Strategies for Coping with Multiple Narratives

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ABSTRACT
The challenge of multiple narratives at cultural heritage sites is explained. Background and references are given to Cultural Heritage Tourism Theory. A solution is proposed, involving different strategies for different people at different sites and time. Open questions from both the non-technical and technical angles are proposed.

Author Keywords
Narratives, Information Technology for Cultural Heritage, Semiotics, Points of View.

ACM Classification Keywords
H.5.m. Information interfaces and presentation (e.g., HCI): Miscellaneous.

INTRODUCTION
In this position paper we address the challenge presented by what cultural heritage theorists call "representation" [7]. When visiting a cultural heritage site enhanced by a mobile guide or information technology (i.e. tangible interfaces), we are presented with hidden messages and narratives. As Steve Watson has stated: "*display not only shows and speak it also **does**, in doing so it orders and organizes its material references in a way that not only sells attractions, but also reflects and affects the underlying meanings, identities, social structures, and affinities that determine the society concerned*"[11]. This is very much in line with current cultural heritage tourism theory [7]. In essence what is being theorized here is that almost every cultural site is open to multiple interpretations, representations connected to the choice of materials, how they are explained, and how they are viewed. The question arises, how do we, as information technology researchers and developers of avant-garde system, react? What sort of systems do we want to develop? Can we build systems that allow

alternative viewpoints, not just what cultural heritage theorists call the authorized heritage discourse (AHD) [2]? Do different cultures have different ways of looking at things? Tim Winter argues resoundingly yes.[12]. Even items that are seemingly neutral, such as choice of language can have tremendous effect[9].

NARRATIVES AND STORYTELLING
Narratives and storytelling are a useful way of presenting information [4, 6, 8]. Many times these narratives contain a hidden viewpoint usually the AHD [2]. Even items that seem innocuous such as a photograph may have semiotic meaning and a viewpoint [10]. A useful example is given in [2] of a Palestinian Dress "thob abu qutbeh" in an Australian Museum. To the Palestinians the dress is a national symbol, a marker of identity, a symbol of resistance. To Israelis the dress is deemed to be of Judaic-Christian origin and challenge the use of material culture as a form of resistance.

MATCHING CONTENT TO USER'S PREFERENCE
Given that media can contain different points of view, the challenge is what to present to the user. We argue first of all for transparency, making the user aware of the bias. Secondly we argue for the best experience you need to give the user what he wants. For example a group of religious students coming on a school trip, may wish to present to their students content that is in line with their beliefs. However this matching is not so simple, the user may not necessarily want to hear only items that match their point of view. Viewpoints can also be based on cultural identities, such as nationality. We identify the following strategies that a user may want to follow:

- Orthodox – They only wish to hear narratives that are in line with their point of view. Here too there can be nuances in the points of view, thus we may have "strict" orthodoxy (that is very close to their point of view) or "loose" (which would allow for some variations). Another form of this strategy is the "home" viewpoint, where the home institution's curator presents the institution's point of view or that of the curator.

- Contrarian – Here the user is familiar with their own point of view and is interested in hearing different points of view from that of their own. Again this can be targeted to a "specific" point of view or it can contain a "range" of differing views

- Mixed – We were tempted to call this strategy "balanced", but in light of the previous section we know how hard if not impossible to accomplish that. This strategy attempts to give a variety of viewpoints, though not necessarily without bias. Another variation of this strategy might be where the user "doesn't care". This strategy may be different that the standard "mixed" strategy.

Anecdotal evidence for the existence of such strategies come from the Director of Development and New Initiatives at the Tower of David Museum of the History of Jerusalem, who spoke about such "orthodox" tours being available to Christian and Jewish Religious schools, while the normal content of the museum tries to be "mixed" [Rose Ginosar, private conversation]. Similar anecdotal evidence, comes from people (n=5) who when told about such "orthodox" tours, reacted with saying they would be interested in the opposing opinion, as they are familiar with their own views on the subject.

An open technical challenge is determining a personalized strategy for the user without explicitly asking him.

DISCUSSION

Preliminary Supporting Evidence
The following table shows the results from a questionnaire on the web directed towards educators in the field of Bible studies when asked if the source and point of view of materials presented is important. From here and in-person follow-up questions with the participants, we have preliminary evidence of interest in the subject of viewpoints and technology that can support viewpoint differentiation and control.

The source and point of view of the information is important to me. (n=31)	
Strongly agree	22
Moderately agree	5
Slightly agree	2
Neutral	1
Slightly disagree	0
Moderately disagree	1
Strongly disagree	0

Table 1. Questionnaire Result

Limitations
As Walter Kaufmann [3] pointed out in his introduction to the translation of Martin Buber's I-Thou, it is very easy to divide the world into two camps, however the world is a diverse place with many different types of relationships.

Thus the question arises are such strict strategies necessary because of the specific requirements (e.g. content validation by authorities) or can more complex personalized strategies be adopted? In addition more evidence is required to substantiate the requirements for such a system. This paper presents the challenge and an initial way to deal with it.

Challenges
Here we present a list of questions, starting with non-technical challenges and moving on to the technical ones. Do we really need this? What is the responsibility of the host institution? Do they need to provide opposing views, acknowledge that they exist? What standards of honesty are required? Do they need to be unbiased? We would argue not necessarily, see Isaiah Berlin's article on the difference between tolerance and pluralism [1]. One is allowed to have his own point of view and not necessarily be neutral on all topics. Some institutions have addressed this issue through the use of social media to provide user generated content, despite the tradition of museums providing only curated and "validated" content[5] What is unique to the area of cultural heritage on these issues?

There are also many technical challenges. How do we determine the user's viewpoint and what strategy they wish to follow? How do we categorize presentations to automatically label their point of view? How do we inter-mix the different viewpoints? What sort of tools do we provide curators and content providers? What sort of interfaces do we build to make this useful and usable to the user? How does social media, and participatory technologies, effect this issue[5]? Can we provide technology that can categorize user generated responses to allow the users to follow a strategy of his choice? What role do languages and language technology play in allowing different narratives to be expressed properly[9]?

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