

Time/Slice Interim Report

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I. Project Summary

Time/Slice is a crowd-sourced digital bulletin board. Its goal is to provide a platform for organizing the physical ephemera through which communities publicize and discuss events and activities. Users take photos of future / past / current events and activities, and submit them to Time/Slice via email using mobile phones. Time/Slice then organizes the media by date, seeding it with additional user-provided metadata (title, location, hashtags). Events are ultimately displayed in a bulletin board format on a library-specific instance of the application. The purpose is multi-fold; Time/Slice aims to be a platform to collect, organize, share, and ultimately archive this information, seeded with basic metadata.

Time/Slice also frames a larger discussion about the role that libraries can (and potentially should) play in organizing community information. Time/Slice is in large part motivated by a sense that the physical information that is traditionally bulletin board fodder provides valuable data and history about a community.

Work on Time/Slice has been primarily focused in Loeb Library at Harvard Graduate School of Design, with some exploration of applications in other Harvard libraries, particularly Fine Arts and the Arnold Arboretum. The project originated in Library Test Kitchen, in the Spring of 2012.

Time/Slice is a web and mobile app, written in javascript. It relies on Backbone.js, Node.js, and MongoDB.

II. Accomplishments

Over the course of the past year, work has focused on rebuilding Time/Slice to be more robust, using an application framework. Basic functionality was also questioned, tested, and refined. In particular, the mechanism for submitting event information (via email) was reconsidered, and other options were explored. Most notably, the potential for MMS submissions was considered, and existing services were looked at (Nexmo and Twilio).

Significant user-testing also occurred during a two-day Digital STS workshop held at the Arnold Arboretum. Groups of participants used some of the Time/Slice functionality to document events during the workshop that highlighted points in their research and design process. Some of the rough output of this documentation is on the workshop's blog:

<http://stsdesignworkshop.tumblr.com/documentation>. This work highlighted issues with functionality (particularly in low-service areas), as well as the extent to which users were interested in using the tool and integrating it into their process.

Another area of significant progress was in discussions with the Arboretum about what form an

engagement with Time/Slice might take. In discussions with their IT and Public Programs departments, we explored the possibility of integrating Time/Slice with their school programs in the fall, as classrooms of students investigate the Arboretum on structured field trips. Although the timeline was too quick to allow for using Time/Slice this Fall, the possibility of integrating it at a later date remains strong.

Lastly, development work is underway updating the application and transferring it to a new website. This has involved rewriting much of the code and significant design and styling revisions. A development version of the site is up at <http://timeslice.herokuapp.com>, including a demo of a GSD instance of Time/Slice and a process for web-submission. Although mobile submissions are not yet fully supported, the submission API is functional.

III. Challenges

A major challenge is deciding which service to use for event submissions. This question is still undecided; although the current platform will continue to support email submission, cost of MMS submission using Twilio is still being considered.

IV. Next Steps

Next steps are primarily development-oriented. The updated platform is not yet finished, so integrating submissions is a top-priority. Following that, Time/Slice will be ready for display and use in Loeb library and around the GSD.

V. Publicity: N/A

VI. Presentations: N/A