Panoptes

Overview

Panoptes is a digital exhibition-catalogue system which allows visitors to browse its content and dwell on details of images, read accompanying texts and follow threads of information. Panoptes builds upon the concepts of playful and aesthetic interaction combining functionality with playfulness and serendipity, thus offering an alternative to information kiosks used for browsing item collections.

Target Domains

The system can be used in any cultural heritage or commercial context.

Panoptes: A visitor blows at the windmill to set the system in motion

Exploring the main screen content

Using the small screen to navigate content

Magnifying a selection

Defining an area by finger drawing
Description

The system comprises two framed touch screens, a webcam, a light sensor and a custom windmill sensor. The larger screen presents a high resolution photo of the currently selected artifact/image. The smaller one presents information about the image on the large screen and also includes some soft buttons. The large screen supports two types of interaction:

**Hotspots**: Each image can include any number of hotspots. If the user touches one of them, the corresponding area is highlighted and a word balloon pops-up with related information. If the user touches any part of the image that does not include a hotspot, then all the available hotspots are highlighted in order to provide feedback about their position.

**Magnification**: If the user drags her/his finger on the image, she/he starts drawing a colored line with which she/he can circle an area of interest. When the user moves the finger off the screen surface, the selected area is magnified. The user can subsequently iteratively zoom into the selected area.

A visitor can browse all the available artifacts by blowing at the windmill (or just rotating it by hand). The windmill’s speed affects the browsing speed but also triggers alternative music pieces originating from old music boxes.

The smaller screen comprises a framed photo of the current artifact, visually linking its contents with those of the larger screen, brief information that depends on the artifact type, a descriptive title and a short text. The screen also offers buttons for browsing/navigating through the collection of artifacts, accessing a gallery of all artifacts through which the user can select one for viewing, and language selection. Above the screens there is a camera and on top of the wall a light sensor. The function of this sensor is to detect flash photography. In such a case, the web camera is used to take a photo of the visitor photographing the exhibit. This was initially meant to be just a fun “hidden” feature, but, eventually, as in situ observations have revealed, it became a very engaging interactive characteristic.

Additional Information

Panoptes has been installed at the Museum of Natural History in Heraklion, Crete, and the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki, as part of “Macedonia: From fragments to pixels” exhibition (www.makedonopixels.org).

Related video: http://youtu.be/f22YTBqCtkw

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