

Textable Movie: improvising with a personal movie database

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Abstract

This sketch presents a new approach to improvising movies according to the inter-relationship between personal videos and the story of an experience. *Textable Movie* is a graphical interface that invites a storyteller of any age to compose and visualize movies, images and sound environments while writing a story; the system self-selects and self-edits movies in real time based on textual input from the teller. *Textable Movie* aims to exalt the imagination of its authors (writer, and film-maker) by immersing them in real time, in a co-constructed narration.

1 Introduction

When Marcel Proust writes about having tea and cookies, he is inspired by having the experience himself, which brings back memories to his mind. This is well known as the "Madeleine of Proust" phenomenon [Proust, 1913]. With *Textable Movie*, we would like to recreate this same phenomenon, by presenting instantly to the users, videos from their own footage. By immersion into their own memories, they could become engaged into telling rich, and passionate stories, based on past experience. It is inspired by a previous work that annotates images in order to retrieve them within a specific context [Lieberman, and Liu, 2002] and it extends the concept to the making of movies with a number of automatic functions. Video editing tools usually provide the user with many parametric functions for creating movies, but do so with a certain constraint on spontaneity. With *Textable Movie*, the videos could stimulate the author's imagination while the experience is recalled. Even though no empirical data has been collected at this time, we could hypothesize that pictures may lead the fantasy of the user during this improvisation.

2 Description

Textable Movie retrieves movie segments and sounds in a specified database, from analyzing textual input. It loads and plays them in real time while the story is being typed. Consequently, a novel movie gets created and generated in a very transparent, and easy manner. The simplicity of use, and immediate response could help focusing on the storytelling, rather than on the concern of technical editing. The system can easily be connected to any personal movie database, and simply requires a text file with a series of descriptive keywords for each clip. For example, the following short keyword sequence [forest.mov, forest nature tree wood leaves Yosemite;] could describe a personal 10-second video clip of the Yosemite park forest, called "forest.mov". The personal labeling is important as it allows the user to give the medium his/her own meaning. The current version also features a series of simple commands, which add instant manipulations of the movie being played.

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These commands are typed directly in the text, and include: [closeup] to zoom in the frame, [faster] and [slower] to change the speed rate, [loop] and [palindrome] to loop in a normal or palindrome fashion, and [spring], [summer], [fall], and [winter], to alter the overall coloration of the image. By deleting the command, the effect disappears (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Examples of interactions with Textable Movie

3 Discussion and Future work

Textable Movie has been presented to, and experimented by, many tellers at an open house of the Media Lab Europe in Dublin, and has engaged them in various tales, although using the same footage. The direct, and instant relationship between text and movie seems to be quite effective, surprising, aesthetic, inspiring, and fun.

The core engine of *Textable Movie* has already been used in other applications, e.g., a system that retrieves, and displays images, from analyzing text messages sent by cellular phone. In its future version, based on the online intercultural training research [Asakawa, et al, to appear], our system will be networked, and used as a multimedia tool to reflect onto someone else's culture. The communities (currently, adolescents from Dublin, Boston, and Sao Paulo) will share their movies, and will learn about the other's own perception of their environment.

References

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