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Media Editing Final Paper

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The definition for “media editing” under which I entered this class was narrow—limited mostly to sound, video and image editing. I was surprised and confounded when the assignments page for the class wiki included seven modules, many of which had nothing to do with that definition. At the beginning of the semester as the class whizzed through the first three modules which conformed to the connotation of media editing that I had formed throughout the years, I experienced frustration that the class was nothing like I had imagined it would be—a semester split between three forms of media, clamoring with refined projects and advanced technical details fighting for my attention. I was disappointed that image editing, the true subject of my fascination, came and went so quickly in the curriculum, resurfacing occasionally to make me wish yet again that we were given more than a week to learn about it.

The end of those first three modules was disappointing—my reason for enrolling in the class had expired while the semester was just beginning to roll. Each passing module just whetted my curiosity for each mode of media editing without allowing time for me to achieve an adequate depth of understanding of its inner workings. But as time went by, I began to understand why the class was set up this way. Aside from emulating the time-crunching working conditions of the real world, the class needed such a limited time frame for each module to expose students to new ideas, and refine ones they had already. In particular, their ideas about media editing. I could see my little definition expanding with the introduction of every passing module, including more and more media. Now, my understanding of the subject is richer, for all the discomfort the expansion caused in the beginning.

Media editing is all about communication. It makes sense now that I was so fixated on sound, image and video editing, for those are the stock of American culture, and how our norms and expectations are communicated. But this communication can happen through many creative means, not limited to those three. Media editing is a way of manipulating the way we think and sending a message by changing something in the environment, from rearranging or redesigning a room, to creating an informational pamphlet that explains a subject with no words. While media

editing includes recent technological methods of artistic expression such as manipulating photographs in Photoshop, it can also be something as different and simple as arranging a space to convey a different feel, or creating an interface to solve a problem. An example of an innovative interface that was covered in class is the Nest Learning Thermostat. This design takes a familiar, everyday, reasonably uninteresting interface—the thermostat—and turns it into something beautiful, creative and functional. This thermostat has the capability to learn when users change certain settings, and can change them automatically after a pattern is detected. If the pattern of

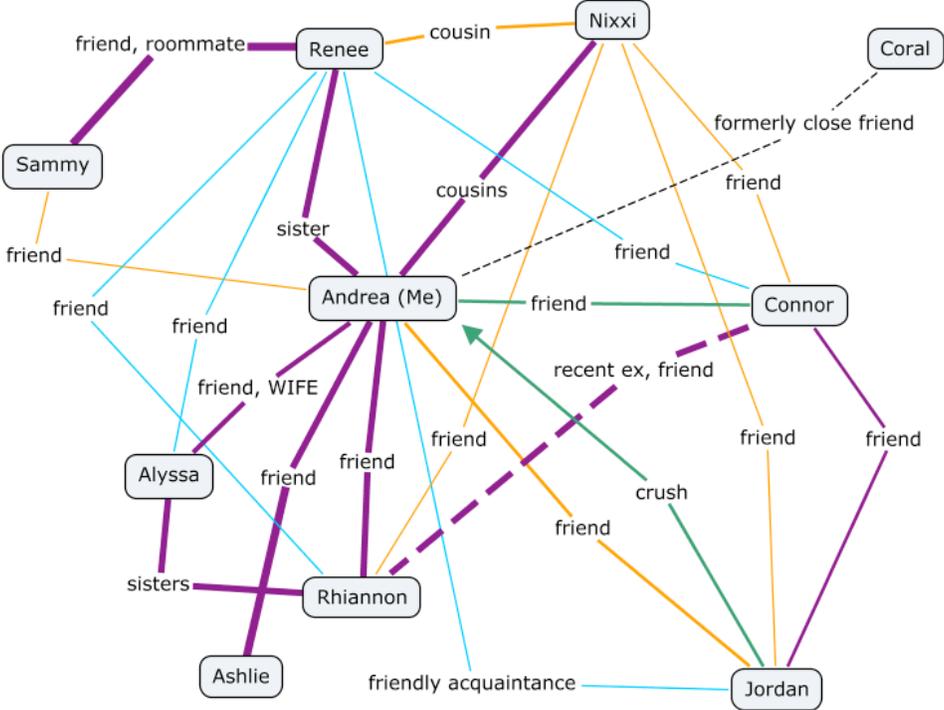


Figure 1 - Nest Learning Thermostat

settings changes, it can adjust accordingly, making the regular chore of adjusting the thermostat throughout the day dissipate as it learns. While this product fulfills a practical, utilitarian purpose, it is artfully designed and conveys a message as any media editing artifact would. It communicates the temperature and thermostat settings to the user. Its simple and innovative design calls into question the boundary between art and industry, and also makes me question the need for overly complicated and unappealing interfaces. This product embodies the spirit of media editing by the way it communicates with its audience.

An aspect of media editing that I did not understand at first was social networking. Of course, social networking is centered around communication and social networking sites such as Facebook have streamlined interfaces that let users browse and edit content based on their preferences and past choices. But this did not fit under my original definition of media editing. Now, I can see it as a prime exemplar for media editing because it is rooted in communication, and allows people to actively view and change their social circles. Just as the Nest thermostat built off of previous models and streamlined them, so did Facebook improve upon earlier popular social networking sites like MySpace. Because the users are in charge of how popular an interface becomes, shifting focus from MySpace to Facebook was the ultimate act of media

editing at a large scale, involving millions of people choosing to approach their social circles in a different way. This process of streamlining and revising can be present in all aspects of media editing, but is obvious in social networking. This act of media editing communicates the majority's preferences. Interfaces like Facebook are not the only example of social networking as media editing. A much more straightforward, if less versatile tool for social media is the network map, as shown by an example of my own work from class.



This example of media editing shows the communication aspect of the idea very clearly. The social network map communicates something about each of the nodes present by how the viewer interprets the differences in the edges. It also communicates in a general manner the relationship between me, the center node, and all of the others, and how I interpret the relationships between my friends. Though this example, the thermostat and Facebook are all very different artifacts, they all communicate information and ideas to an audience and contribute to the ever growing and changing definition of media editing.

References

Nest Learning Thermostat. Digital image. Cranking Up the Heat on Your Product Design. N.p., 13 Aug. 2012. Web. 5 May 2013.