Together Apart: Community life in times of crisis

Given recent events relating to the Covid-19 pandemic, as a group of concerned citizens who share an interest in community development, we have created a story-sharing platform. We hope that it can inform communities everywhere about how to mobilise their local resources. Our interest is in responding with care, connectedness and creativity to the crisis that is unfolding before us.

Ours is a modest contribution. We don't expect, nor have the capacity, to host the stories of the world. Rather, we hope that local people, who care about the development of communities in their own areas, will take on the mantle and host their own versions of this platform in ways that are designed for and responsive to local need. To support this aim, we will contribute this platform to the creative commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

If you are considering hosting your own local version, below is a technical outline of the platform configuration and available options. If you or someone in your community have the technical skills to take this on, or contribute in any way, please get in touch with us to discuss further - info@myfastestmile.com

Story Capture

Lime Survey (https://www.limesurvey.org)

"As a web server-based software Lime Survey enables users using a web interface to develop and publish on-line surveys, collect responses, create statistics, and export the resulting data to other applications" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LimeSurvey)

- the standard "stack" is HTML, JavaScript, CSS, PHP & MySQL
- Hosting options
    - Lime Survey Pro (hosted option)
    - Lime Survey CE (hosting your own installation)
        - installation guidelines
- Lime Survey Pro (hosted) limitations
    - survey response limits
    - cannot install some plugins/extensions that would enable additional functionality
    - limited capacity for uploading and storing media files
        - we are cooking up an AWS S3 integration as an alternative option
- the survey questions in the current story capture deployment are straightforward in terms of data types - text fields, multiple choice, and a maps plugin that stores lat/long coordinates to a text field.
    - we sometimes tinker with javascript/css to customise questions or add functionality
- survey data can be accessed and exported via the administration console interface or programmatically via a JSON-RPC API
    - we have created a "data wrangling" app that uses the API to grab survey responses and then create a csv file that is specifically formatted for import into Kumu (see below)
- survey designs can be exported/imported as XML
    - we will be doing this for the current story capture deployment and saving to the public GitHub repository (see below)

Story Visualisation

- Kumu (https://www.kumu.io)
  - *"Kumu is a powerful data visualization platform that helps you organize complex information into interactive relationship maps"*
  - Kumu uses css-like syntax to design and style maps
  - We are experimenting with the Kumu platform to share and visualise stories. You can see our current efforts here - https://kumu.io/mark-u/together-apart
    - story data is **manually** imported and updated via csv file (accessible in the GitHub repository)
  - Public Kumu projects can be "forked" and iterated upon by anyone
- We would love others to build on these visualisations, or use their skills and creativity with other platforms/tools to develop something better!

Data & Code Sharing

In line with the open-source and creative commons nature of the together-apart story platform, we will make story data*, survey designs, scripts/coding etc publicly available through a GitHub repository - https://github.com/mark-mfm/together-apart

* In acknowledging data protection and privacy, some data (such as IP address and referral url) will not be made public. It is up to the person sharing their story to decide if they would like to reveal their identity through the story or in supplying contact info (email, social media handle etc)