Visual Literacies: From Print to Screen

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Picturing the UP – The Game

Picturing the UP is a quest-based iPhone/iPad educational game created in the ARIS learning environment platform. The game situates contemporary digital photography in relation to historic archival research, as well as mobile technologies. In this game, players visit historical locations in the Upper Keweenaw Peninsula in order to learn more about their histories and to compare the past and present. More specifically, players first encounter a historical photograph of the location, and then meet a location guide that provides historical background. Next, they access a contemporary photograph of the location and receive a secret prize.

The game was created in a Fundamentals of Digital Imaging class as a pedagogical tool for understanding digital photography and digital imaging in a larger historical as well as technological contexts. The students in the class conducted three photo-shoots, created mobile images in Photoshop, conducted historical research and prepared the historical narratives for the game. I organized their visual and textual data into narrative quests using the ARIS Platform.
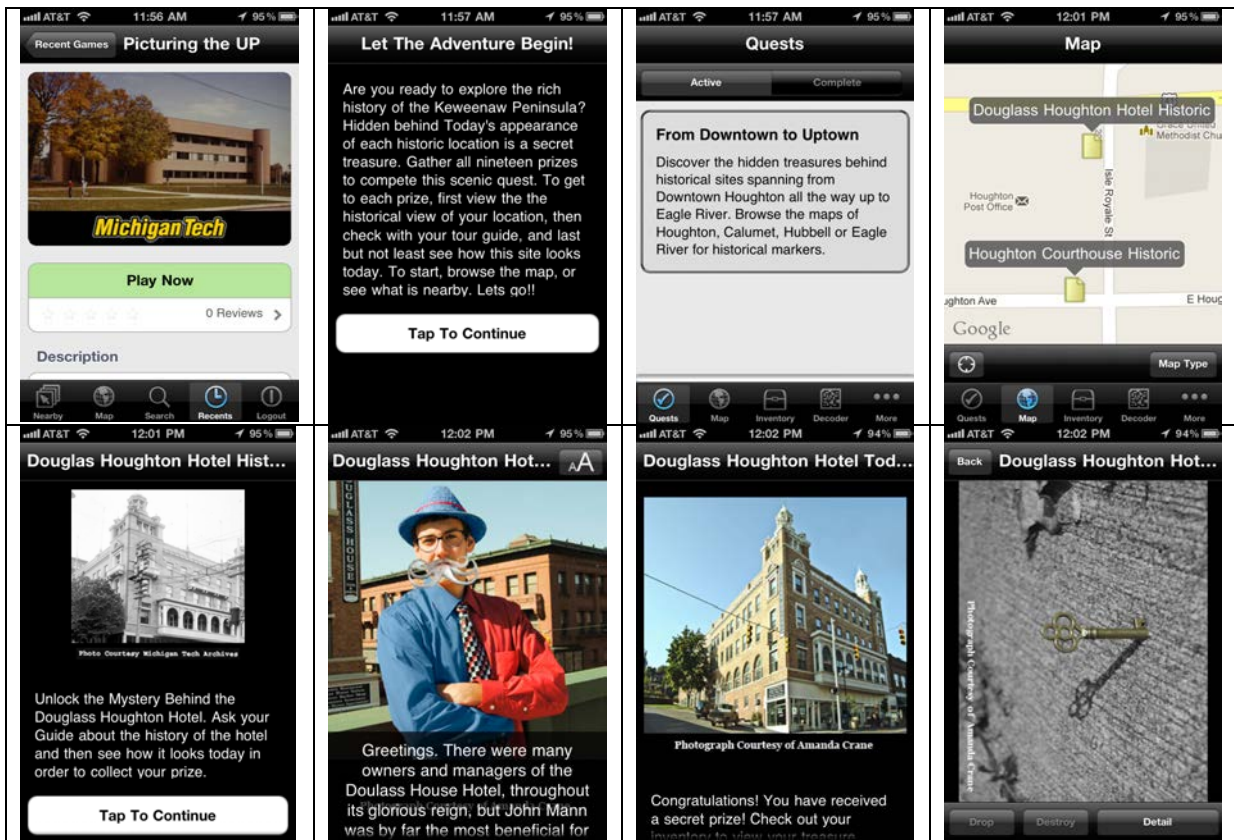

Figure 1: Screenshots from the game.

Engaging New and Old Technologies

As every year new visual technologies enter our society, it is important to provide media students with analytical frameworks that allow for comparative media analysis, connecting "new", "current" and "obsolete" media. Digital camera photography thus should be situated in the larger historical trajectory of analog photography as well as in the emergent field of cell-phone photography. The emphasis on the importance of history in understanding contemporary technology is further underscored when the subject photographed is also situated within a larger historical archive. Thus engaging with archival prints offers insight both into the development of the photographic technology itself but also of the cultural and socio-historical contexts. Adapting digital photographs for mobile games on the other

hand, opens up questions about the storytelling powers of visual technologies, as games provide "means for producing new forms of narrative" (Gordon, 2011: 6).

The *Picturing the UP* game engages with two major strands of digital media, namely locative arts and historical games. As a locative media game, *Picturing the UP* engages the notions of mobility and mobilization as synchronous as well as anachronous experience as it builds upon "the exploratory movements of locative art [that] are located between the art of communications
and networking and the arts of landscape, walking and the environment" (Hemmet, 2006, p.348). As a history-driven game, it provides an opportunity for both the authors and the players of the game to engage with an augmented view of reality, where history acts as a supplement to the contemporary physical presence. As a history-based game, it also allows both parties to enter the historical research process and become visitors, photographers, gamers, and most importantly, historians. (Kee, Graham, et. al., 2009)

To sum up, the game attempts to provide a critical pedagogical model (Crocco, 2011) for teaching digital photography through engagement with older and newer forms of technology, historical archives, storytelling, and locative media in a mobile learning environment.

References
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