

THE ONLINE GALLERY OF PUBLIC INTERACTIVES:



DIGITAL ARCHIVING AS DOING AND PRESENTING RESEARCH

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Abstract

Throughout the known history of humanity many efforts have focused on the means to design technologies that improve lives while articulating the human condition. Inherent in that condition is the desire for the ability to communicate more closely with one another. In doing so, amongst many innovations across technology and culture, we have formed systems of communication, as well as the means to disseminate, translate, and fashion them into concrete forms situated in our world.

A productive lens through which to view these concurrent cultural technological developments is via research in Public Interactives. Balsamo describes this emergent communications phenomenon as a means to identify the broad category of interactive technologies for communication with a range of audiences in public space. While investigating Public Interactives, one may observe and consider the complex nature of digital mediation, what constitutes the public and their agency or agencies, as well as what constitutes an interaction. We can begin to ask these questions with the understanding of the continued proliferation and ubiquity of communications technologies and computation, modes and modalities of interaction, coupled with trends towards heightened urbanization.

Continuing the efforts of my master's thesis carried out at The New School, developing an archive as doing and presenting research enables a deeper

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walkthrough on prior research. In doing so I may investigate questions surrounding defining and bounding what a Public Interactive is, how to find them, and how to archive them. This may lead to bigger questions such as how to detect and study emerging forms of communication. Inspired by Mattern's investigations of interfaces to archives, I aspire to present an archive that allows visitors to view the complexity of my system of examples, while helping to orient themselves within the grand scheme of the collection. Mattern discusses the virtues of seamless interfaces that do not too thoroughly conceal all the complexity that lies beneath, where visitors retain more agency, critical faculties, and the ability to see the interface for what it is, an embodiment of epistemology, ontology, and ideology. She notes that digital collections represent multiple modalities, the documented objects come in a myriad of formats, that visitors research and learn through their multisensory bodies and multiple intelligences.

I'm hoping to build an archive that allows for the presentation of, and interface with, the richness that Public Interactives represent as diverse forms of experiences that require diverse forms of documentation. My research work has already amassed a huge corpus of text, URLs, and images towards the creation of the Online Gallery of Public Interactives. I have begun preliminary experiments with URL extraction, text extraction, and text classification with machine learning. I will continue to develop these tools as well as experiment with presenting the archive utilizing Collective Access. My goal is to construct better tools to assist in researching what are Public Interactives, as well as how to go about designing them. Ultimately, The Online Gallery of Public Interactives aims to serve as a useful resource for conducting and presenting research.