Inokashira Player:
The Creation of Mashup Web Media Linked with a Public Facility in the Real World

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Introduction

Recent developments surrounding the Web are described as Web 2.0. Designed by authorized editors, the information generated online changes dynamically depending on the end-users' intention and environment. One such tool used to achieve this interaction is a *Mashup* web application — a set of several combined online APIs produced regardless of any profit or commercial value. A *Mashup* design is able to construct a single story from multiple information sources, thereby launching new services everyday that providers will be unable to predict.

Related work

Typically previous work in this area had concentrated on the link between real-world events and information using maps provided by the Google API.

There are also new kinds of art projects that allow personal opinions to be published online. The Dumpster[1] uniquely expresses stories of unrequited love by collecting these stories from blogs all over the world. The COLORS project[2] expresses the feelings of today's world through an automated search of emotion-related words in blog entries.

While there are many crossover projects designed to visualize events at the 'world' or 'community' level (so-called 'god-view'), there is an absense of initiatives 'zooming in' to a more individual position ('insect-view'), which should allow us to see things from a completely different viewpoint.

Zoo park project

This was a trial project to test how Mashup contents can link facilities to the real world. We conducted this research in the Inokashira Zoo Park — a small zoo in Tokyo operated by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. Since the operating budget is limited, they faced the problem of promoting the presence of the facility and extending its services in the future. Therefore this project started as a research investigation to realize a medium for promoting the zoo within these restrictions.

Inokashira player: Mashup web media for public facilities

In this project we implemented the Mashup web contents to generate online information solely linked with the real "places" and "animals" of Inokashira Zoo Park. When people access this web application online, the contents are reflected by the time of access and the weather information of Inokashira Park Zoo (online weather reports are used to generate real-time weather graphics). In front of each animal are icons representing staff members, which when clicked returns an image library based on the animal. There are also icons representing the zoo visitors, which when clicked display the viewpoints and opinions of previous visitors to that specific animal in Inokashira Park Zoo (extracted from Blogs using the Google API). For example, by retrieving information from the keywords "Inokashira Park Zoo and Elephant", the application is able to visualize real-time viewpoints of visitors to this animal.

Figure 1: Inokashira Player (http://being.inokashira-zoo.jp/)

Unique linking between online information and physical places

This application's main feature is to realize information design extracted from the real space by retrieving unique keywords (in this case 'Inokashira Zoo Park') and a name for each animal. Thus the idea of linking personal blogs to unique names and physical spaces enables us to aquire a reflection of the viewpoints and opinions in society.

Figure 2: Inokashira Player Voice from the Blog

Discussion

While the Inokashira Player may not prove to be the single most effective solution to promote the zoo, the zoo staff found an interesting usage of this application. Professional staff who had previously operated the zoo in a more conventional fashion began to use the application as a tool for checking each animal and the zoo itself. By visualizing a wide spectrum of communications between visitors and animals, this tool allows staff to observe the animals' conditions in finer detail and identify any issues that animal doctors may have overlooked. Consequently, Inokashira Player mirrors the real-time zoo as information architecture.

Meanwhile, pernicious advertisements by affiliate marketers are becoming increasingly obstructive when searching Blog articles. This problem makes it more difficult to maintain the connection between unique keywords and physical spaces.

Conclusion

This research realized a media application focused on one public facility by linking several APIs to the specific place. Inokashira Player provides an 'insect-view' to explore our world by considering the linkage between personal blogs and physical places.

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1 Flong, 2006, "The Dumpster", http://www.flong.com/projects/dumpster/

2 h.o, 2005, "COLORS project", http://www.colors-expo2005.org/, 2005