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Final Paper

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Digital Humanities

Literature Based Smartphone Apps

The use of literature based smartphone and tablet applications (apps) is a subject I believe to be not fully recognized in digital humanities. It is certainly a field of digital humanities, but I believe that it is a less known and studied subject. There are so many wonderful uses for these apps. There are the basic apps for texting and browsing the web, and then there are advanced apps for software development and everything in between. The main focus I have is on the use of literature based apps and how beneficial they are.

Digital Humanities is a quickly growing field, and there are so many topics that can be considered digital humanities. We have covered many topics in this course, but one we never talked about much was smartphone applications. We briefly discussed in class about interactive books that use the GPS location of the device. Taking stories, and making them into an app can take the stories taken to entirely different levels. The reader can experience sound, videos, colors, and more all at once. What traditional paper books have you read where sounds and videos played from the book? I believe it is safe to say that does not exist.

The stories involved with these apps can really bring the reader into the story. In a lot of these apps, the reader controls the story. When the character in the story needs to make a decision, the reader can actually choose what happens next. This is fascinating! For hundreds of years, authors wrote a book and controlled exactly what the person was reading. But now, there is so much more. No more black and white text for 500 pages. Instead, colorful pages of text with pictures and animations, the reader can actually see what is happening. Based on

research, there are two main types of literature apps, there is traditional literature converted to digital text and literature created specifically for smartphone apps. With the emergence of these apps, people who don't usually read are exploring these new options that make reading more fun and enjoyable.

I have personally used the app called "LifeLine", which is one of the top paid apps on Apple's Appstore. This is an example of literature created specifically for apps. It is a genius plot and story. The author gives the reader all the power in the world to control the story. The reader can choose almost everything the character does in the story. This is a feature only



available through electronic literature. The reader controls everything. Can a reader do that with a traditional book? No.

Another aspect of this story is that it is only available via app download. It is not a print book, and it is not available on a website. The plot of the story is that an

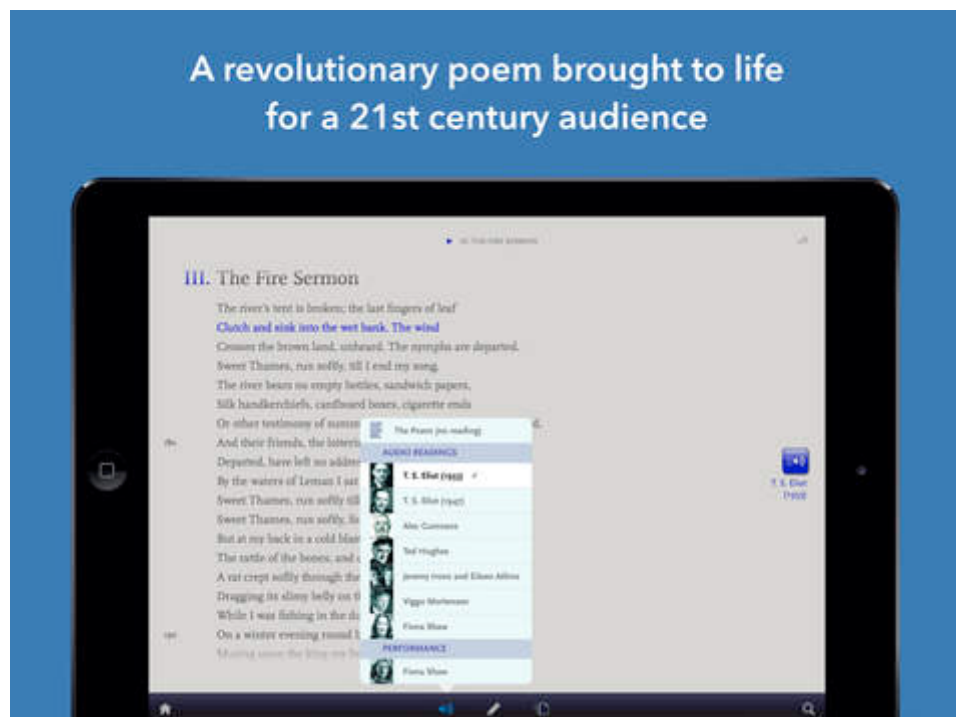
astronaut, whose name is Taylor, reaches

out to you from a different planet. He is stranded and he constantly asks you for advice on what to do next. It is almost as if the reader is texting back and forth with Taylor. Now, in the story some decisions seem simple and require no thought, while others require you to think. In the end, you control the fate of Taylor. Some decisions may seem pointless at the time, but later on in the story that decision made can be crucial to the outcome.

What is even more amazing about the app is that it cannot be finished in one sitting. I have talked to multiple people who have finished novels in one day or even in one sitting. Lifeline does not let that happen. The game will make you pause for a few hours when Taylor is

“busy”. The app is designed so that story can only be completed over a time period of a few days. You interact with the character in real time. A traditional printed book simply cannot make a person wait to read more; it is completely up to the reader. This adds suspense to the story, the reader is eager to get on with the next chapter, but then all of a sudden you cannot continue for two more hours. I truly believe that this is something that should be studied more. Apps like “Lifeline” take reading books to a whole new level. Here is a link to a video of actual footage from the app, [Lifeline - iOS Game Review](#), which shows exactly how interactive storytelling apps can be. Readers like to be sucked into the story and feel like they are part of the actual story itself. With the new type of electronic literature, the reader is put right in the main plot of the story. He or she can control the outcome or at least have some influence on it. This is awesome, it makes the story much more interesting. It is a whole new look on storytelling that soon will be a big topic among smartphone users.

An example of traditional literature converted to digital text is an app created from the poem “The Waste Land.” In the article, [iPad Apps Take Old Literature To New Levels](#), Melissa Bell talks about how in 12th grade she has to read “The Waste Land.” She was never able to understand the story until it came out as an iPad app. All the original text is left intact, but there are elements added to the story. When you come to a part that may be confusing,



there are links that the reader can click that opens to a new window where the reader then can go more in depth on the part of the story and fully understand it. T.S. Eliot originally wrote the poem, and Max Whitby designed the app. The author of the poem is still the original, but the app is just an “enhanced” version of the poem that allows readers more insight on the story. This is truly an innovative way for a person to experience a piece of literature. By doing this, the reader can actually interpret the story the way it was meant to be. It could not be achieved easily without the use of apps. Melissa talks about a specific example in the poem. She explains that there is a part in the story where it breaks into German song and that she has no idea what it means. Melissa states how she never was able to finish or understand the story because of this. But the app helps, when she gets to that point in the story now, she can click on a little window that explains what the song means. She now understands what that part meant and she can finally finish and understand the poem.

Some may argue that these apps are simply games and are not considered literature, but I disagree. These apps can grasp the reader’s attention and keep it. Some say that these aren’t books or literature because they are fun and that you “play” them not read. This could not be more inaccurate. Books are supposed to be fun. They are supposed to grasp the reader and take them on a roller coaster ride keeping them guessing what is going to happen next. That is exactly what these apps do. Along with having fun and enjoying the story, the reader can be learning and improving their knowledge and reading skills.

There is a very beneficial effect to downloading and interacting with literature based apps. There is an effect where the reader can be learning and not even be aware of it. Literature based apps are designed to be fun and interactive. The authors and designers want the reader to be having fun with the stories. Who can really take credit for the app, the person who actually wrote the text or the person who designed and wrote the code? The answer is

both. Every literature based app that I have looked into has listed both the author and designer. It is a collaborative effort, which makes this even more of an effort to create. Unless the author knows code, it would be difficult for him or her to design and write the code for an app. Yes there are some authors that can do both and I give them credit, they have some very unique skills to do this. Technology is a very useful learning tool. It gives a person access to more resources to learn and find out information quickly.

There are two main types of literature based apps that exist in the world. Traditional literature converted to digital text and then literature designed specifically for apps. Both of these types are greatly helpful learning tools. They are excellent and new ways of storytelling that takes books to a whole new level. I believe that these apps will soon be on top of the charts of app downloads. A lot of people who find reading boring are exploring these new options as more fun ways to read and comprehend. They combine literature with games and make a whole new interactive way of storytelling become available. Literature based apps are a whole new category of apps that are becoming very beneficial ways of expanding storytelling.

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