

Project Snake

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Synopsis

Literature used

Berry, David: The Philosophy of Code, chapter Real-time streams

Our Software

Through a snake game we try to explore the overflow of information on social media sites exemplified in the following quote by Borthwick:

“Think about Twitter as a rope of information — at the outset you assume you can hold on to the rope. That you can read all the posts, handle all the replies and use Twitter as a communications tool, similar to IM — then at some point, as the number of people you follow and follow you rises — your hands begin to burn. You realize you can't hold the rope you need to just let go and observe the rope”

In the above quote Borthwick explains how the social media site Twitter has turned into a mass stream of information that flows before the eyes of the user. You might have the right intention to be a meaningful part of twitter, reading what everyone you follow posts, handling all your messages and replying accordingly to what needs to be replied to. But as the people you follow increase, and likewise the people that follow you, the stream of information to handle, reaches a critical point, and it becomes too much for you to give attention to everything. Social media becomes a river of information flowing through your feed, and all you can do is observe this uncontrollable and unfiltered information stream, because meaningfully processing all the information would be impossible. It is this phenomenon, happening on social media sites like twitter or Facebook, we try to explore through a snake game. The snake is the user navigating through a social media site and the food is the constant stream of information, that eventually overflows and overwhelms the snake

How it works

When you start the game you get to choose whether you want to login through Facebook, or if you want to make a new account. If you login through Facebook, you get forwarded directly to the snake game, otherwise you have to create a new account, by which you have to put in an extreme amount of personal information. It indirectly forces you to login through Facebook, because nobody wants to put all their personal information on a random website.

After you login through Facebook (a simple press of a button), you get to play the snake game. The snake game utilizes the same basic controls and mechanics of the original game, where you control the snake around the canvas, to eat the food. In our version of the game, the snake doesn't grow when it eats the food, but the amount of generated food keeps increasing exponentially when a piece of food has been consumed. At a certain point the canvas will be filled with food, with no empty spaces left. Eventually the canvas will be completely filled with food. There is no end to the game.

The aesthetic of code and the project as a critical work itself

In the chapter “Real-time streams” from the book “The Philosophy of Code”, David Berry describes real-time streams; *“as distributed narratives which, although fragmentary, are running across and through multiple media”*. Through our work we express the computational

culture of streams as the massive amount of data we are presented with, as we are now living in a culture where we are constantly met with data and information.

The structure of our social media equates the computational structure of the streams in which we use and navigate on a daily basis.

In our work the food represents the massive stream of data and information, which is exponentially generated on the screen. Each time the snake consumes a piece of food even more food appears. This is to illustrate the constant growing stream of social data and information.

This results, in a canvas filled with food and the snake is eagerly trying to consume all of it, but as one piece is consumed, even more appear. This is to exemplify the above quote by Borthwick. It becomes increasingly impossible for us to ever catch up to the constant updates and flow of new information that appears in our real-time streams.

The real-time streams have also impacted the way we understand and form social structures as explained by David Berry in the following quote:

“As such, real-time streams presents an excellent opportunity for tracing the impact of computational real-time devices in everyday life and the way in which they capture the informal representations of issues with which contemporary communities are becoming increasingly concerned. It is possible that Twitter and other real-time streams both decentre social structures and expand the numbers involved”.

The computational real-time devices, that are used in our everyday life, can be used as a way to understand the impact the streams have had on our culture. Social media sites, such as Twitter, have changed our social structures of being together and being involved in different issues.

Furthermore, this new social culture influenced by real time streams and computational real-time devices, perhaps breeds a principle of people seeking to social media for their information and answers, which leads to a knowing-that culture explained by David Berry:

“This points towards an intensity of fast moving technological culture that privileges data streams over meaning, that is, an explosion of knowing-that rather than knowing-how – and here we might note the current political fascination with Twitter and similar social networking sites”.

We see our project as a critical stand on the way social media information is consumed in an uncontrollable and uncritical fashion. The snake represents the riparian citizens behaviour in real-time streams, where information and data is consumed in an unfiltered manner. By the use of the well known game, Snake, we have simplified and visualized this behaviour. We wish to draw attention and critically look upon the increasing usage of real-time streams, and what culture it might promote.