

Online and offline, together and apart: Sharing memories with digital video

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Presentation Abstract

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From the era of 8mm and 16 mm film cameras, through days of analog videotape cameras to today's digital video recorders, people have avidly consumed technologies that capture moments from their lives. These captured moments are the presumed substrate of memories. They promise a way of reliving treasured moments in an imaginary future. Thus, for most people, the expressed intent is that videos will later be reviewed, perhaps edited, and almost always shared with others.

It is apparent that the newest technologies are ringing changes, both in the genre of the record that is produced, and in the ways in which the product is shared. People are enthused by the promise of these new technologies, and are animated in their descriptions of features that allow content capture, viewing, editing, storage and sharing. In this work, I report on the birth of a new genre, stimulated by the availability of new consumer technologies, and speculate on arenas for design.

This work details field observations and semi-structured interviews with people who use digital recording technologies. The work reveals that, in fact as of late 2002, many people never actually review their DV footage, few people edit footage and people seldom share footage with others. When sharing does occur, it is largely asynchronous, forwarded through networked communication technologies and applications such as email. What is shared tends to be short, often isolated scenes, with limited accompanying comments to provide context for the selection.

The quality of these experiences differ vastly from descriptions of "home movie" evenings where stories and conversation accompany film viewing, and group and collective memories are born and elaborated. Thus, although the recorded moments are being shared through asynchronous sharing of footage, social and collective memory construction with asynchronous video requires the development of new visual forms that require editing and narration – formerly achieved through collaborative viewing and narration.