

Lost Time Expansion Statement

Tate Johnson, Arthur Odom, Kaylah Townsend, Neha Shanbhag, Aden Robertson

MDM: <https://github.com/alrob22/Lost-Time/wiki>

Expansion

Lost Time is a narrative game that started with great ambitions, pulling inspiration from storytelling and aesthetics from renowned games like Final Fantasy IX and Boku no Natsuyasumi. With the semester coming to an end, even though we were able to provide a demo showcasing the world of our characters, there were many elements that we were unable to implement due to time constraints. However, if time permits in the future, then we as collaborators might find ourselves working again towards this project.

The first most important thing would be working on a time-based system to actually work within the game. Having a world that heavily requires the passage of time to advance in the narratives of our characters, it would be essential to get this implemented properly. Our dialogue system, Articy, is very opaque to the programmer & version control systems; so all changes integrating dialogue require going back-and-forth multiple times with the Articy handler. Once time progression is synced between the dialogue system & the rest of the game, a day-night cycle would be implemented. This will put the player & the NPCs on a schedule, creating a relaxing day-to-day rhythm of play while emphasizing our themes.

For context, you are a traveling merchant going to a dock to leave on a boat, but you must pass through two towns to get to your destination. Interacting and helping the residents of these towns during a 2-week experience will affect who joins you at the end, waving you goodbye from the shore. To make this game more interactive, rather than a storytelling experience, we would work on adding quests that aid characters. For instance, the character Melio Gresham is a

child who plays in the woods on the outskirts of Town A. When you get to know this character, Melio may ask you to help him collect some materials, and this would thus advance his narrative when you choose to help him. Implementing engaging elements like this will allow players to do more than read through the dialogue of characters.

Another impactful piece would be the creation of the second village. Currently, the layout of town A and the existing characters is entirely fleshed out, but in the future, we would work on the creation of town B, a more coastal landscape due to it being the closest to the dock. Here, there would be more lovable characters, such as a guild member who has a budding crush on the tavern keeper in town A, and a miner, who has a long rivalry with the blacksmith in town A. The player could choose to meddle in these relationships by either building or destroying them, thus giving the player agency in this world.

For a more immersive gameplay, building the interiors of the village huts would have been a fun addition. For town A, there were already plans in place to create the interiors of the tavern, the bakery, and the blacksmith, where you could find the characters in their respective places. If time permitted, we would have created a scene within the game where all the townsfolk gather together in the tavern for the historian's birthday, a special event that wouldn't have happened if you hadn't passed out invitations. Just like Final Fantasy IX, accessing the interiors of buildings will add another layer to gameplay, making players feel more in control of where they want to explore and enter the inner worlds of the characters.

Below is a comprehensive list containing our ideas for expansion:

- Quest line for Melio, which is already written
- Quest line for all main characters
- Second village, creating characters for it and following up on existing characters
- Time-based system that actually works and updates global variables in Articy
- Boat ride epilogue/ending
- Character reactions (surprise faces)
- Polish work
- Interiors of village huts
- Grave site for Eliza's narrative
- NPC schedules with some naturalistic variation
- A day/night cycle that forces the player to sleep in a bed.

Unfinished Work

Unfortunately, due to the inherent size of our idea and the inexperience of working on a narrative-driven project of this nature, the scope we had laid out for ourselves (which we thought was obtainable at the time) did not come to pass. While this ultimately led to us having to shed a lot of what we wanted to do, as detailed above in the Expansion section, it also led to many aspects of our game remaining unfinished.

For the narrative, there were entire story arcs that had been written and fleshed out, but were unfortunately unable to make the cut due to time constraints. For instance, the characters Eliza and Melio Gresham each had 5 different story segments that the player could go through, and if you completed them in time, then you could have had influence in a pivoting moment, such as Melio running away from home, or Eliza locking herself away from the world on her late husband's death anniversary. All the other characters would have also each followed the same framework of 5 story arcs and a pivotal moment you could influence, and this would have made a long and impactful narrative game interacting with all characters and helping them with their needs throughout a 2 week timeframe within the game. Whoever you had helped would be there at the end of the game, waving you goodbye as you leave on a boat. At the moment of our demo, the only characters drawn out are town A residents, and you can have minimal dialogue with them, with their emotions changing as you converse with them. In the future, we will have more character arcs written out, in both town A and town B, with stories interwoven between characters to make a rich and complex narrative to engage in.

Our worlds for the game, meaning both the 3D overworld and the 2.5D town, have all the necessary engine functionality. However, certain cuts to the scope of content had to be made. We cut all content implementation for Town B and the dock in the overworld. The dock remains

placed in the overworld with a ramp down to it, but it has no attached 2.5D scene where the ending would have taken place. Since we left out the ending, the dock remains functionless. We cut the second town entirely, completely removing its temporary model in the overworld. We did not realize how long it would take to fully realize a single town with as much detail as we gave it, so we thought it best to put all of our focus on a single Town A instead of stretching ourselves between two towns. Also, boundaries, collisions, and player movement could be improved with more time to polish, as well as some additional polish work within the town, specifically with art and models. Additionally, the demonstration we had of Melio running through the overworld during a set time was removed since we did not have time to flesh out the time management of the game.