**Not The Darkest Timeline - Episode 2 - final**

**Tom Abba:** [00:00:00] Okay. So hello, if you're listening to this. So this is by way of a very brief introduction to explain the massive plot hole exists in our podcast series. I'm Tom Abba, and he is Baldur Bjarnason. And you're going to listen to us for the next sort of 45 minutes or so. I'm talking about media forms and talking about things that interest is, but we didn't have a title for this podcast series for the first four or five weeks.

We

**Baldur Bjarnason:** [00:00:23] didn't have a clue.

**Tom Abba:** [00:00:24] No. You don't have a clue what the title was going to be. We used to do a podcast called, this is not a book that was following and reinterpreting and talking about a book we'd written, and we're going back about five or six years now, but this was something different. So. It took us a few weeks from the title.

Obviously you're listening to this on some kind of service. You subscribed or you're just dipping in or you downloaded the wrong podcast by accident, in which case thank you and welcome. But just as an explanation, the reason that you'll see, you'll hear two men talking about in animated fashion the fact they don't know what this thing is called, and the fact that it does have a title is a peculiar trick of what we're going to call a kind of time travel dilation.

So we're, we're recording this now after having recorded the sixth episode in the series in order that this will be placed back in our past on the first three or four, which from our point of view is in your future. So if you, if you're confused by that, just imagine how we are. But yeah, this is called Not The Darkest Timeline, and thank you for subscribing and we'll get out of your way now.

Thank you.

**Baldur Bjarnason:** [00:01:29] Yes. Please enjoy.

Who wants to do the introduction opening this time.

**Tom Abba:** [00:01:34] I think up to you this time.

**Baldur Bjarnason:** [00:01:36] Okay. We are untitled multimedia podcasts. We'll figure out a good title and name for this at some point. Start working with---

**Tom Abba:** [00:01:45] we are three episodes in, so it's about time we did that, but yeah, let's right.

We

**Baldur Bjarnason:** [00:01:49] get there. It will be a sounding no pressure. My name is and I'm Baldur Bjarnason, I'm currently in Iceland drinking Danish yule hvitöl and I've butchered the pronunciation of the Danish there. Yes. So I'm the, the, the Webby technical person, but with a cultural analysis background and literature and things.

And you are.

**Tom Abba:** [00:02:18] Well, you're a generalist and we can covered the last time. Hi. Yeah, I'm Tom Abba. I'm an academic and an artist and a writer, and I'm in Bristol with a cup of ginger tea. I can't do anything like accents. And the. It's Sunday afternoon. It's ginger tea time. It's, yeah, I'm, here we are. We're on the, the second of the actual podcasts with the third in the sequence.

And this time it's you for the subject.

**Baldur Bjarnason:** [00:02:45] Snowfall the back in 2012, the New York times released a format bombshell on the, on news media for a new story that was probably not that interesting in its own right, but was given a, a specialized unusual at the time treatment in, in, in the form of a mini websites discussing the story of of an avalanche in the States, and it brought in the, the context details, visualizations audio and graphics, and, and told the story. And it. One of the things that got to probably go, Oh, we're going to cover is the fact that a lot of it wasn't strictly speaking original. As in , not in the sense that it hadn't been done before, but it definitely hadn't been done by a major news media outlet and it definitely hadn't been done in this context where it was done to, it was a decision that they were going to cover this story anyway, and it was a decision on their part to treat the story this way, much in the same way that a magazine would make a decision to say we've got this interview, we're going to, should we give it a spread or going to turn it into a proper feature.

**Tom Abba:** [00:04:09] It's interesting that with silent history and with snowfall. We're both going back to 2012. That, I know we said this will be a, an uncanon and this will be as looking back at some of the, the pieces of work that we felt were worthy of more attention, but I think it's issue that would be both the two that we started with are coming up on eight years old. And that's just something that's worthy of note right at the moment. So. In terms of its, and it's probably worth us talking a little bit about, a little bit about the context. In terms of the story. And as you say, this is a story that they would covered only covered anyway, but not necessarily in this level of details.

One could describe this as, as an opportunity. The sort of presented itself in that regard.

**Baldur Bjarnason:** [00:04:43] I mean, yes. I mean, one of the things that I found interesting, I mean, both that sort of fits, and it has several characteristics that are fairly normal now, as in you'd see them regularly in the way media outlets to websites and do stories.

It's the integration of, of the visualizations of data and your animations there of animations that are triggered through scrolling. The integration of multimedia artifacts like audio and and video. And the idea that you apply graphic design. To the story and that the story is, is co-authored essentially with the designers, which is something that was always the case in print.

But when it came to publishing on the web the collaboration was with the designer. Wasn't there, the designer design templates that you poured the content into, but it kind of was one of the early cases where. They took the design staff that they had on on staff and really gave them full reign on letting the design the story.

So it's kind of, it's kind of the process is where most parts of the actual innovation took place because like any of these individual elements, the scroll animation, the visuals, et cetera, they're all things we've seen, we've seen before, whether apps or in, and like one off projects, but it's a bit

The, I thing I have an interesting is that it was because it was so unusual. It had to be created and, and published entirely outside of the new times, existing publishing workflow. At the time. He couldn't, it wasn't made in it doesn't still to this day, I don't think it exists as a part of their CMS, the content management system.

It's literally something that somebody had to code it and uploaded the static files to a place that where it's just hosted on the web, which is both probably a word probably. I've promoted a level of innovation that you wouldn't see otherwise. Because if you're going to go completely custom.

Why? Then? Why not just go all the way and just try all of the ideas that you've had.

**Tom Abba:** [00:07:00] Yeah, and the world is your oyster. Yeah. You pretty much do whatever you want and come up to a phrase that we've used before and we will go and use it again. This is to me, to my mind, this is one of the first time is that form followed content.

That the, the, there was a kind of explicit relationship between those two aspects of we are here to tell a story and we have a platform to tell it in, but the platform is largely well it's capable of, a lot of things, but we need to read to kind of rewrite it in order to properly tell the story we want to tell in the way we want.

**Baldur Bjarnason:** [00:07:31] Yeah. And it's you mentioned the year 2012 and I think that's, I think it's interesting in that. It's once you start looking back and looking at how things looked like on the web at the time, things changed a lot. The standard practice for on web storytelling has changed a lot in the space of eight years.

I mean, eight years ago we had was that like, is that before or around the same time that people were doing iPad apps?

**Tom Abba:** [00:08:05] It's around the same time. Yes. As in things like am I going to get my dates wrong here? The wasteland, which we'll touch on another point in my mind is it's definitely post 2007 , it's post- when you and I handed in our, our doctorates.

And it probably kicks about that time when the iPad became a platform. In its own right that there was a sense that, at least in the circles that you and I moved in, in the sense of publishing, that this was something that you could one, monetize in a way that the audience would at least, start to accept that.

And also that the, the tools were mature enough and the platform was mature enough that there was a degree of innovation that was almost kind of permissible in that space.

**Baldur Bjarnason:** [00:08:43] The monetization aspect is something I want to touch on later on, but not right now. But I, because I think I think it's important to talk about the monetization and monetization aspects in terms of how the formats that snowfall put together has spread.

Because I think that that's. All right. And the connection between the monetization and the spread of this format is going to be fairly obvious once we get the, to get to it. But what sort of, if I want to continue on the context a bit, and that's w I, Am I wrong in remembering that most of the news websites and blogs at the time were kind of blandly designed. They were the same template for everything and it was kind of hard to drop in individual interactive elements into a regular story or a blog post unless you were embedding a video.

**Tom Abba:** [00:09:36] No. Absolutely. It's one of those moments where if we look back through the wayback machine through Brewster Kale's project is those times that we look at either early, I mean, Amazon's the obvious when we look at it and Oh my God, did we really find anything from that?

But also the BBC, the guardian, the New York times. Yeah. I mean still we are because it's because the scale of the industry, we're largely, we it is largely template driven and that's always going to be the case. But I think yes to a much greater extent. That was sort of them to start 2010, 2011.

Everything. I think workflow had become. At least to outside observer What would become the thing that a 24 hour news cycle had imposed on when you must use web broadcast journalism for the needs to be a way of managing this content that, you know, we, we, I think were probably, we were definitely around the time of the daily mail sidebar of shame.

Which is completely templated driven to a horrific extent. But yeah, everything was designed to drop into a format and then readers would become familiar with that format and you could just drop more content in. But yeah, the, the space for proper experimentation, for proper consideration of, of how we read in that space and how you could, how you could integrate different elements.

They had been seen on different platforms. You know, the, the obvious example is an inconvenient truth as, as a. It was a large, major piece of what we might, we might now look back and go, Oh my God, it's a PowerPoint presentation. And really, you know, to a large extent it is, but it's, it was innovative in the space of trying to consider how you get across a fair, pretty complex argument.

Well, it boils down to one very simple thing, but a fairly complex argument. In terms of the kind of data it's presenting in a way. I think now, and this is just the thing I noticed yesterday, I'm looking for anything on Twitter. I noticed something we're actually really used to, fairly fairly rich visualizations that come and bite size chunks.

And I think we can read them. We read them in a way that I'm not sure we would've been, we would have found as, as easy 10 years ago. In terms of our, our kind of consumption with that kind of data,

**Baldur Bjarnason:** [00:11:38] the whole sort of dynamic visualizations that respond to your interactivity a decade ago, there's a decent chance that most people would have just treated it as a static object and not really understood that fact that you can click around and select, you know, this political party to see its result in the in the, in the election. And it's kind of, there's a level of media literacy that's grown up alongside this form or that I think that's kind of necessary in that.

And that's kind of one of the reasons why there was a, was. Both a hype and then a backlash to snowfall and Snowfall-like storytelling when it initially came out, because when it came out, One of the things that snowfall did is that it used every trick,, every trick it had in the book and it like, it just went through the catalog of, of things you could do for in flash interactive movies or Director, CD ROMs.

And it just kind of just. Went through the bu--- you know, filled the bucket of stuff. And because it's like, you know, they were working outside of the existing systems. So why not just like stretch the boundaries, but media literacy at the time really had not followed. And also they pushed the boundaries in many ways on things that.

Were in terms of what the distribution and the platforms weren't quite comfortable with yet especially the, one of the most controversial aspect of it, which still hasn't aged actually, that well, is the scroll jacking where they. Disconnect the, you're scrolling the scroll position on the, on the page, and then from the actual position of the page and connected to animations instead.

And that has, it's one of the, one of the things that's still a bit controversial today because. Scrolling. Scroll. The scroll bar is an accessibility tool. It's a, a an affordance for users to understand where they are in the page and it's very easy once you get into this designs to completely disconnect the scroll bar from being a, that that kind of.

Wayfinding tool. And that means that users can easily get lost in a narrative, and that makes them very angry for understandable reasons.

**Tom Abba:** [00:13:57] It's say, it feels to me, and I'm kind of conscious that as you said, there is still controversy. There's still controversy about what you could see it breaking one of the fundamental rules of web navigation of the, there's a thing that we know how to read this page because there was a thing, there was a, there was a visual interface.

Sorry I'm dumbing this down completely and trying not to use UX terms, but there's a, there's a piece of visual interface that the, the, grounds you where you are, I've said before, I'm really interested in. In how books operate and how books work in a way that is about our haptic response. And I have to consider have to relationship with them.

And you know, I guess the, the simple way of explaining scroll tracking is one of my, one of my, I keep talking about this. What am I going of The, the elegances is of, of book design is when I opened a book as flat as I want to open it. I know how far I am through it. And this is, if that, that visual reference point with if it was scroll-jacked it would no longer be true.

Although as a designer, I'm interested in the innovation and what you can do in that space. And obviously there's a whole other section that we're going to talk about about what happens when the media literacies lie to us when they, when they do break those rules.

But yeah, but without a doubt there is a, there was something quite fundamental that's a little bit scary and a little bit. irritating at the same time. Some something that take for granted has gone, but it's gone. Yeah. I completely get that there is, there is still controversy. They certainly would have been at the time.

**Baldur Bjarnason:** [00:15:20] Oh yeah. It was especially among like user experience designers and user interface designers. They were like, Oh my God, what are you doing? You're, you're, and also back at that time, it was much more common for platforms to have the scroll bar always visible as well. Which is now kind of fallen by the wayside, which I think is a, is a tragedy terms of user.

Like usability, but I'm in a very small minority when I, when it comes to that. But one of the things I find interesting when I was preparing for this by looking at how people are doing, like, snowfall type stories t oday, like looking at like, BBC still does. New York Times still does. And NRK or the Norwegian broadcasting company.

They do them. And one of the things that's interesting is that they tend to be more subtle in how they connect things to the scroll bar than snowfall was, which is the same actually, because snowfall was really in your face with it. So it's like bam. And they tend to like, often, like most of the animations are.

Like triggered by scrolling. So you scroll to a position and then and then that triggers an animation. But animation is like an animated image or animated graphic rather than something that's animated by your scrolling. So it's, it's, it's triggered by coming into view and it's, that's, that's a, a slight tweak on the, on the format, but it's it makes it more, more usable.

And then the reserve, the, like, for example, there's a recent new story at NRK about the about the spread of suicidal ideation through social media. Was made a huge impact in the Nordic countries. And their story on this was done snowfall style and they reserved the primary scroll jacking animation for the core info infographic about the spread of like ideation and thoughts throughout a network on Instagram.

Right? And so they reserved it for, rather than having this as a reg, like these, these scroll jacks animation is a regular beat through the story. They use triggered animation through the through the story and reserve the scroll jacking for the core argument for the, like the gut punch impact on, on how things are spreading.

And I think that's kind of. It's interesting to see that people like, it's a, it's like the development of the novel after Robinson Crusoe. It's so you, you see somebody who like hashed out a lot of the initial ideas and then you, it's, you follow through the novels afterwards and see how people are.

The writers are learning how to use the format and how to become more effective with it and in creative ways that you can't really, you can't account for that with like formulas or, or the templates that's, you need to have a tool set. Like if this, if these, if these stories had to be still had to be hand coded like snowfall.

You wouldn't get this learning that because this has slowly been adopt these, these features have been added to the cm, the co, the content management systems. The writers are starting to learn how to use a more intuitively. Does that make sense?

**Tom Abba:** [00:18:32] They become modularised. Absolutely.

**Baldur Bjarnason:** [00:18:35] It returns us to the point that was hoping to, in terms of sustainability and you know, fight like the economic model.

Because there's one thing that New York Times, Netflix with Bandersnatch, NRK, and the BBC have in common that one-off like the, like regular publishers don't have , which is that they have recurring revenue. Netflix is a subscription business. New York times is primarily like their, their, their foundation revenue comes from subscription.

NRK or the Norwegian broadcasting service company and BBC are they have recurring revenue through license fees because they have a committed audience that they, they have more freedom to experiment. And because the, they can, they have a recurring, committed, committed, or recurring revenue with a committed audience so they can invest in tools.

They can invest in. The staff, like the, the staff, the New York times has. Eh, for interactive graphics and interactive storytelling is amazing. They have some of the ---like these, some of the best people around one programmer called Rich Harris, which is basically his tools are trans, have, have transformed large parts of the JavaScript web developer, web developer commu nity.

He works doing the graphics. For New York times, like the interactive graphics. And so they, their business model or you know, the national broadcasting services to probably might not be accurate to call them business models, but it's like a revenue model. Gives them the space to do digital experimentations that publishers who do books or one-off titles where each title has to build and engage its own audience. They don't have that luxury. There's... it's very hard for their business model to sustain that level of constant like investment

**Tom Abba:** [00:20:25] completely. And there's something else that occurred to me while you were talking in that.

With regard. I mean on the one hand, the two ways of the two way my brain is working on this one is that there is, there's not only the space to do that, which you're absolutely right. There is also a need to do that, to get content out there because we are, we do exist in, you know, 24 hour news cycle is almost an old phrase now.

It's always on new cycle. There is a, no matter where you are in the world, no matter what time of day it is and you expect to be updated on X, Y, or Z on anything that's happening on. You know that we're, we're currently looking at a crisis developing at the moment in Iran, in light of Trump's impeachment, in light of a whole set of things.

And the analysis that is happening in real time, it's, we're not waiting for us. We'd be, we haven't done for 10 15 20 years. We're not waiting for the next edition of a newspaper, which are, we're seeing stuff being put out there, and that's something that publishing in the sector that we're. Used to working with or we've worked with elsewhere doesn't have, there is the, there was a, there is a slow burn.

There is a looking for, it's more like television. There's looking for a transmission date, partially traditional television, and I see, you're right. In the same sense, Netflix has exactly the same problem in that they, they're not built on a kind of BBC broadcast model of there are X number of channels or X number of hours a day, and that's what you have got to fill. Netflix are throwing everything on the kitchen sink at this in the hope , one, look at it.

But expressing the hope that enough of those things stick and enough of those things have gained traction, have gained an audience and this, this also speaks to sort of the image that the are going to talk about... We are going to talk about another point about the way Netflix are responding to a. So in the last couple of years are responding to mostly which audience drop off audience engagement.

They're releasing, they're investing in two seasons of a thing and then dropping it there. They're not necessarily committing to all the way through and there are bigger, there are bigger players and there are bigger mechanics of play above that, but yeah within certainly was in broadcast journalism. What we see as web broadcast journalism.

There's, there's a need. There's a need not only to, to generate content, to keep generating content, and as you say that that's built on the one hand from, because largely their revenue is built from advertising and subscription, but also alongside that. And it's something that I find frustrating about kind of traditional or conventional---not traditional, but kind of more established media organizations within web journalism does.

There's also a need for novelty. There's a need to engage an audience in. In a way that hasn't been seen before. And to push the envelope a little bit more, and it doesn't happen all the time. And things like snow fall happen, and you've even indicated already, they do break the landscape a little bit and they break enough rules.

They start to redefine some of the, what those rules might be, but that novelty is all built into the form or sort of, it's built in much more than it is in other.

**Baldur Bjarnason:** [00:23:05] I mean, yeah, they're definitely there. They definitely have the issue where globalization of the web has brought all of these media outlets in competition with each other.

And which is a reason why if you're a small you know, news website based in the States. You're competing with the Guardian you're competing with New York times. I mean, before you were just competing with a local, the other local rag. And you know that those were the, the only journalists, you had to be better at that it was at a, but now you're, you're, you're.

Literally competing with the world's, the world's best institutions at this sort of thing. I mean, you could debate the actual quality of the news reportage itself, but in terms of the format and the design and the sort of creativity aspect of it in the form of creativity aspect of it, these are, they're like, the New York Times.

The guardian are, are right up there. No matter what you think about, their, their, their take on things. But also one of the things that we sort of found that found interesting is that by pushing the boundaries beyond what was possible and the content management systems off the time snowfall forced publishers to reassess.

Do the boundaries of their content management systems have to be, it's like we clearly need to be able to do more things than we used to, and so they've put a lot of work in the meantime. Sometimes they outsource it, like there's a, this is called shorthand, which basically specializes in creating a, and helping media outlets create Snowfall-type stories, stories, it's a tool specifically for that.

But a lot of the time they just, they expanded their CMSes to let people add like drop in interactive objects, drop in video drop in like custom code here or there to expand that canvas to make sure that the scope enough for different, for each medium, each team to differentiate itself within the boundaries of the system.

Which means that if you hire a good enough designer. That designer can work within the system, within the boundaries of the CMS to create something that differentiates you from the competitors. So you can start competing by hiring the best people, irrespective of, yeah. Irrespective of your code capabilities.

**Tom Abba:** [00:25:29] Sure and that content or that, that that intellectual property becomes proprietary and is that something, something we were going into a different... It does that become proprietary as long as that designer is with you, does the designer move that with them. I mean, that's it. We were, into IP arguments and kind of where, where you differentiate from that, but that does seem to be, I mean, I'm, I'm interested in, I have been for a long time in the, the kind of the, the power of.

The power of coding, the power of coding as a, as an industry, that means that you do. You do look, and you mentioned already names that continue to work for the new York times is interesting. I looked, when we were talking, I Googled Andrew Kueneman who was digital designer on this, who still works for New York times eight years later, and I'm interested at the same time, there's an interesting, from my point of view about what, what has that done to roles that were previously been very much behind the scenes that are now in. They now have an opportunity to shape some of the ways in which we communicate in the ways in which communication tools are used.

**Baldur Bjarnason:** [00:26:26] Yeah, I think that's, I mean, that ties in, I think both with the Andrew Kueneman and Rich Harris who both worked for the new times.

I can't remember where I read it, I think it must've been on Twitter, but I remember seeing some of them discuss how they work with news teams on important stories on how things are represented. And for example, they're like, I know that the digital team for New York Times has on more of has on a few occasions created interactive graphics that are generated using code.

And, but the core code also generates the same graphics. For the print. So it's no longer the case where, where the, you'd have a print designer who would design a graphic for print and then you'd have the digital designer or design an interactive graphic for the screen. The same core code generates the graphic for both print and intro--- and the, and the web.

And the web version is interactive and it's, I think that's, that's something that can only come from both having people. With experience because a yeah, but having people with experience working for a long time and collaborating with the news team and the print team, it's like, you can't do that if you start siloing and separating it, separating out your digital teams and your coding teams away from.

The, your, your print or or like editorial team. It's like you need, you need cross-functional teamwork for this to actually work. And I think that's something for that, that that news websites and news media has done that you don't actually see that much of outside. You don't see that generally happen in publishers.

**Tom Abba:** [00:28:11] And yeah, in publishing didn't, not, so, I mean, I was thinking there about advertising in the sort of mid nineties, late nineties, and the early two thousands as design agencies and these people I was working with at the time, the, the digital, the digital design team was separate where we're quite some time.

There was a, there was definitely a role of director of digital, although we still know some of those in publishing. And the, but the, within. Say a client brief, the digital space would be handled separately and that happened, I think that happened in ad agencies and design agencies and graphics agencies quite quickly in that, I think maybe because I know because the ones I was dealing with were smaller.

They weren't scared of New York times. If there is a state of New York Times and agencies that you, you need to be nimble. You need to kind of cross those, cross those boundaries and have those silos taken away that maybe, maybe that, that. Mode of development. That mode of kind of concurrent thinking happens at difficult---we're seeing this happens at different paces in different industries because of the demands of it, because it takes a while for broadcast to catch up with, or web broadcast is to catch up with where graphics was 15 years before and that that's frustrating. As an educator. It's frustrating as a designer, it's frustrating, but it's a thing that's happened.

**Baldur Bjarnason:** [00:29:22] Hmm.

**Tom Abba:** [00:29:23] Because the demands on different sectors are driven by economics, by commerce, by revenue streams, by a set of things, and also by audience. And this is what we're coming back to in all of this, is that what snowfall does is, is re-- say reeducate the re---. Offer the ability to read, learn a way of engaging with content from an audience point of view, as much as from a design point of view, as much as from a kind of journalist perspective is it's inviting the readers into a space as this is, if this was the, this is the new norm, because that sounds quite highfalutin, quite, you

**Baldur Bjarnason:** [00:29:55] know,

**Tom Abba:** [00:29:56] but, but the, the, the, the ground shifts and the ground gets rewritten and.

The challenge is how do you engage with that and how do you read that and therefore what, what do you push back against as a reader? Cause we are all readers in that space. And what do you, what do we take as being comfortable? What do we take as acceptable, where does, where does, where does that evolution happen and what does, what does snowfall or what does the tools of Snow Fall may look like eight years on, I guess is what I, where I'm interested in sort of moving this bit of conversation.

**Baldur Bjarnason:** [00:30:26] But an interesting part of it is that some of these are some of the tools for creating snowfall style stories have actually failed quite miserably. Like the The Atavist, I think started out as a iPad, iPad magazine. And they ha created this. Yes, this platform for creating specifically for creating snowfall style stories.

And then they just petered out, ended up getting bought up by Automattic, the company behind WordPress, and basically stopped taking new customers. And, and as far as I can tell, very little of their, their platform or tool set ever made it into WordPress. So there was a, there was definitely a hype around the whole idea of a new revolution in interactive storytelling that went very over the overboard and and was completely disconnected from what the actual end user.

Was interested in investing their time in and it's like you even saw this in websites like The Verge, the tech, the tech outlet. They did a like the, their initial review of the Apple watch was this very fancy scroll jacking, animating things, flying in and out snowfall style story. And people really didn't like it.

And if you look at them, they're like. Subsequent reviews they'd tend to have have limited that kind of storytelling to very specific features. Like they did a feature on, you know, how on Zuckerberg a few months ago, they did it for that, but they don't do that sort of any more for their bread and butter stories like reviews.

So there's a. There's a place for this for going all the way, but also I don't think people realize just how many of the small features in snowfall have of like a spread out into regular store attending. Just the idea of. Having a little interactive widget in the middle of a story that plays audio war, having an an animated infographic or you know, things, small, things like that, that people started to drop into even blog posts these days.

It started to become more normalized. And I think that snowfall had a role to play in that normalisation because it's the hype. Push the boundaries. So when there was a backlash pushing things back, it didn't go all the way back and it like we have a slightly more expanded space and things are a little bit more interesting.

**Tom Abba:** [00:32:58] Sure. It is. It's sort of resettles the landscape a little bit that the, the thing that gets upset kind of throws. All the snow, everything lines down again. And then when the landscape, when, when everything settles down, things look slightly different things, things we've, we accepted some things we've moved on from others and some things that we will go back and we'll still challenge.

But yeah, the sense to which these are, these are things that leapfrog, they, they, they bounce forward and bounce back. And some people, as soon as you sit on top of somebody else, but you move the landscape forward in, in fits and starts, but things like snow falls, you say. Snow Fall is in terms of its time is not so revolutionary, was so revolutionary in terms of what it presents and the platform presents it on given its readership that it, it allows that, that seismic shift to take place.

**Baldur Bjarnason:** [00:33:42] Yeah. I mean it's, it's like the same thing where it's like, we've seen this happen so often in the history of computing and interactive media. You, you saw Alan Kay's team Xerox park put together the core like the core ideas of the, you know, the windows icons, menu, pointer, user interface, and they themselves were building on.

I would Douglas Engelbart augment project and it took basically commercialization that watered things slightly down. Well both in the form of the Mac and in. And and Windows to actually break that, those ideas that at that time were, were like the Augment system is, for instance, from the 60s. So these were ideas that even at that time were 20 years old at some point.

Things break out and it's sometimes you just need somebody who's commercially minded to do so. That's kind of the distinction. Also, you could see this Apple itself because the Mac was not the first attempt that Apple made at creating this sort of user interface. They first tried it with the Lisa, which was a huge, huge failure.

It flopped completely, and it took a complete rebuild off that same idea under more commercial. auspices where, that were, in a way dumbing things a little bit more down to actually spread it out into, into into the public. And the same way that windows 95 is is, you know, as a biased Mac user felt like a dumbing down of the of the Mac interface.

It was also something that was necessary to read the, the user interface para- paradigm further. Was to just be more commercial.

**Tom Abba:** [00:35:27] Absolutely. It's almost hard to imagine what windows looked like before windows 95 in a sense to which that, that that does, it does, it shifts completely. A very wide user base is appreciation of what the interface looks like of what's, what the computer is there to do.

And it has a different, has obviously a different effect in terms of education. It does empower people who see computers who see code or see their role in relation to say education around... around using digital tools. But yeah, these things, it's an evolving ecosystem, I guess what we're saying and these things, it requires occasionally something quite drastic to happen in order to move something forward, or else we just sit here and we're doing the same thing 10 2030 years later without any kind of real operation.

**Baldur Bjarnason:** [00:36:09] So I kind of. Sort of, I'm narrowing down to a thesis here, which is that to sort of around 2012 starting maybe in 2010 you sort of at that time might have been a bit of a scene. We might've seen a bit of a a growth in known ideas from interactive media and multimedia design starting to become more mainstream because the.

Potential and platform for commercialization and mass media appeal through the web was finally there. Like the web had reached a certain kind of maturity where it could finally be used as a distribution vector for ideas that had been tried out and tested very well in like preceding for a, a formats which weren't as conducive to global distribution.

Like CD-ROMs is a very awkward format to distribute content in. It's just true.

**Tom Abba:** [00:37:07] Yeah, absolutely. Well, what CDROMs do, and this is where even the conversation is that they normalize a certain set of engagement. Certain way of thinking about how we, how we navigate that data cause with, with, certainly with most of our content, especially with this or when we're looking at or we're really looking at is, is communicating data and communicating something to an audience.

Then the platform is, how do you communicate that? How do you package that in certain ways that are, that are the equivalent, as you said at the very start of this, saying, well, we're going to make a feature in a magazine out of this rather than simply editorial piece is not going to be a piece of news reporting, it's going to be a big in-depth expose.

With call outs with things on sidebar with, I'm thinking about print here, but it's how do we, how do we make that work within this space? And absolutely. I think you're right. CD-ROMs, the iPad as a platform and the ubiquity of, of certainly the iPads, the sense of touch, interface of touch as a, as a way of engaging more than with a mouse over the scroll over the trackpad, I think opened up a way of thinking around how to, how do I as a, as a human being engage with what is purely, we know, purely digital data, digital information, but how do I do it in a way that feels like I'm exploring something.

Because let's say, you know, alongside that we'd had, I mean, there was always the predict the future by showing it where the minority report is around about the same time. Which is a technology we had not really seen in the past in terms of its user interfaces. But there are, there are things that point the way towards different ways of visualizing data, of exploring data.

That I think 10 years on from that point have become a little more normalized in how we see things in how, in how we deconstruct stuff that we moved on from. How many times we've just done dumb data, we've moved on from a kind of standard Excel this is what data looks like it's a pie chart, and that's all you're going to get to.

A much more nuanced understanding and, being able to read that. And that's for good. And for ill, you know, that means that charts can be, or data can be manipulated very easily and very quickly because we don't, we. The great unwashed public don't always look twice. We don't always look at the deeper the scales or graphs here or what is data pertains to, but actually we're used to reading in a richer fashion because you know what I'm saying,

**Baldur Bjarnason:** [00:39:19] I mean it's another way of describing it would be.

We are, that we now understand that you always need to contextualize data with some sort of story. And now it's more accepted to tell that story using interactivity and like con, like contextual design. Yes. But one of the problems you always have with stories is that stories through reframing data can completely change how we understand it.

Without actually. Changing the data so we can come away with completely different understanding of reality based on the same set of data, because we experienced them through two, two, two different lenses that were the design and the interactivity surrounding it. And that's something that you see is actually playing out.

Quite starkly in modern media. And now you have the right wing media and you have the, you know, centrist media, and then you have the left wing media, and they're all telling very, very different stories. And they, there's nothing, nothing in common that they have in common in terms of worldview.

Conversely, there's also more international and global collaboration going on. Like, for example, there was a recent story in Iceland which the goal was given internationally, the charming moniker of fish rot about Icelandic fishing company that was managed to take over the Nigerian fishing industry through bribery and corruption and money laundering.

And this was this was a story that was told in collaboration with this was just like a few weeks ago, done in collaboration between, as a collaboration between the Icelandic national broadcasting service. Al Jazeera, and the Icelandic branch of WikiLeaks. Yeah. It's actually the interesting part is that it was published simultaneously on by the Icelandic outlet, eh, as a, as a video documentary, as a mini websites.

Both in English and Icelandic, and as a print book, like all at the same time. You know, and bar good. So it's like nobody knew this was coming and it was just like you know, one, two gut punch in a sucker punch. It was just you know, really good general journalism, but it was like, that level of international collaboration is something that you don't, didn't see that that much. I think it's probably pioneered by some of the work of the early work of WikiLeaks before it got hijacked by certain certain individuals.

**Tom Abba:** [00:41:46] This speaks to things that we've talked about already in this with regard to media literacy in the education is it's really important to read the small print or read what's there and also not to be, to challenge, to challenge sensibly what's out there.

And that's one thing. That's something that snowfall has, has enabled. You know, this is, and this is an evolving picture, the, the sense of our, our literacy with media is a moving target, is an evolving field, is not something that you can pin down to 1990 or 2000 2010, that's it, we now know everything.

It's, it's very simple to say fake news is a thing and it's an absolute noun. And it there actually a manipulation of data is, I mean, really what we're talking about here, as much as Trump. Standing up and saying black is white and white is black? The gray areas are possibly where as much danger exists.

**Baldur Bjarnason:** [00:42:37] The gray area is by.

Looking reasonable and, and turning it, turning the data into a, into a story that sounds familiar and compelling, that that's the dangerous part. That's where you bring people over most of the studies on the, what's it called, where this sort of, people are turned more extremists over a period of time.

Eh, w most of the research I've seen shows that you don't start off with the blatant fake news or the, the completely over the top things. People start off on the edges.

**Tom Abba:** [00:43:13] Okay. On that note very cheerful note that the world is going to hell in a hand basket and we should read the grey areas. I'm going to suggest we call a halt there.

We're, we're gonna come back next week and I'm going to propose, cause it's my turn that we're going to talk about. We're talking about podcasts with a this with a kind of Lovecraftian bent to them. Okay. Well, we'll, I'll, I'll have some thoughts. We'll spend some time picking it apart. Okay. Baldur, thank you very much.

You've been Baldur Bjarnason, I've been Tom Abba we will be back next week.