



**design studio two**

{de612}

project 2.0 — database / interface

In this assignment, we'll explore data, data collection, analysis, information, structured relationships, time, space, mapping, sequencing, and visual representation through the lens of a data set you choose. Then, you'll design and develop a rich interface to your database in Flash that features motion, sound, and video. Our objective is for you to experience the entire range of the interface development process while focusing upon the functional and visual aesthetics of modern data visualization and interface design.



MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

## design studio two

{de612}

### project 2.0 – database / interface

**semester** spring 2009  
**web site** dmide612.pbwiki.com  
**professor** joseph a. quackenbush  
**office hours** tuesdays 1:30 – 3:00  
 by appointment  
**office** tower 607  
**office phone** 617.879.7682  
**studio phone** 781.740.0644  
**studio fax** 781.740.0645  
**e-mail** joe@jamdesign.com  
**web** www.jamdesign.com

#### overview

This assignment investigates the transformation of raw data into comprehensible information. The first phase of the assignment entails gathering a simple data set and defining methods to structure that data. The second phase involves extracting findings from the data and conveying that information clearly and engagingly in a dynamic interface.

#### requirements

Every project *must* include the following elements. In addition, each student will be asked to develop features unique to their particular database.

- + You must select a minimum of 100 objects in your data set.
- + Data must contain a minimum of seven attributes; two of which must be *time* and *space*.
- + One component of your interface must map time/space of your data.
- + You must show a search mechanism that does not rely upon words.
- + Sound, video, and motion must be integral parts of the interface.
- + Final interface must be in Flash.

#### objectives

- + To gather a collection of abstract data;
- + To develop unique and appropriate methods of structuring and filtering data;
- + To become familiar with ordering, presenting and sequencing information within static and dynamic media;
- + To consider the appropriateness of each medium in relation to given content;
- + To transfer complex information visually in a clear and concise way;
- + To use motion and sound as tools to clarify and contextualize visual information.

#### reading list

- Tufte, Edward R. *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information*. Graphics Press, 2001.
- Tufte, Edward R. *Envisioning Information*. Graphics Press, 1990.
- Wurman, Richard Saul. *Understanding USA*. TED Conferences. 1999.

*This assignment is based, in part, on one created by Brian Lucid titled Database. Thanks to Brian for this part of the project.*



## design studio two

{de612}

MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

### project 2.1 – interface aesthetics

**semester** spring 2009  
**web site** dmide612.pbwiki.com  
**professor** joseph a. quackenbush  
**office hours** tuesdays 1:30 – 3:00  
 by appointment  
**office** tower 607  
**office phone** 617.879.7682  
**studio phone** 781.740.0644  
**studio fax** 781.740.0645  
**e-mail** joe@jamdesign.com  
**web** www.jamdesign.com

#### overview

Working in small groups over the next week, you will critique selected interfaces, write a summary of each for the Wiki, and choose just one to present to class next week. Your critiques must respond, at a minimum, to the questions posed below.

Your written critique of each interface should be in essay form (not just a list of answers to the questions). Post a PDF of your critique for each site to the wiki before class starts next week.

#### group 1: Dennis / Kat

- 1) [www.intentionallies.co.jp](http://www.intentionallies.co.jp)
- 2) Adobe Lightroom

#### group 2: Kyoung / Kent

- 1) [www.razorfish.com](http://www.razorfish.com)
- 3) [www.wefeelfine.org](http://www.wefeelfine.org)

#### group 3: Lou / Audrey / David

- 1) British History Timeline  
[bbc.co.uk/history/british/launch\\_tl\\_british.shtml](http://bbc.co.uk/history/british/launch_tl_british.shtml)
- 2) The Dumpster  
[artport.whitney.org/commissions/thedumpster/](http://artport.whitney.org/commissions/thedumpster/)
- 3) [www.sonicmemorial.org](http://www.sonicmemorial.org)

#### functional aesthetics

- + What are the predominant media elements of the piece?
- + Are they visual? Aural? Gestural? Interactive? In what proportion?
- + What demands are placed on the user?
- + How is data managed? Is it static? Dynamic?
- + How is time used in the work?
- + Does the work employ metaphors?
- + Are there recurring themes present in the piece?
- + Is the work poetic or practical?
- + Does the work contain parallels to the analog world?

#### visual aesthetics

- + What is your gut reaction to the visual presentation?
- + How does it make you feel? Initially? After time in the piece?
- + How would you describe its visual aesthetic?
- + What are the visual conventions used in the piece?
- + Is there one overriding aesthetic or are there multiple visual ideas within the piece? If multiple, do they work together? Or against each other?
- + How does the visual presentation support/impede the interactive?
- + How does the visual presentation support/impede other media?
- + Would you say the piece is an effective visual experience? An effective new media experience?

#### aesthetic *Function: noun*

1 plural but singular or plural in construction : a branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of beauty, art, and taste and with the creation and appreciation of beauty

2 : a particular theory or conception of beauty or art : a particular taste for or approach to what is pleasing to the senses and especially sight <modernist aesthetics> <staging new ballets which reflected the aesthetic of the new nation — Mary Clarke & Clement Crisp>

3 plural : a pleasing appearance or effect : BEAUTY <appreciated the aesthetics of the gemstones>



MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

## design studio two

{de612}

### project 2.2 — developing your data

<b>semester</b>	spring 2009
<b>web site</b>	dmide612.pbwiki.com
<b>professor</b>	joseph a. quackenbush
<b>office hours</b>	tuesdays 1:30 – 3:00 by appointment
<b>office</b>	tower 607
<b>office phone</b>	617.879.7682
<b>studio phone</b>	781.740.0644
<b>studio fax</b>	781.740.0645
<b>e-mail</b>	joe@jamdesign.com
<b>web</b>	www.jamdesign.com

#### choosing your data

The art of this assignment is designing your interface, not choosing your data set. You'll have just one week to choose. Some things to think about:

- + Select a subject matter that you feel strongly about. Try to include a thesis interest if possible.
- + Objects, experiences, journeys, people, and places can make for interesting data sets.
- + Avoid conventional collections of data such as DVDs, music, and books.
- + Consider selecting multiple subjects and quickly mapping them to get an idea of their potential.

#### what to do first

Create a detailed record of your collection, noting specific details for each item. What should be recorded for each object? Contemplate the context of how the items in the collection are created, marketed, and used. Do not limit yourself to general facts such as dates and genres, consider personal interactions with these items as well.

#### then ...

Once you have completed a thorough accounting of the items, use the principles of Richard Saul Wurman's L.A.T.C.H. (Location, Alphabet, Time, Category, Hierarchy) to identify seven unique methods with which you can organize or sort your collection. A certain amount of creative interpretation should be applied when choosing organizational methods. For example, in a collection organized chronologically, items could be put in order by their release date or by the date of purchase. Both methods of organization clarify the collection. One is personal. One is not. For this assignment, both methods are constructive. Be creative in your selection of organizational methods. Pushing beyond the expected will reveal deeper insight into your collection.

#### what to do

Identify seven useful ways with which you re-sort your collection, then design a poster that clearly presents your collection while illustrating how each "entry" in your database (i.e. album or DVD) relates to each of your seven organizational schemes.

Unlike a computer database, data on paper cannot be resorted at will. The challenge of designing this poster lies in creating an understandable structure of information that clearly presents all seven data relationships simultaneously. This requires placing the chosen sorting methods into a hierarchy. What organizational methods are most important based upon your opinion as to how others should view this collection?

For example, if a record collection is organized by the following seven parameters (i.e. each album is tagged with the following "metadata")

1. Name of artist
2. Name of album
3. Date album released
4. Number of tracks
5. Genre
6. Number of times played (personal)
7. Date album purchased (personal) the designer may decide that (1) is the most useful method of organizing the collection, (6) is the second most important and (5) is the third. This hierarchy might lead to a tabular chart with the albums listed in alphabetical order with sub-groupings like (5) visualized within the overall structure via formal relationships—color, scale, typography, etc.

#### map your data

User colored markers only and large craft paper for your early sketches. Work quickly and loosely. Convey as much information as possible. Strive for accuracy, clarity, and simplicity. *Minimum size is 4'x4'.*



# design studio two {de612}

MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

## project 2.0 – schedule

**semester** spring 2009  
**web site** dmide612.pbwiki.com  
**professor** joseph a. quackenbush  
**office hours** tuesdays 1:30 – 3:00  
 by appointment  
**office** tower 607  
**office phone** 617.879.7682  
**studio phone** 781.740.0644  
**studio fax** 781.740.0645  
**e-mail** joe@jamdesign.com  
**web** www.jamdesign.com

week	date	tuesdays
<b>week 9</b>	march 24	<i>project 2: introduction</i>
<b>week 10</b>	march 31	<i>project 2</i> Presentation of interface critiques by small groups. Initial presentation of your data.
<b>week 11</b>	april 7	<i>project 2</i> Hand drawn diagram of your data using markers only, minimum size is 4' x 4'. Rough marker sketches of your interface and its key features.
<b>week 12</b>	april 14	<i>project 2</i> Wireframes in the form of PDF click thru. Paper prototype of your wireframes.
<b>week 13</b>	april 21	<i>project 2</i> Three design concepts of your interface showing key features presented in Photoshop, Illustrator, or InDesign.
<b>week 14</b>	april 28	<i>project 2</i> Revised and final design concept for your interface incorporating feedback from last week's critique. Rough cut of interface in Flash showing motion, animations, and behaviors.
<b>week 15</b>	may 5	<i>project 2</i> Final draft of Flash prototype showing all major features as well as motion, animation, sound, and behaviors.
<b>week 16</b>	may 12	<i>project 2</i> Presentation of final working prototype Final revised Murray project due Observations and conclusions
<b>week 17</b>	may 13, 14	<i>dmi final reviews</i>