Mobilizing User-Generated Content for Canada's Digital Content Advantage

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The Project

- To examine user-generated content (UGC) in its current state, the state of knowledge related to UGC and identify gaps where additional research could create Canada's digital content advantage.
- Seek to reach goals by asking the same questions in three domains of UGC:
  - define UGC in its current state
  - identify successful models built for UGC
  - identify and anticipate barriers to further development and use UGC
  - anticipate the policy infrastructure needed to sustain a model to leverage further development of UGC to Canada's advantage

UGC: Three Major Domains

Creative Content

- UGC generated by individuals or small non-regulated groups.
- May be created, developed, captured and put on display by a individual on an online platform.
- Found on portals such as YouTube, Flickr, Twitter, & Facebook.

Small-Scale Tools

- Tools, modifications, & applications that have been created by a user or group of users.
- Game modifications/add-ons created by users/ players to modify the game or assist in gameplay or virtual worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft, Second LIfe).
- Applications or tools created for mobile devices (such as the iPhone or Android).

Collaborative

- UGC authored collectively and shared by a self-regulating group of contributors.
- OSS includes both open-source software and free/ libre software.
- Wikis such as wikipedia.
- Government data sets can be provided by any level of government.

Creative Content	Small-Scale Tools	Collaborative
Current State of UGC		
- Successful sites integrate content creation, aggregation, distribution and consumption into a single tool. - A recurring theme throughout the literature on creative content is the erosion of the traditional dichotomies between traditional creators and end-users – typical users are now more able than ever to produce creative content in a transformative way. - User-generated content sites with unobtrusive marketing and no required fees are more attractive to users.	- Many elements of UGC present in games available today in user interface customizations or game conversion modifications. - Modifications can act as sociotechnical objects, managing gameplay, providing incentive, enabling play, or can incite frustration. - Modders/UGC creators may spend countless hours and effort on their mods; will support each other through websites and forums. - Mods can aid in increasing the longevity and appeal of a game, as well as customer loyalty.	- Open source software (refers to a model of software production that is premised on making human readable code accessible – includes both "open source software (OSS) and 'Free software" (Most successful examples of projects include Linux, Mozilla Firefox, Apache platform. - Government data sets (by providing access to datasets, open data projects can utilize government data for a range of uses (i.e. the local NextStop app for transit data) -- simply by providing access to data, governments can encourage the creation of useful apps at no cost to themselves.
Barriers		
- Closed proprietary platforms. - Privacy and security issues. - Copyright uncertainties. - Access to bandwidth/infrastructures ("digital divide" concerns). - Software/Hardware skills. - Costs to accessing platforms. - Lack of value or incentive (social, emotional, monetary).	- The digital divide. - Broadband Internet access. - Appropriate hardware/software for development. - Computer/programming skills. - Costs to accessing a game/virtual world. - SDK costs. - Policies preventing or limiting thecreation of small scale tools.	- Restrictive intellectual property rights (mostly copyright but now also potentially business method patents). - Crown Copyright in the case of government data. - Restrictive End User Licensing Agreements - EULAs (often pointing to US law). - TPMs /DRM (and the proposed anti-circumvention rules). - Liability worries.
Mobilizing UGC		
- Understanding the target market, creating and maintaining a self-sustaining environment. - Encourage models and platforms where users find value in generating content. - Understand and anticipate the skills of future UGC creators and consumers.	- Encourage the creation of specific platforms that are open to creation. - Encourage fans of games, virtual worlds, and mobile devices to create UGC: this leads to future employment opportunities, as well as technological literacy. - Encourage further research on mobile applications in Canada, as well as the state of UGC small scale tools.	- Create supportive learning environments and communities to close the digital divide. - Facilitate innovation, creation and protection of UGC as well as the production of UGC from other source material. - Create a flourishing UGC environment through a careful, thoughtful and purposeful balancing of the various policy levers.

Policy & Infrastructures

- Limited information on policy for mobile applications.
- Companies have established privacy statements, Terms of Service agreements, and End-User License Agreements; some of these act as law in the virtual world.
- Community norms, player consent, and social sanctions act as infrastructure in games and virtual worlds.
- Different types of intellectual property may be awarded.
- Possible to apply "fair dealing" doctrine.
- Would be helpful to develop policies surrounding litigation, as this door has been opened and creates constraints.
- Copyright is not necessarily applicable in the development of UGC in the same manner as other types of content/media produced.

Where Do We Go From Here?

- Conduct further research on the policy and technological infrastructures needed to mobilize and leverage UGC in Canada.
- Conduct further research on the motivations behind UGC and the qualities of popular/viral UGC.
- Examine avenues for effective commercialization and monetization, to gain the value generated by UGC (and do so without hampering the energy and enthusiasm of end users) – searching for effective balancing mechanisms is crucial.

By enabling its populace, Canada will not only create a vibrant and innovative UGC sector, but also facilitate greater cultural expression and economic growth.

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