

Data Gardens: | Final Project Proposal | Clelia Lou-Yang Knox

| Option 1: Further Research and Collection of Custom Cursors |

For this option I would return to my “API project” and actually engage with the history of cursor icons and their customizability. This research would likely touch back on the discussions we were having early in the semester regarding early computer interfaces and computer culture. I don’t already have much knowledge regarding the history of computer cursor icons, so it’s kind of difficult to pinpoint the trajectory of my research. However, here are a few things I know I need to work on for this project:

- Write a better image scraper tailored to the custom cursor website’s architecture
 - For the small class project I was pressed on time and used the image scraper we made in class, which wasn’t entirely suited for the website I was scraping (it worked, but could be tweaked to extract information more effectively and accurately from the site)
- Finding a system of compensation or way of crediting the makers behind the custom cursors I scrape—this might be a challenge since the “junkyard” cursors aren’t linked to the user’s page, they only cite the user’s handle. This page on the website gives a small outline of licensing: <http://www.rw-designer.com/licenses>
- Is more, better? (re: the quantity of collected cursors)
 - I am thinking of maybe only scraping cursors with human faces? Or creating sub-collections? (a kind of taxonomy of custom cursors?)
- What can this archive become?
 - I am still drawn to the idea of custom cursors as keychains—perhaps the idea is “quaint,” but I think it would be lovely to print these cursors to-scale and turn them into actual functional keychains (course, with crediting on the back)
 - I could also experiment with using these images to generate new custom cursors (maybe share them as a twitter bot?)
 - How can this archive matter now that it’s kind of an obsolete practice (?)

| Option 2: Research on Generative Text for Small Datasets |

This option would probably veer more towards the essay option for the final project. If I go in this direction I would be expanding on my past research on the history of writing tools and the craft of writing, in particular, how text-editors changed the way we metabolize the process of imagining, composing, editing, and disseminating stories—after pen and paper, after the typewriter. I am interested in how this history may inform my own explorations of “writing *with* Sontag”—the idea of creating a text-editor that is augmented with a generative text function; in my case, a char-rnn

neural net trained on Sontag's fiction. A dimension of my research that I haven't been able to really explore is how augmented text editing tools could become teaching tools—I am not sure, though, if I am qualified to really point out how tools like this might be used to teach writing (let alone have time to learn enough to have some authority over such a claim). So far, the conclusion I have come to is that this tool can provide some nice creative prompts to extrapolate manually. So, I am kind of stuck in my research at the moment, but would love to take this opportunity to continue working with my Sontag corpus, even if it means trying different methods to generate text based on either the whole corpus or small subsections.

Some ideas for continuing my work with my Sontag corpus:

- Train different generative text models on the Sontag corpus
 - Try Markov chains (for her journal corpus)
 - (Maybe) try GPT-2 (for her theory corpus)
 - Research other open-source tools
- Create a fabricated interview between her and I
- I still need to think about other ideas.