

Designing Storyworlds Across Media

MIT Splash! 2012

THE PROJECT

Students will organize into “transmedia companies” and agree on a media property (film, television series, video game, comic book, novel, etc.) to turn into a successful transmedia franchise. You can consider a property that is a “standalone,” or you can look at a property that you feel has poorly handled media extensions in the past. In the next two hours, your team will:

1. Plan a transmedia franchise (for the purposes of this exercise, at least three different media platforms, including the main property). The plan should be recorded in the form of a Powerpoint or Keynote presentation.
2. Design an early prototype for one of the media extensions.
3. Pitch your franchise to the class in a 5-10 minute presentation.

THE PLAN

In your transmedia plan, you should try to answer at least some of these questions:

- What is unique about this media property?
- What is the established story and world, and how can you expand or enrich what’s already in place? What details can you draw from one part of the story to include in another?
- Who is the intended audience(s)?
- What part of the story do you plan to tell on each media platform? Why?
- How will you integrate the different media platforms to create a cohesive world?

And, of course, the basics: what’s the story, who are the characters, where does it take place, and so on.

THE PROTOTYPE

What’s important for us to remember is that *we’re not trying to create a finished product*. Here are some examples of what you can do:

- Illustrate a storyboard with written dialogue and plot description for some scenes of a comic book extension.
- Create a paper-based version of a videogame extension you would build, and have the class playtest it.
- Write the plot summary of a short film extension and perform or record a scene from it.

THE TEAM

Each member of the team will inevitably have their own strengths and weaknesses. Try to team up with people with skills different to your own. Is someone in your group a musician, and someone else an artist? Maybe you can produce some kind of audiovisual experience. Leverage your talents!

Of course, everyone can and should contribute to the *overall* strategy for telling the story across media.

THE SUPPLIES

Paper, markers, pens, scissors, glue, and other supplies will be available for you to use. Depending on availability, computers and video cameras may also be available for use. If you have a smartphone or laptop with a video camera or microphone, don't be afraid to use that as well. Just ask Stephen or Michael if you want to use the computer lab to conduct research, upload files, or create your prototype/presentation.

That being said, while digital tools can be valuable, we would also suggest creating paper-based prototypes. This way of working will give you more time to try out different possibilities and develop a strong concept.

In the end, just remember to be creative and have fun!