
Go Queer

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This poster presents the work completed to date on *Go Queer*, a ludic, locative media experiment and experience that occurs on location, in the city, on the playful border between game and story, the present and the past, the queer and the straight, the normative and the *slant*. The app takes the city of Edmonton's queer history as its text, and produces a locative, spatialized narrative of that history by displaying text, images, video and audio in place at the actual locations where they occurred, thus creating what Richardson and Hjorth (2014, 256) and call "the hybrid experience of place and presence." The app invites its users to drift queerly through the city, discovering the hidden histories that always surround us, yet somehow remain just beyond our apprehension. The app compiles these traces into a media layer that augments quotidian city space, juxtaposing the past onto the present, creating a deep, queer narrative of place. By bringing together the physical navigation of the contemporary city with the imaginative navigation of its queer past, the app enacts a praxis that we characterize as a queer ludic traversal, one that renders the navigation itself as queer as the content that it presents. In so doing, the app produces the experience of *place*, in Lucy Lip-pard's (1997) formulation that

Place is latitudinal and longitudinal within the map of a person's life. It is temporal and spatial, personal and political. A layered location replete with human histories and memories, place has width as well as depth. It is about connections, what surrounds it, what formed it, what happened there, what will happen there. (7)

This poster highlights four foundational questions of *Go Queer* that serve as base from which we research, write, and build:

Why a "game" for queer history?

Games have the unique affordance of putting players/readers into a first-person relationship with content, where they expect to actively interact with, and manipulate it. *Go Queer* seeks to generate the affective experience of queerness, to show and not just tell the queer history of the city, to collapse the distance between the present and the past. The game proceeds according to a procedural rhetoric that argues, in Sarah Ahmed's words (2006, 563), that "queers are differently 'oriented' to a spatial world that is the product of extended and extensive heteronormativity."

How can we encode a queer sense of place and co-presence in the contemporary city?

Thinking through the implications of "orientation" makes locative media a logical choice of format. It allows us to create a mimetic experience, where the player experiences the juxtaposition of queer space/time simultaneously with contemporary, normative space/time. The result of this juxtaposition is, we argue, a particularly powerful form of affect, where the player/user experiences the paradox of queer space: that it is always simultaneously both queer and not queer, slant and straight, persistent and fleeting.

How can we integrate crowd-sourced materials effectively and ethically?

Queer places are, by definition, sites of accretion, where stories, memories, and experiences are gathered. Queer place, in particular, is reliant on ephemeral histories, personal moments and memories. That *Go Queer* must integrate these personal archives is apparent, yet we must also be diligent about our ethical relationship to the material. How can we ethically solicit, verify, and evaluate community contributions to our history?

What technological structures will facilitate our goals?

The project requires both flexibility and stability. In order to offer the greatest flexibility to the interface, but the most stability to the actual content, we have decided on a custom server wrapped around a core GIS server. The GIS server will host the stable database; the custom wrapper will allow the flexibility to: a) customize and change the behaviour of the app as needed without modifying the underlying data structure; and b) input the primary materials into the database via a simple form-based interface.

We expect to have a functional beta version in place by DH 2017. A final production version should be launched in summer 2018.

Bibliography

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