback from a demo of the elements we had built including a movie teaser, the AR demo *Ghost vs. Club*, the *Ghost Club Girls* webisodes, and the flash game *TGC 1*. Because the audiences were familiar with other transmedia franchises there was acceptance to seeing a group of collected works that referenced each other through unique modalities. The trailer evoked key elements of the genre and participants who identified with the genre spent time testing all the demos and other media. The AR demo touched on the blurring boundary of reality and fiction by allowing users to discover local ghosts and take their pictures with them. Overall the participants perceived multiple media as a connected whole. But more structured research is required to determine how meaning is shared between platforms.

Since that point the three websites have been taken to a beta trial, the movie is nearing completion, and the AR team is involved with a more extensive reenactment of the narrative experience expected to be demonstrated in late 2012.

For the future work, we plan to conduct empirical studies that collect feedback from the participants. The studies are to understand participants' subjective experience, how they make sense of different components of a storyscape, and how they connect these components together. Through the user studies, we will be able to reflect on the four connectors for transmedia stories (mythology, canon, character, and genres). The

findings will not only contribute to answering the question of how transmedia storytelling stories work and best design practices, but also broaden our understandings about cross-media, emergent user experience.

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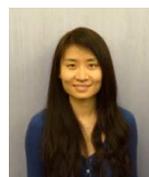
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BIOGRAPHIES



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Yan Xu is a PhD candidate in the interactive computing school in Georgia Institute of Technology. She designs and evaluates novel gameplay experience by drawing methods and theories from multiple domains, including human computer interaction, sociology, and game research.