

the open space in a story

Feb. 18 – Feb. 22, 2013

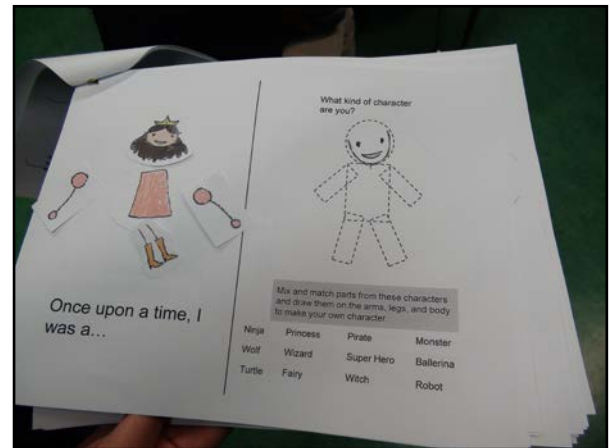
The Week in Review

We spent most of sixth week in San Antonio, Texas, where we had an opportunity to run three playtests with different demographics. After three days of Texan warmth, we returned to Pittsburgh with a better understanding of what our interactive storytelling experience is really about and a taste for springtime.

We began our trip with a tour the current San Antonio Children's Museum, where our exhibit will be tested for the next year. We also looked at the plans for the new 65,000 square-foot-space (scheduled to open in 2015) where our exhibit will be re-skinned and installed eventually. This helped us better understand our client and the context for our work.

That evening, as the museum opened its doors for its weekly free night, we ran a series of playtests of a second iteration of our paper prototype. For the first time, we invited kids and their parents to work together through the paper prototype. While the demographics skewed younger than our target age range—six to 10—the opportunity to test in a real, noisy museum, with kids and their harried, understandably impatient parents proved valuable.

The next day, we ran two playtests at two schools that could not have been more different. At the first, at St. Luke's Episcopal School, courteous second graders in uniforms were ushered to our playtest in a quiet corner of the hallway. At the second, at nearby Schultz Elementary, we had compete with our project partner, Argyle Design, for the attention of the kids as they playtested a number of math-based exhibits, which they were designing for



We playtest a paper version of our hero maker with kids at the San Antonio Children's Museum.

other parts of the new museum.

Observing Argyle gave us ideas about how to better test in the future. When playtesting, they tried to simulate real world settings to the point of limiting their instructions and help as much as possible. While it could be frustrating to watch kids struggle with an element that wasn't working well—most kids did not, for example, understand what they were supposed to do with several of the exhibits—observing this was valuable and will lead to better final design.

As a brief aside, should the opportunity arise, walk around San Antonio's downtown. A network of riverside walkways with bars and restaurants runs through the central district, lending the city a sort of Venice by way of Texas feel. Nearby sites, including the Alamo, the County Courthouse, and the Scottish Rite Cathedral, a vast range of architectural styles and influences.





Week 6: Going to Texas

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We Suggest

- Should you ever be in San Antonio, go to La Gloria at the Pearl. It's a delicious Mexican street food restaurant in an old brewery.
- Jonathan Gottschall's book *The Storytelling Animal* argues that storytelling is a central part of our humanity and a key way we practice the biggest challenges in our lives. For those interested in storytelling, this is a must-skim book.
- Locomotive Labs' *Kid in the Story* iPad helps kids make simple storybooks by selecting or taking photos, adding captions, and even recording audio. A clever feature separates photos of kids' from the background of the photo, letting kids easily insert themselves into any scene or setting.

The Week Ahead

In the coming week, we start a concerted push towards having a Beta prototype ready for halves. We will:

- Implement a new concept to expand kids' creativity discussed in San Antonio
- Complete a storyboard of the entire user experience
- Finish design CAD work so we out-source the build and order materials
- Continue push to move from digital to analog



Above: The museum and our exhibit's future location

Below: Younger kids have difficulty with our paper prototype.

