

# Project 4: Narrative of Public Space/ Mini Thesis

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## ABSTRACT

In this research paper, I will attempt to describe the concept for my narrative class final project. I will go into some detail about what my project idea is. In this final project, I will research how narrative is used with the integration of a public space, in this case I have chosen the lobby of 2 W13th street. I will choose a space in the Parsons lobby to assess its narrative content and create an interface that will further extend the story of experiencing it. I will study the narrative strategies that exist in the lobby and assess its quality and usefulness.

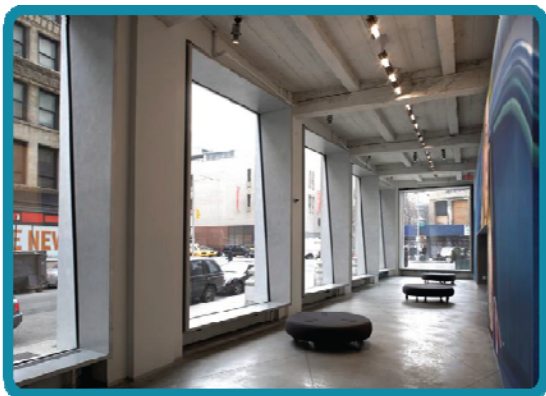


Figure 1. Kiosk prototype (New York, United States, Parsons final project, 2011.)

## Keywords

Interface, Installation, Interactive E-Book

## INTRODUCTION

I wanted to create a project for this space that would serve as an entertainment piece to the students utilizing this space. Many students on break come to the lobby in 2 west

13<sup>th</sup> street to relax. I want to help enhance that experience by providing some entertainment for them. The project that I am currently working on is called the graphic novel interaction project. The thesis question as an argument that I propose to ask is “How did the graphic novel interaction project launch my career as an innovative artist & entrepreneur?” The reason why I wanted to explore this question is that I wanted to create a form of documentation for this project.



Figure 2. Kiosk prototype (New York, United States, Parsons final project, 2011.)

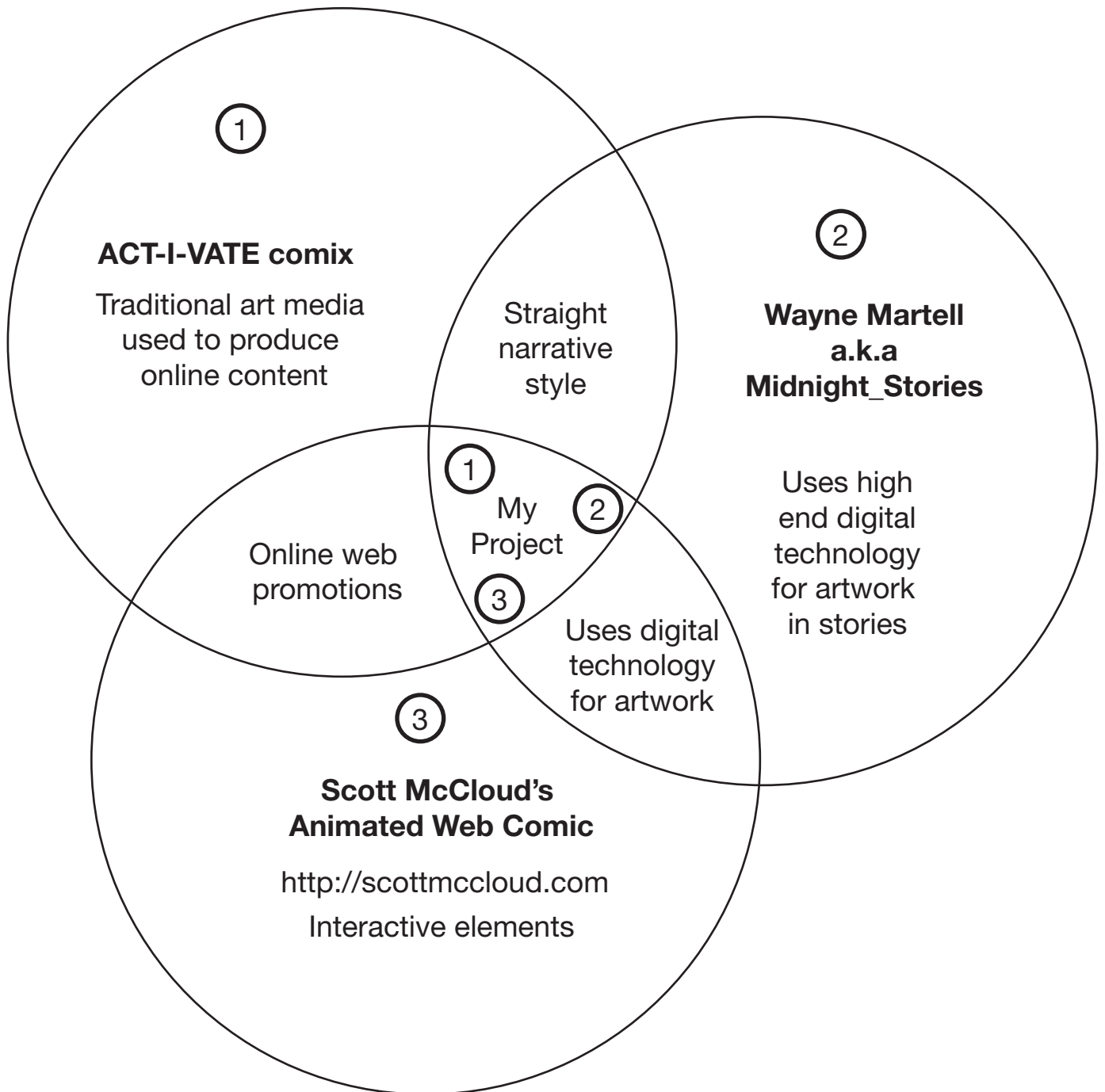
## Happenings

Students usually go to the Parsons lobby to relax on break, work on projects, papers, eat lunch, use it as a meeting place, work on their laptops & socialize. Why choose this space? This space is sometimes used for art & design installation pieces for Parsons Students & for its convenience for me in proximity as well as the ability to receive permission to display my work there for academic purposes.

## CONTEXTUALIZING MY DESIGN CONCEPT

For this project the domains & fields that are similar to my project are the follows: My precedents are, Activate Comics, Wayne Martell from Renderosity.com, an online community of artists, Scott McCloud’s online interactive comics & lastly an interactive e-book that I’ve created

# Visual Map of domains covered by my project & project precedents



previously. “What is Activate Comics? ACT-I-VATE comix, is webcomix collective conceived by Dean Haspiel, debuted February 1st, 2006, on the blogging platform, Livejournal, and featured the works of founding members Dean Haspiel, Dan Goldman, Nick Bertozzi, Michel Fiffe, Leland Purvis, Nikki Cook, Tim Hamilton, and Josh Neufeld. Since then, the curated collective has expanded by hand-picking cartoonists to achieve its current membership. ACT-I-VATE does not accept unsolicited submissions. ACT-I-VATE features original, serialized graphic novels and is updated daily. Artists produce their signature work sans editorial oversight and offer their personal comix for free to an ever-growing audience of loyal readers. In addition to these high-quality comix, ACT-I-VATE is known for having lifted the veil between creation, creator, and reader by providing a forum for spirited dialogue between audience and auteur. The website confirms one of ACT-I-VATE's core tenets: that the artists and writers of this curated comix community are the optimal providers of intellectual properties and original content. The members of the ACT-I-VATE web comix collective are among the most industry nominated creators in the world. With 11 Eisner's, seven Harvey's, seven Ignatz, five Xeric's, one Reuben, one Eagle Award, and one Emmy.” [1] My second project precedent comes from the creator Wayne Martell also known as Midnight\_stories: He is an artist that creates online content with using renderosity.com as a platform for his online graphic stories. He was formerly a member of Devil Dog Studios, he was hired because they needed someone who could do morphs and rigging. He started by doing morphs for the characters they created and that's how he got started in the business. He regularly publishes online comics at renderosity.com to help promote his creations since he does this as a fulltime creator. My last precedent would be an electronic interactive E-book I created in the past. I wanted to create an electronic E-book that can be portable for use on multi media platforms such interactive kiosks or touch-less interface devices such as the Ask module created by the Integrated Media Group. I will be using software technology to program my artwork & storyline into a digital book interface. For this project, I also wanted to add Scott McCloud's work to include in my precedents. Scott McCloud is an online comic artist that uses interactive elements into his work. He has been creating comics since 1984. He is well known for these particular nonfictional works which are “Understanding comics”, “Reinventing Comics”, “Making Comics 50 State Tour” and the “Google Chrome comic” [2] Scott McCloud has taught at & has given lectures at Harvard, MIT, Google, the 2005 TED Conference, Pixar studios as well as about 250 other destinations around the world. Scott McCloud was one of the industry pioneers & advocates in the creation of digital comics in the 1990s and the early 2000 era. The work that caught my attention particularly was the online comic titled “The Right Number” [2] This title makes use of interactive elements into his work that

help to engage the reader in a interesting & creative way using scalar animation.

## RESEARCH AND DESIGN QUESTIONS:

For this project I hope to prove that I can use my work as a starting point to creating my own corporation & self sustaining business as a young entrepreneur. The projects that are already doing something similar are Activate Comix, Wayne Martell from Renderosity, Scott McCloud & my own previous digital work done in a similar style for HOP Industries Corporation. I wanted to try to make my project more laced with modern technology that really has not been used before for just this purpose of start up business marketing, promotion & forward thinking. I also wanted to possibly use interactive animation into my digital E-book work as well as to make use of story cliff hangers that would direct & encourage the readers to seek out other locations to find the rest of the story, either on the web, at a gallery or even in published print at their local book shop. This is how I feel my project proposal is different & innovative in this field. The audiences that will view my project are fellow alumni from FIT University, possibly using their gallery space, as well as my peers at Parsons, art directors from different companies that I'm interested in working with & possibly angel capital investors that I want to try to attract to seed my startup business. First there will be a digital E-book created. I wanted to make something that people can flip through the story with, maybe using a physical kiosk for multimedia display. Something with a touch screen or touch-less interface for use as a gallery installation art piece like this one shown here made by the Integrated Media Group. [Figure 1] Next, there will be an online web graphic novel/E-book created for people to enjoy & experience. [Figure 2] A sequential story produced for a website which people can interact with. And finally, I wanted to make a cardboard & paper book prototype for traditional print. [Figure 3] I wanted to make use of new CGI technology to re-create my story's illustrated characters from scratch for this project.

## PROTOTYPING PROCESS

For my initial prototype, I created a digital E-book mockup for use on a kiosk for deploying my graphic novel creation, I also created a website mockup for the online digital version of it & a lastly a handmade graphic novel as a cardboard & paper prototype. I wanted to continue to use parts of the creative process from my previous 5 in 5 project as a guide for the actual project execution. What the 5 in 5 project is, is a 5 day intensive project where as I had to create 5 projects in 5 days with a constraint involved with each project usually involving limited time. I sought to use a narrative style to execute the art for it combining both digital & traditional mediums. I wanted to try to create a more polished & presentable print prototype book for my final presentation. In general I wanted to research

more & to incorporate new software technology into the project for improving my initial ideas to get more interaction from readers in general. I wanted to use the process from previous 5 in 5 project as a guide for project execution. I wanted to use a written narrative of a story & execute the art for it combining digital & traditional mediums. I came into this project confident that things would go very smooth



**Figure 3. Holographic kiosk interface (New York, United States, Parsons final project conceptualization, 2011.)**

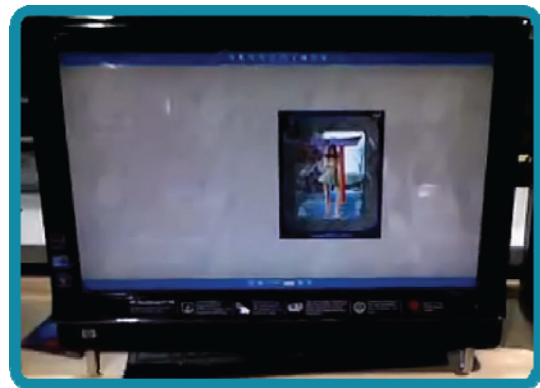


**Figure 4. Website prototype (New York, United States, Parsons final project, 2011.)**

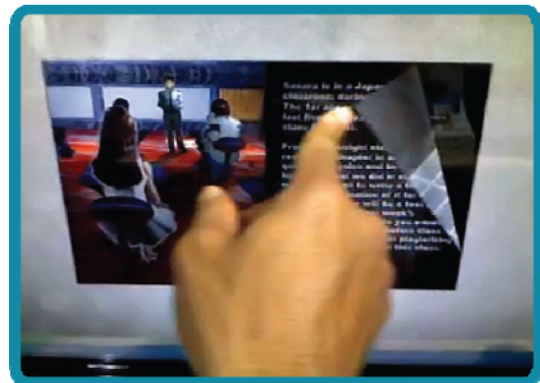
& very easy. My previous 5 in 5 project documentation is as the following: "I thought that it would be a rather easy project because I had the frame work in my head & a goal that I wanted to reach. I originally started out in my head with the idea of illustrating 2 new characters (Analog) or by pencil in this case & coloring them as separate digitally projects for an analog book that I wanted to create merging them into one digital/analog project for the last project. I didn't really anticipate the technical computer problems that I ran into, e.g. gathering reference/research material to



**Figure 5. Print prototype (New York, United States, Parsons final project, 2011.)**



**Figure 6. Kiosk prototype (New York, United States, Parsons final project, 2011.)**



**Figure 7. Touch interface example (New York, United States, Parsons final project, 2011.)**

use via my computer software & having a massive trouble shooting session with my hardware/software, which consumed most of my first day to fix. So, since that happened I had to take my project into a different direction in order to complete the 1st project in time. So instead, I



used this 5 in 5 project as a kind of jumping off point to come up with a process or structure that I wanted to follow for future projects including my future thesis. Not to say that the process I came up with would not change due to outside influences, but I still wanted an idea of the way that I intended to work for other projects."

#### Back story to the project

The main story is about the protagonist named Sakura Kaze. She is a bright, intelligent young Japanese university student who is also a Good Samaritan. She often goes out of the way to lend a hand to her fellow citizens in times of need. She usually does volunteer work and is an avid practitioner of Jeet Kune Do martial arts. On the other hand, the Antagonist Cairo is a young man trained in the traditional African-Brazilian martial arts. He is also young, bright intelligent man who has taken the opposite path in life than Sakura. Cairo starts to organize a group of mercenaries & martial artists from throughout Asia. He tries to recruit by enticing potential members with promises of wealth & power to join his organization. He is into organized crime & starts territorial wars with local gangs & Yakuza. Cairo is a man with little respect for life. He grew up in the war torn country of the Ivory de Coast in West Africa. He eventually tries to recruit the young, beautiful & talented Sakura into his organization but she refuses. Eventually he starts to threaten Sakura's friends to sway her decision. Cairo actually starts to harbor a torch for Sakura in the duration of the story so he continues to pursue her because he feels that she is a challenge. He wants to corrupt something pure. And so the story goes.....Kaze Jetstream.

#### Marketing

For this project my target market will be teens & young adults. For business my SWOT analysis is as follows: Strengths: As an artist, I know my material & have a good understanding of the technical side for production. Weakness: Dealing with the market of people not interested in product. Opportunities: In publishing you're able to reach a large audience. Even if not published work can stand on it's own as a portfolio piece for future opportunities. Threats: Limited time. How to deal with this problem?

#### Possible future funding

For future funding of this project I wanted to consider a grant from the Xeric foundation. "The Xeric Foundation is a private, nonprofit corporation based in Northampton, Massachusetts, which awards self-publishing grants to comic book creators, as well as qualified charitable and nonprofit organizations. The Xeric Foundation was established by Peter Laird, co-creator of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and Planet Racers. Laird founded the Xeric Foundation in 1992 the name originating out of a Scrabble game with Laird's brother Don," "Xeric" simply

being "a word he liked," ostensibly meaning "dry and desert like" — but which ultimately "has absolutely no direct connection with the foundation." As far as the Foundation's projected lifespan," He hoped that ultimately the figure can be raised from "thousands of dollars" to "hundreds of thousands of dollars," to support an increasing number of large and small projects. The Foundation has awarded in excess of \$2,000,000 since its first grant cycle in September 1992. Laird founded the Foundation after considerable thought, as "an appropriate way to give back something extra to the comics world," by providing grants for self-publishers. Laird has stated that the Xeric Foundation is "actually two foundations in one. One half of it is for charitable organizations, and the other half is for creators who want to self-publish their comics." That later half is perhaps what the foundation is best known for, working much the same as any benevolent fund, involving an application process detailing how much money is being applied for and why. The Foundation tends to support work of an alternative or non-"mainstream" nature, reasoning that if a comic has strong commercial appeal, it would be picked up by one of the major publishers. Therefore, it is an extremely valuable supporter of "art for art's sake" comics, and has helped launch the careers of a number of "literary" cartoonists. The Foundation assists comic book creators with some of the costs in self-publishing their work; it is not the Foundation's intention to fully support an artist/writer through the entire process of self-publishing, but rather to encourage creators to experience the learning process involved in working towards such a goal." [3] Also I have considered applying to the Caroline and Erwin Swann Foundation for Caricature and Cartoon Fellowship with a stipend of up to \$15,000 if granted. About the foundation. "New York advertising executive Erwin Swann (1906-1973) established the Swann Foundation for Caricature and Cartoon in 1967. An avid collector, Swann assembled a large group of original drawings by four hundred artists, spanning two centuries, which his estate bequeathed to the Library of Congress in two installments in 1974 and 1977. Mr. Swann's original purpose was to compile a collection of original drawings by significant humorous and satiric artists, and to encourage the study of original cartoon and caricature drawings as works of art. The stress on original works serves two purposes: to preserve work that is too often lost or casually destroyed and to afford the opportunity to judge draftsmanship, subtlety of line and wash in the artist's original work instead of the reproduction which, while retaining its message, loses graphic quality. The Caroline and Erwin Swann Collection of Caricature and Cartoon, is now preserved within in the Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, 101 Independence Avenue, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20540-4730. These drawings are frequently placed on exhibition at the Library of Congress and in museums and galleries throughout the world. The collection is particularly strong

in American work, but there is substantial representation of British, French and German artists, as well. The Foundation's support of research and academic publication is carried out in part through a program of fellowships. Applicants are invited to write to the Foundation, with a statement of qualifications, needs and a budget. These grants are intended to assist ongoing research and writing projects in the specific areas of interest to the Foundation. The Foundation, now administered by the Library of Congress, is overseen by an advisory board composed of scholars, collectors, cartoonists, and Library of Congress staff members. Its activities support the study, interpretation, preservation and appreciation of original works of humorous and satiric art by graphic artists from around the world."

## CONCLUSIONS & FEEDBACK

Here are the conclusions & feedback that I have drawn from this project thus far from one of my peers. Q: "How would my experience in the method I used to present affect what could the reader learn?" A: For those professionals who also work in my field, my project may serve as an example for other people who may wish to self publish in a similar manner. Q: "How can the reader benefit from it?" A: My response would be that I would try to incorporate themes & ideas of good will, hope & selflessness toward your fellow man in times of need. If not that, then I would try to incorporate something similar into the storyline for my readers to take away from. Q: Next question, "what could the reader get from the project being presented?" A: Well, for the project presentation itself, well it could serve as a precedent for other people's future projects. Q: And finally for the last question, "Is it possible for the project being presented to help the reader engage in their own creative outlet?" A: Well one idea could be that I may create a colorless digital interactive book as a future iteration that kids or people can manipulate the story's art & written content to engage in their own creativity.

### Further project feedback from 3 more of my peers

Questions I asked my peers about my project. "What do you think?", "Could you understand what's going on?" and "What are your general comments?"

#### Feedback for kiosk

After seeing the video documentation of the kiosk, Jenni's initial thought that it was a project on interactivity & she thought that the project was cool. She gave the suggestion of making a version just for the Apple iPad & said "it would look efficient on that platform for project deployment." Her general comments on this project were that she likes the page flipping & she likes that I can produce the story digitally.

#### Feedback for website version

"Jenni felt that it would be cool if I could find a way to incorporate more interactivity in the digital content"

*~Jenni, Design and Technology major at Parsons*

#### Feedback for kiosk

Philip's initial thought was that it was obviously an interactive book project, however without my explanation to him; he wasn't really sure what the idea of the project itself was. Philip suggested a future iteration of the project could include use a high definition video camera for documentation. He felt that using a high definition video camera would really enhance the quality making the storyline more readable to viewers and readers.

#### Feedback for website version

Philip noticed some areas of white on the pages when flipping through the web version of the digital book & suggested that I might be able to improve the experience by fixing it in the future so that the viewers would not see the white on the pages when flipping forward. He also suggested that I could choose a different theme for the background as well.

*~Philip, Design and Technology major at Parsons*

#### Feedback for kiosk

Savannah thought that the interaction was interesting. She felt a little confused without an explanation from me after just watching a user scenario on video. She didn't like the blank white pages when pages were turned to the next. She felt that the overall idea of using a touch screen kiosk to interact with book was good because it connects with people more then just clicking on a mouse for interaction. Savannah said that she really liked the animated motion, "it felt more modern, more like a storybook & not a game. It felt more intimate to use." She really likes how the readers can see the before & after of the pages.

#### Feedback for website version

"Has nice movements. The sound effects are a definite plus."

*~Savannah, Print major at Parsons*

## FUTURE IDEAS & DIRECTIONS

These are some of the next steps that I would like to take on this project aside from implementing the changes & suggestions from my peers. For the future ideas for this project I was thinking that I could create a 3D video game for the PC, X-Box or Sony Playstation based off of the storyline. I could use the narrative from this final project as a jumping point into 2nd & 3rd book in a series. I could also replicate the process & structure used in the continuation of the series as well. I may also present my idea to my mentor, William Tucci for further feedback and

I could possibly use the storyline to create a fully animated 3D CGI short for a future project. I was also thinking about the use of the hyper futuristic ASK module for gallery installation promotions [4] “ASK is a new digital signage technology with a patented, touch-less holographic screen that turns science fiction into science fact. It spotlights your message with a combination of entertainment, cinema-quality motion graphics and an almost human personality.” [4] If possible, I would like to try to contact this company and suggest that I could make use of their product as a way to help promote my project. I’m not sure if it is possible, but I was thinking that I may even ask them if they are interested in helping to fund my project in the future, as I know many companies offer scholarships & grants to students doing testing in the research and development of their products. I may also try to create a colorless digital interactive book as a future iteration that kids or people can manipulate or add color to the story’s art or written content.

## REFERENCES

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3. About the Xeric Foundation. Reference available at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xeric\\_Foundation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xeric_Foundation).
4. About the Ask module display. Reference available at <http://www.integratedmediagr.com>, [http://www.askinteractive.tv/pages/watch\\_a\\_demo](http://www.askinteractive.tv/pages/watch_a_demo)
5. About the Caroline and Erwin Swann Foundation for Caricature and Cartoon. Reference available at <http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/swann/> .