

# Proposal: THEN

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## A Sentient Newspaper

I would like to intervene on our perspective of current technology as a beneficial primary vessel for mass media. Through creating this object, I will explore our relationship with digital devices and how it relates to the "medium is the message" concept of Marshall McLuhan's where he speaks of instant media giving way to a "global village". This will be done through considering the differences in how we react to print and digital media, and examining whether our reactions are affected by the perceived interactivity of each. My artefact would be presented in an exhibition space- not necessarily that of a gallery. I also feel that in my ideal situation the object would also be taken home by the user, and they could provide feedback on how well this object integrated with their living space. Did it seem out of place for the present day home? Did they use it while eating breakfast? Although my piece is likely to be presented as an art piece, it should be engaging for most audiences, regardless of whether or not they would usually concern themselves with art world. This would encourage play, curiosity and exploration among users of all ages- the commonality between the users should be that they all use personal technology or devices on a daily basis.

I feel that my artefact will challenge the user to reconsider their relationships with their devices and consider the suitability of current vessels of mass media as our primary source of readable content. Some argue that our current sense of reality is being warped by online algorithms that detect what types and sources we are likely to engage with, increasing click-ability and therefore ad revenue. I also want them to consider the appearance of mass media - both visually and sensory. Do they feel that visual content usually present within online media is distracting/overwhelming/overstimulating? Do they prefer the feel of textured paper and manipulating the folds as they turn a page over pushing glass on a screen to advance an article? I want my users to contemplate integrating this artefact on an everyday basis in their own life and their own home. Would they have this work on their coffee table? I am also interested to find out whether users recognise the mildly dystopian echo chamber effect of not having to be exposed to other versions of global news, or whether this is something they enjoy and cherish about the experience.

My artefact may give the user the impression that they are empowered and in control of what they have to be exposed to. However, some may feel that they are being unnecessarily sheltered from other important articles. I feel that there is importance in being exposed to articles with which you might normally not engage- I think this is an attribute of print media that people often overlook. For example, when one sits on a bus or train and picks up a paper next to them, they are likely to flick through the paper; being exposed to a lot of visual and textual material and settling for an article that they probably wouldn't if they were online and had the whole web at their fingertips. I think it is important to expand one's horizons and become understanding of others' views (not only political but further), whether or not you decide to agree on them. For example, even if someone strongly supports a certain political stance, it's critical to understand the opposing views in order to debate and suitably critique it. For these reasons I will strive for my artefact to challenge people's perception of the echo chamber effect, and note their reactions to this responsive and adaptable print media. In fact it would be interesting to have the user answer a question afterwards that determines: 1. Whether or not they felt empowered by the experience; 2. If they think media like this will be implemented in everyday life in the future; 3. If they feel the experience of only viewing what sources they wanted was a positive or negative one.

I'm trying to materialise a sentient newspaper that offers the functions of what our digital media system already performs. By doing this I am exaggerating the echo chamber concept that we experience online on a daily basis without always thinking about it or the way it steers our perception of politics and world news. By allowing users of my prototype to choose their news and source I am allowing them to remain comfortable in their cocoon of articles written by people who think and act like them, and they get to remain pleased with how they react to the world. I will achieve normalising this method of news and content delivery by including additional trivial information such as the weather and will design the spread to take on the appearance of a traditional newspaper. This will allow the user to immediately understand what the object is as they approach it, even if they are not priorly informed.

## WifiTapestry, Richard Vijgen

WifiTapestry is a textile data visualisation of the wireless connections in the space surrounding it. It listens to all traffic coming from all smart devices using wifi such as remote printers, mobile phones and cameras. When data is transmitted from any of 13 channels on the 2.4GHz wifi spectrum, the controller sends a current to an array of thermal elements embedded within the tapestry. Woven from thermochromic yarn, this alters the appearance of the textile, causing the slow and subtle crawling of colours across the wall hanging.

This piece translates a cold artefact which normally is only detected by metal and silicone and visualised on glass screens and presents it in a medium that most wouldn't associate with time-based reactions or interactivity.

## Oh My ( ), Noriyuki Suzuki, 2017

Oh My ( ) is an installation that uses Twitter APIs to track the word "god" in 48 different languages and when found in the text of a tweet, triggers the sound of "oh my god" in that language from a speaker in the exhibition space. There are 48 speakers in the space, one for each language, which are arranged in a world map at the position of the country corresponding to each speaker's assigned language. It also consists of a monitor displaying the live tweets as they come in using HTML, CSS, JavaScript and jQuery.

The system uses a Raspberry Pi 3 Model B as a master with 12 Arduino Mega 2560s as slave computers connected through I2C. Each arduino has 4 speakers connected and upon receipt of a signal from the Pi, it plays the corresponding language's "oh my god". This installation seeks to present the abundance of culture and diversity in the world and encourages the internet to fulfil its originally harked potential- to bridge physical and social distances globally.

## Project Jacquard, Google, 2014 - ongoing

Project Jacquard is an electronic textile project by Google exploring garments that are interactive. The pieces are designed to be worn by urban commuters and are supposed to "understand various touch gestures, activate digital services, and respond with light and haptic feedback". It connects to online services and can notify users of messages and calls they receive. Other services highlighted are on-the-go navigation and music

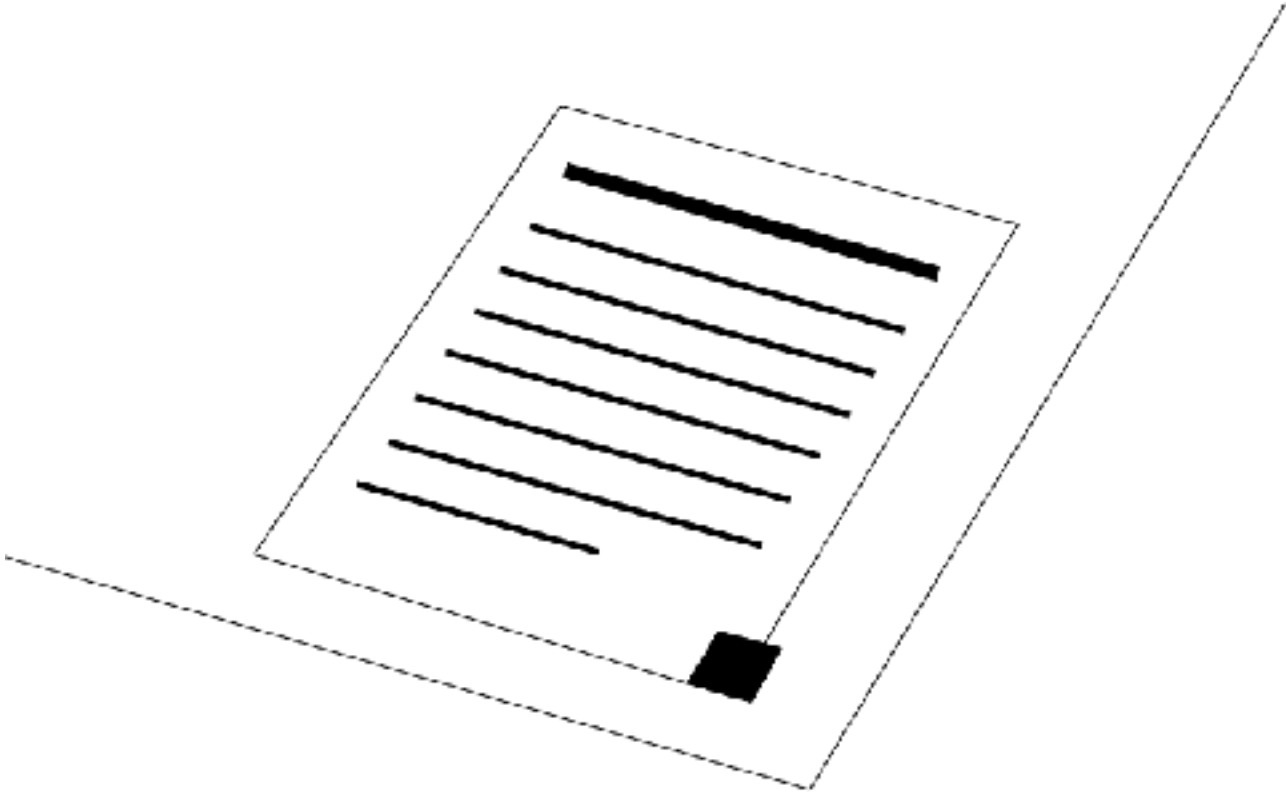
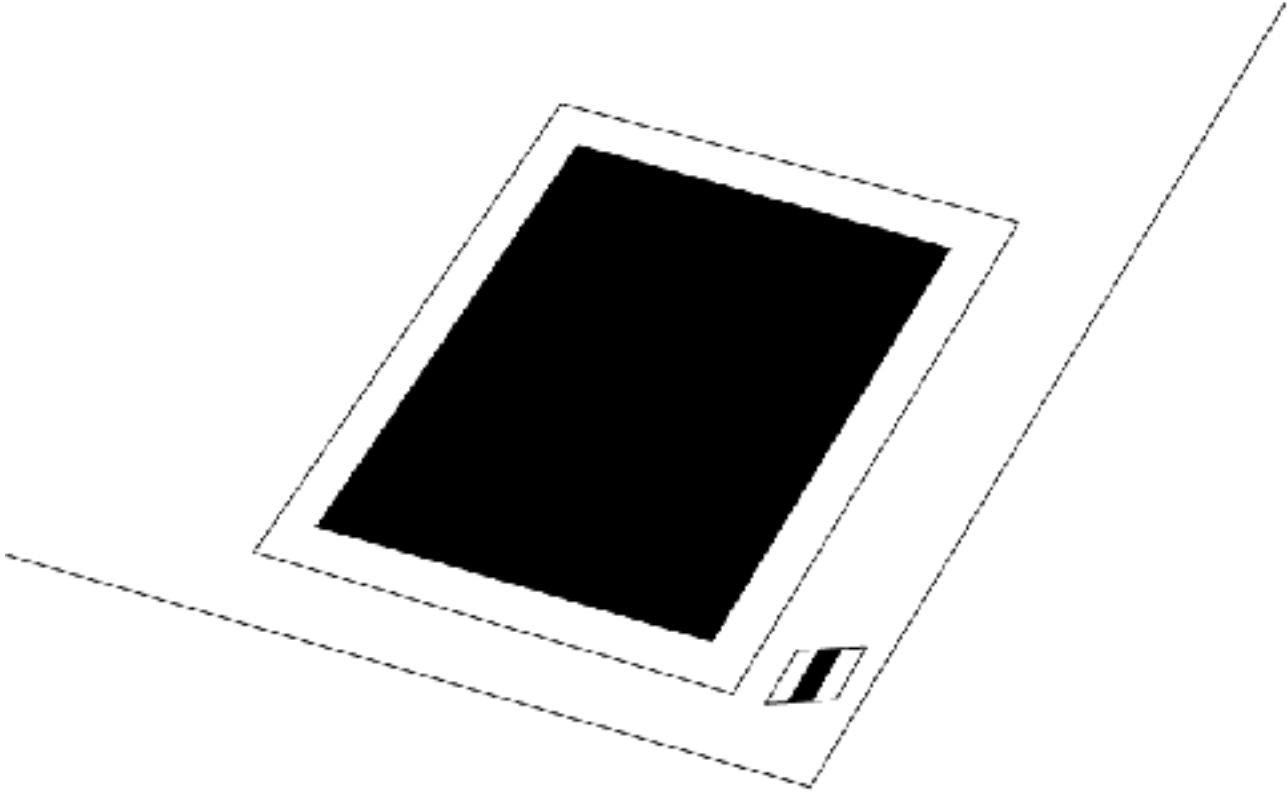
controls. As more apps and services become available, Jacquard expands and increases usability. Google also says their electronics are extremely light, not noticeable when embedded in the fabric and machine washable. So far Google have produced a line of Levi jackets that are Jacquard enabled that are on sale on the project's home page.

## My Project Stands Out

My artefact will be a newspaper spread that is interactive and responsive to both people physically in it's space and to live web data. It will include censored articles that users can choose to reveal one at a time depending on whether or not they find it's title stimulating. This will differ from the other projects because it is able to be interacted with by the people inhabiting the space it will be presented in. It is also an object that users can hold and bend and should not be particularly fragile, where the others are installations that are not intended to be infringed upon or tarnished by the visitors. My project is similar to these projects as it will be responsive to live data from the web. In regards to WifiTapestry, it is similar because it responds to data surrounding it and uses thermochromic materials and it differs where the wall-hanging isn't trying to challenge the viewer in any stimulating or thought provoking way- rather it just translates arbitrary live data into colours and movements that don't serve any purpose other than visual. With Google's Jacquard, the similarities can be drawn in that both it and my project are responsive to web data and physical input and both serve as personal devices. However, they are not similar in their approach to service. My project serves to engage the user in a debate over the benefits and cons of being constantly connected digitally and having customisable incoming media, and also provides the user with new media content. Jacquard on the other hand is to be used as an everyday tool which is supposed to positively benefit your life and exists in the background to feed you with factual data that assists you on your urban commute.



Visualising the Usability



paper switch pressed down