

Heritage Inquiries: A Designerly Approach to Human Values

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ABSTRACT

This two-day workshop brings together the interdisciplinary community of scholars and practitioners involved in the design of interactive systems and sharing a common interest in heritage matters. The workshop addresses heritage as a unique domain for the exploration of novel design inquiries into how we come together through separate understandings and attachments to artifacts, places, and events of the past as well as of the present. The aim of the workshop is to explore how design research in the heritage domain can contribute to human-centered interaction design, with a particular focus on issues of everyday engagement.

Keywords

Cultural heritage, everyday engagement, human values, interaction design, design inquiry

INTRODUCTION

The role of emerging technologies in the preservation of the things we value is increasingly at the forefront of people's concerns. As designers of interactive systems, we are asked to better understand what people do and do not value. At the core is the question: what does it mean to be human? This understanding is central to how we design for a changing world [6]. Heritage matters represent a unique domain to explore fundamental human values, including remembering, being a community, and coming

together as a society through separate understandings and attachments to artifacts, places and events. Such an exploration bears extraordinary opportunities for the future design of interactive systems of social and cultural significance, and opens up design inquiries that go beyond traditional museological concerns and interaction design issues, contributing to basic research in human-centered design.

UNDERSTANDING HERITAGE

The notion of heritage rests on extremely varied value systems, from the values of one individual to those of a community. Because these value systems are constantly in evolution, it is normal that the notion of heritage is also constantly in evolution [8]. This workshop understands heritage as the fabric of material objects and human activities through which knowledge and memories come to matter into the present. This understanding assumes that heritage experience entails a cultural, meaning-making process that actively engages us in multiple acts of remembrance, interpretation, and communication. From this perspective, the workshop sees museums and heritage practices as concerned with (re)articulating—within different spaces and temporalities—the physical and social settings that shape and define our sense of belonging, identity and culture. In doing so, museums and heritage practices increasingly deal with issues of embodied and emotional engagement, aesthetic experience, community participation, and issues of appropriation and sustainability [2, 4, 9].

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DESIGN INQUIRIES INTO HERITAGE MATTERS

In interaction design, the interest in museums and heritage matters has recently started to emerge with the bulk of this work revolving around enriching visitor experiences of curated museum objects in the context of exhibit design [1, 3]. Envisioning the museum or heritage site as places of interaction between people and artefacts have guided the design of engaging experiences and interpretive exchanges. More recently, attention is shifting also to emerging issues such as the social production of heritage and the construction of mediated memories through multiple and ubiquitous technologies, with a concern on how to sustain the dialectical, often impalpable relations between people and their everyday settings [5, 7].

CRITICAL ISSUES FOR INTERACTION DESIGN

Design inquiries into heritage matters are necessarily aesthetic and transformative. They expand our understanding of the embodied and emotional engagements, motivations, and values underpinning long-term social and cultural processes. This workshop is concerned in particular with how individual and community encounters with heritage are formed through a sustained yet day-to-day engagement with the materiality of the heritage object (be it a tangible artifact, a digitally-born content, a physical site, or an historical event) as well as with people's environmental settings.

OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The workshop aims to serve as a forum to discuss the theoretical implications of design inquiries in the heritage domain, and it addresses in particular the following questions:

- How can designers inquire into people's everyday engagement in heritage matters?
- How can interactive technology support and promote the motivation and values sustaining everyday engagement in heritage matters?
- What characterizes an authentic heritage experience, and how can we design for it?
- How can interaction design support the social system of experiences and interpretations that makes heritage meaning evolve over time?

- What structures of conversation can we put in place to foster the dialectical, always situated relation between people and heritage?
- How can a designerly approach to heritage matters contribute to the design of systems of social and cultural significance in general?

SCOPE

Topics covered by the workshop may include open museums, participatory content, grassroots heritage, location-based experiences, aesthetic experience, community-based heritage, affective geographies, mediated memories, emerging curatorial practices, cultural sustainability.

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