Digital Imagery in Human-Computer Interaction Design
Project 1.A Digital Imagery as a Material of Interaction Design
Thursday January 14th 2010

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Project
Find or create your own images or illustrations which denote or picture the notion of digital imagery as a material of interaction design. This is a design research project—I am not interested in your original concepts, but rather things you find by observation or secondary sources that are interesting and compelling. Choose three contrasting images or illustrations. At least one of your choices must be connected to digital technologies in some way.

Format:
Your project must be presented on three and only three landscape mode pages in pdf format. The first page should be a sketch, the second page should be your final research or concept, and the third page should be your primary and secondary attributions lists, as in the example/model solution that follows. Upload your work to oncourse, as instructed in class. Be certain to reference all of your sources accurately and completely.

DUE Thursday January 21st no later than 9:00 AM
A FINAL form completed project.

The example on the pages that follow gives an idea of what a design research project could look like for the purposes of this class project. The example is by no means the most ideal project—yours should not be longer, but it can and ideally should be more compelling and interesting.
Lewis Hine’s world interactions photography as agency of socio-political awareness
Child Labor, Lewis Hine (1900-1973)

Young textile spinner, cotton mill, NC (1900-1937)
by Lewis Wickes Hine (1874-1940)
(source: digitalgallery.nypl.org)

Lewis Wickes Hine is one of the first and most famous of American Photographers and is widely recognized as the first photographer to use photographic imagery for the purpose of inspiring greater social justice. Beginning in the early 1900’s, he documented child labor in the United States. By many accounts, his photographs helped to establish child labor laws in this country.

Hine may have helped to raise awareness of child labor by his use of photographs as socio-political documentary, but the world still has a long way to go. According to UNICEF, “An estimated 158 million children aged 5-14 are engaged in child labour - one in six children in the world. Millions of children are engaged in hazardous situations or conditions, such as working in mines, working with chemicals and pesticides in agriculture or working with dangerous machinery. They are everywhere but invisible, toiling as domestic servants in homes, labouring behind the walls of workshops, hidden from view in plantations.”
(source: unicef.org/protection/index_childlabour.html)

New York Public Library Digital Gallery

The New York Public Library Digital Gallery: Open Access to Digitized Primary Source Images
(source: digitalgallery.nypl.org)

Many of Hine’s images are available in digital form from the NYPL Digital Gallery. Large prints are available for purchase as “gallery prints.” Instructions for editorial or commercial use are provided, but the issue of context in which digital images can and cannot be used without payment of a licensing fee, as for example in our present educational context, remains unclear. Indiana University provides several digital image libraries online, including DIDO—digital images delivered online, as well as licensing agreements with larger collections such as ARTstor (www.artstor.org), and special collections such as the Charles W. Cushman Photograph Collection (webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/cushman).

The interactivity design of digital galleries varies widely from one gallery to another. This is an open area of study in HCI/d—A quick search of the term “digital gallery” in the ACM digital library indicates more presence for the issue in SIGGRAPH than SIGCHI literatures, at the time I write this.

Google Image Search

Google Images: Search for “Child Labor”
(source: images.google.com)

An image search using Google images on the term “Child Labor” yields an interesting mix of images of modern day child labor with many well known century old images by Lewis Hine. The abundance of photographic imagery in the digital world certainly holds implications that go beyond the mechanisms of distribution available in Hine’s day. The question before us, as we embark on our study of digital imagery as a material of interaction design, is exactly what are these implications?

Does digital technology applied to the archiving and distribution of everyday imagery raise awareness or does the abundance of digital imagery create so much noise that pressing social issues such as modern day child labor may be hidden by the sheer volume of content available? Or, is it both? What is the potential role of interaction design in taking an active values-rich position on interactivité with digital imagery? How does digital imagery as a material differ from digital textual materials?

(All sites referenced on this page accessed on 1.13.2010)
Primary Attributions
Lewis W. Hine: The notion of photography as social agency.

Secondary Attributions
image: Young textile spinner, cotton mill, NC (1900-1937) by Lewis Wickes Hine (1874-1940) (source: digitalgallery.nypl.org @ 1.13.2010)
image: Google Images: Search for “Child Labor” (source: images.google.com @ 1.13.2010)
source: www.unicef.org/protection/index_childlabour.html @ 1.13.2010
source: www.artstor.org @ 1.13.2010
source: webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/cushman @ 1.13.2010
source: dido.dlib.indiana.edu/collections/dido @ 1.13.2010
source: www.libraries.iub.edu @ 1.13.2010
source: portal.acm.org/dl.cfm @ 1.13.2010