
Public Curation of a Historic Collection: A Means for Speaking Safely in Public

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Abstract

We showcase the *Voices from the Rwanda Tribunal* project and associated website that provides online public access to a set of historic video interviews with personnel from the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. The demonstration emphasizes the careful design process needed for a project of this sensitivity, including two technical features that democratize curation of the collection – (1) public suggestions for video highlights and (2) public contribution of keywords in Kinyarwanda, English or French.

Keywords

Multi-lifespan information system design; democratizing curation; international justice; public participation, protecting political discourse

ACM Classification Keywords

H5.m. Information interfaces and presentation (e.g., HCI): Miscellaneous.

General Terms

Design, human factors.

Introduction

In socio-political environments with deep-seated recurring violence, it can be challenging to design for

public participation while keeping safe those who would choose to engage in online discourse. We take up this challenge from a multi-lifespan information system design perspective [2] with the *Voices from the Rwanda Tribunal* [1] (*Tribunal Voices*) project.

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) was established in response to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. One of the first tribunals since Nuremberg, the ICTR represents one significant step on the complex path toward developing meaningful systems of international justice. The *Voices from the Rwanda Tribunal*, in turn, comprises historic video interviews that contain insights, reflections, and learnings from those who participated in the tribunal. Traditionally, special collections such as this are kept in carefully protected library vaults, accessible to only a small number of researchers; furthermore, the power of curation typically rests in even fewer hands.

Demonstration

During this CSCW reception demonstration, visitors are briefly introduced to the *Tribunal Voices* collection. Depending on the number of attendees, opportunity exists for individual or collective exploration of the system. The presenters are available to discuss and reflect on the issues and values, both implicit and explicit, in many of the design decisions. We anticipate that this discussion and reflection will be of particular interest to CSCW conference attendees.

Discussion topics include:

- Challenges for supporting online public speech within constrained socio-political environments; including reasons why an open-ended discussion forum

is not a tenable solution given current Rwandan domestic law (e.g., 2008 Genocide Ideology Law).

- How the online public's suggested video highlights provide one way to allow for "safe" speech within the parameters of the website.
- How the online public's contributed keywords will be used to evolve future access to the video collection responsive to different communities. Specifically given the multi-lifespan framing of this research, how these keyword contributions position the research and design team to create interfaces and interactions sensitive to different generations of Rwandans and different specialist interests (e.g., legal researchers).
- Ways in which this work explores how interaction design can support generational healing from widespread, horrific violence.
- Design decisions that seek to ensure the future safety of visitors to the site. In particular, the decision "not to design user-oriented features," and the decision "not to retain logs." Tensions between personalization and future visitor safety.
- Future directions for facilitating re-use and remixing of this material by other groups including Rwandan youth and the Rwandan legal community.

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References

[1] *Voices from the Rwanda Tribunal*
<http://www.tribunalvoices.org/>.

[2] Friedman, B., and Nathan, L. P. Multi-lifespan information system design: A research initiative for the HCI community. In *Proc. CHI 2010*, ACM Press (2010), 2243-2246.