

SCAPSSULLER

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01.

INTRODUCTION

Immersive Storytelling and Experience Design, or simply Immersive Design is a dynamic change to how we tell stories. Susan Bonds describes this evolution in storytelling as “bringing stories to life in a holistic way, storytelling that surrounds you, using the world as your stage or platform, letting the audience have a voice and a meaningful role.” (Future of Storytelling 2014)

This change is both a mental and a physical change, where the passive and detached observer becomes an active participant in the unfolding story. To achieve this change the person needs to be immersed in the story using tools that are mainly derived from the technological developments in experience design employed in the entertainment industries. This project builds on these innovations in storytelling by reforming and refocusing tools found not only in the general entertainment industry, but also in themed entertainment, and games and applies them to the Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums (GLAMs) sector.

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Continual developments in the internet, short form media, portable devices, augmented and virtual reality have changed the way we tell stories. However, many of these technologies are currently only immersive for a single user and connected environment. They do not allow socially connected immersive experiences. (Future of Storytelling 2012) This is a challenge for the GLAMs sector where there is a need for unique mass immersive experiences and where the world of the museum can be seamlessly incorporated in the virtual or immersive world.

GLAMs have always been key experience industries, but the level of innovation and implementation of immersive storytelling has not surpassed that of 'interaction booths'. (Zichermann & Cunningham 2011) Here the application of technology appears forced, awkward, and clunky. Further, and more importantly, the audience has not been primed for the experience. This sector therefore provides fertile ground for the development of immersive experiences. This project shows one way of providing this experience to the GLAMs sector.

This project attempts to combine the sustained engagement, comfort and sense of fulfilment that is found within the many forms of entertainment with the quality educational value that is found in the areas of GLAMs. It also incorporates a key element of

the experience service sector, where it provides a purchased experience within the GLAMs sector. Entitled *Capsule: The Destroyer of Worlds*, this project is a prototype for a subscription immersive experience in storytelling. A person or persons are encouraged to participate and make decisions crucial to a historical event. Activities are designed to not only immerse the participant or participants in a historical time period but to challenge them to experience the historical event personally. The box can be experienced in a solo situation or a group situation either utilizing a single box or connected via the internet and associated apps.

This project, although primarily focused on the development of the 'Capsule', has as its purpose also to supply people with an immersive learning experience through the processes of games, augmented reality and reflection.

OUTLINE

The evolution of the project was a process of prototyping of various solutions using known and developed technologies from other experiential sectors; principally from gaming and interactive theatre. Utilising Frayling's classification of 'research through design' (Frayling 1993), this project evolved via the production and testing of several prototypes in order to produce a product that was successful in transferring the museum experience to the user's own environment and thus removing the awkward interaction between education institutions and users.

Being such a highly user intrinsic product, this project required the careful consideration of experience concepts such as Jason Patterson's; 'switchy users', 'screen chaos', 'technical issues', 'roads-capability' and 'general skepticism'. (Patterson NA)

There were also the testing of various technologies; such as gamification, augmented reality and binaural sound. These technologies have been successfully used with groups of people in video games and themed entertainment and should, with modifications, be applicable to groups in GLAMs. Testing and prototyping were the key processes to driving the research and the project's development. Even more so, testing and prototyping were important to the project's conversion to the realm of immersive experiences and to the utilization of content from educational institutions.

05.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The way we tell stories has been rapidly changing throughout the past few decades as technology has advanced; from the invention of the radio, to television and finally to the internet. During this technological evolution, as data acquisition became easier and faster, our ability to process this data flow decreased with the gradual reduction in our attention span. As a result storytellers have had to adapt and develop new ways of engaging their audiences. (Patterson NA) Pertinent to these new ways of storytelling are the concepts of priming experiences and world building.

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Priming is the “activation of specific concepts in memory for the purposes of influencing subsequent behaviors” (Bradley 2010). In the context of immersive experiences, priming is the act of ‘warming up’ or contextualizing an audience. It aims to place the

attempt can be found in the *Australian National War Memorial’s ANZAC Hall* and specifically the *G for George Lancaster Bomber* multi-media display (Figure 1). The audience is exposed to a multi-media show which simulates the experiences of a bomber crew



FIGURE 1

audience in the right mood, in the right atmosphere and the right state of mind for the content they are about to be exposed to. It allows the audience to be more receptive to and more engaged in the content. As a *New York Times* article states, “Psychologists say that ‘priming’ people... is not some form of hypnotism, or even subliminal seduction; rather, it’s a demonstration of how everyday sights, smells and sounds can selectively activate goals or motives that people already have.” (Carey 2007)

Many educational institutions have attempted to ‘prime’ their audience for the experience and information they are about to be witness to. One such

during a sortie over Germany during World War II. The War Memorial experience is described as ‘Object theatre’ by Lorentz and contains “three exhibitions which employ the use of high level technological presentation to provide an immersive experience for the visitor” (Lorentz 2006). Lorentz goes on to state the key element of the piece, “with the simulated realism, the imagination of the visitors is activated, making the multi-sensory experience more complete.”

Another show based priming of an audience is situated at the Atlantis Exhibit at NASA’s *Kennedy Space Centre* in Orlando Florida (Figure 2). To enter the exhibit hall guests are required to

pass through a series of show rooms, before dramatically revealing the centerpiece of the exhibition, the Atlantis Space Shuttle. This experience is described by Larry Olmsted of *Forbes* as “designed to build anticipation”. (Olmsted 2013)

and descend, was intended to make one mindful of exactly that notion.” (Cairns 2013) This priming experience is more effective for the audience as they are slowly welcomed to the idea of entering the museum space. So even before they have arrived onsite, they have become

FIGURE 2



These two show based priming experiences occur onsite, once the audience has already arrived and is open, willing and compliant with the concept of visiting an educational space. In contrast the experience of arrival at *Tasmania’s Museum of Old and New Art (MONA)* is one of off-site priming. Here the guest must take a journey by ferry during which there is a slow reveal of the museum. The experience is described by Ed Rodley as “a destination if you approach via water ferry; the long climb up, and the descent into the hillside *MONA* is carved into. If *MONA* is any kind of temple, it’s more an oracular cave than an edifice of orthodoxy... the effort required from a visitor by ferry, to rise

more willing, more accepting and more open to the idea of consuming the content within *MONA*.

As well as priming, another pertinent method of story telling is World Building, an essential part of any work of fiction. It is a concept utilized in novel writing, cinematic productions, and more so lately in the development of video games and themed entertainment. (Future of Storytelling 2015) It is the process of constructing an imaginary world. As computer technology evolves, becomes quicker and more capable, the ability to tell long form stories will increase. Game series such as *World of Warcraft*, *Assassin’s Creed* and *Fallout*

developed by *Blizzard*, *Ubisoft* and *Bethesda* respectively tell their stories, which often stretch over decades, in a series of video games. By comparison, traditional forms of storytelling, as Jake Krajewski discusses, have a fundamental barrier that restricts their audience from having complete immersion: “sometimes it still feels like there is a barrier separating us from the story.” Video games by providing the user with control over a character and his or her actions, breaks this barrier by allowing the user to experience the story in their own way and possibly alter or change the entire path of the story. (Krajewski 2015)

Similarly with themed entertainment such as immersive theatre, a barrier has been removed. The audience is not only watching a story unfold but is an important part of that story. It is the creation of “participative... experiences where audience members give up their observer status to become co-actors and co-creators of the narrative and of the storytelling process.” (ImmersiveTheatre NA). Through combining text, movement, video, objects, sound, lights and visuals, the experience developed is completely immersive; achieving “transportation performances’ that result in rendering powerful emotions and eye-opening adventures.” (ImmersiveTheatre NA).

Sleep No More is one of many immersive theatrical performances around the world. These experiences include multiple interactive sets through which the audience passes. In each set a number of choreographed performances occur which change depending on the activities of the audience. The audience themselves “are part of the story, however small their role may be, they are in the middle of the action” (The Space 2014). Once inside, the audience is left to wander the rooms of the premises at their own pace says Tim Garratt, writer for *Theatre People*. “Rather than going in and being presented with a linear story, everything is simply what you make of it.” (Garratt 2014). These experiences prove more engaging by removing the ‘fourth wall’ between the story and the audience and plays with the concept of the ‘fear of missing out’.

With both priming experiences and world building there are the development of atmosphere, anticipation, sense of exploration and freedom of choice. All of which are critical to the engagement of the audience. This level of engagement can be developed through transmedia formats and is crucial to the ways we tell stories in the future.

METHODS OVERVIEW

The complexity of this project required a series of prototypes and tests to determine which content design is a best fit for each section of the experience. Prototyping was the key to developing a sense of the best visual outcome. The search was for the 'correct approach' to convey emotions, the story and the atmosphere to an audience. It also required the determination of the correct approach to delivering transmedia content. The prototyping process allowed for people to interact, test and provide feedback on the project throughout its development and so provide clarity on what were the 'correct approaches'. These 'correct approaches' were then compared to theoretical, technical and situational knowledge of not only previous existing products, concepts and technologies but also the overall psychology of human interaction with objects and contents.

The project's complexity required each of its sections to be treated separately using different technologies and stories. The separateness of each section, although still part of a cohesive overall story, was important for one of the aims of the project. This aim was to have a design product that allowed the audience to pick up the project at any time without needing context and not having to back track in order to understand what to do and where to proceed. The four key concepts of the project; immersive experiences, priming, world building and augmented reality drove the research methods.

The overall aim of this project was a key challenge: to develop immersive education experiences for users both interested and not interested in visiting museum spaces. To better understand immersive experiences it was necessary to evaluate and experiment with existing forms of immersive experiences. It was also necessary to review various written articles on these experiences in order to come to a better understanding of what works, what does not work as well as what consumers enjoy and find engaging. These two methods led to a better understanding of the developing topic that is currently in its infancy.

To develop an effective piece of priming for audiences entering a museum space it was required to

first of all research existing, effective ways of priming an audience not only in experience spaces like museums but in the tourism sector, themed entertainment and theatre. It was also necessary to look into priming in terms of branding, visual identity, entertainment, media and interactive. Finally these learnt techniques were tested through various prototypes of activities, visual palettes, 3D renders, and products. These tests were carried out on people with design and other backgrounds, of various ages and levels of engagement with the project. Their feedback was used to further refine, develop and cycle the creation of the final project. Feedback was delivered in person through monitoring of the user experience, then at the end through verbal feedback.

Within certain sections of the project it was a requirement to successfully immerse the audience into the world of 1940s USA and its government, utilizing materials and technologies that could fit into the box packaging. This required prototyping and visual research to develop successful forms of world building whether it be identifying the correct fonts to display on certain documents, the accurate texture and feel of documents, the terminology and wording as well as locating several collections of images and documents to use as references. These found elements, simulated objects and researched visual elements,

were further tested on people. Their feedback either removed or improved upon the experience by making it more believable, enjoyable and engaging.

The applicability of augmented reality to the GLAMs sector required research into existing and developing technologies of augmented reality and comparing them to needs of GLAMs. Here it was envisioned that any applied technology should be easy for audiences of all ages and disciplines to, not only interact with, but interact with in a comfortable manner in many different environments. This requirement was tackled with thought experiments and verbal conversations rather than technical experiments due to cost and accessibility restraints of the latter. The results of these experiments and discussions were compared to industry knowledge on human interaction with objects, comfortable experiences and encouraging engagement with audiences.

Ultimately, as human nature was central to this project it was necessary to check and receive feedback from a range of people who would potentially utilize this product. This cycle of presenting prototype concepts and receiving feedback allowed the project to evolve in a natural way. A way that ensured that every audience activity was an effective, comfortable and immersive human experience. This process allowed the

concepts of immersive experiences, audience priming, world building and augmented reality not only to become easier to define and insert into the project but to become clear focus points for the audience.

MAIN BODY

The development of a transmedia project to generate immersive experiences, together with the adaptation of technologies not originally designed for such experiences, required a number of iterations, revisions and feedback sessions. The final result was reached via a combination of reflection and analysis on a number of articles and reports as well as by the physical development of prototypes and material and visual tests. The project was split into 6 main sections, each of which required a different approach both visually and materially. The project required the design and testing of the packaging and identity design of the box and its contents: the four main chapters, the prologue and the epilogue.

BOX IDENTITY

The external packaging of the box was an incredibly important design piece of the entire project, being the first thing the audience sees, touches and holds. The box had to represent everything

states that 52 percent of consumers are likely to make repeat purchases if it is delivered in premium packaging. (Lazazzera 2015)

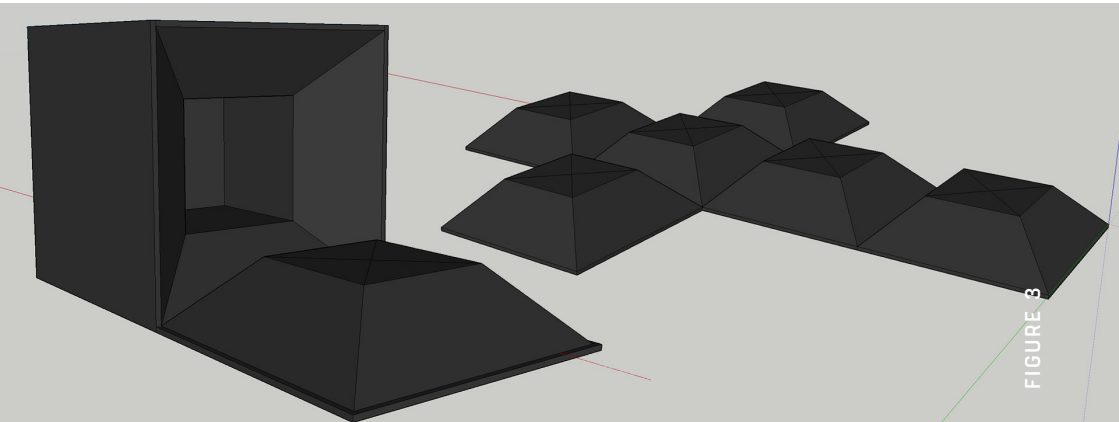
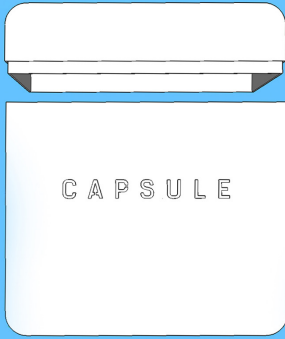


FIGURE 3

within it and everything the project stands for. It also had to be a key part of the experience. The experience of opening the box needed to be clean, simple and easy to do, yet still feel special, like opening a present. It also had to remain special upon re-opening multiple times. The box not only had to be a good experience but a great visual one for its potential market. A recent study from Dotcom revealed 'that nearly 4 in 10 consumers would share an image of a delivery via social media if it came in a unique package' (Lazazzera R, 2015), thus promoting the service. Similarly the packaging needed to feel premium in order to make the purchase worthwhile and memorable. Dotcom

The design, the feel and the experience of the packaging was inspired by many in the industry; especially Apple that is known for its world class packaging. Apple is described as always wanting 'to use a box that elicits the perfect emotional response on opening'. (Condliffe 2012). Apple's unboxing process is quick and painless, providing what you purchased up front with no hassles, as well as attempting to spike anticipation. (Dromgoole 2016) Harrison Dromgoole explained the importance of a good unboxing experiences as 'it's a social occasion that partially replaces shopping in bricks and mortar stores'. (Dromgoole 2016)

FIGURE 4



The initial design for the box (*Figure 3*), was a complicated set up of packages within packages, with folding mechanisms to provide an unfolding experience. Upon review and discussion with academics and the public it was found that such a design would ultimately be hard to open and the experience complicated. Also the box would not be structurally sound. The box continued to go through revisions, becoming simpler, easier and the experience perfected. Revisions included a clam shell package, shoebox,

and tuck box. The only constant was that it was to be a black cube in order to look visually enticing, mysterious and easily identifiable. Ultimately through continual revisions, feedback and checking with the needs of the contents the final design was reached; a simple black rectangular box with a slide on lid (*Figure 4*).

Another major element of the box design was the material used in its construction and its texture. A key component of the box design was its touch experience. The initial construction material considered for the box was cardboard. However, with the weight of the contents in mind, the cardboard structure was not feasible. A prototype of the clamshell version of the package was developed out of black stained plywood with aluminum edging (*Figure 5*). Examining this prototype it was decided that utilizing wood in this manner made the box too heavy, clunky and large for the intended experience. To resolve the deficiencies of the wooden prototype



but still retain the dimensions of the box, it was decided to use 3D printing technology to construct the box with a PLA material at 300 microns per inch. This resolution is a relatively low resolution, however, it was chosen to achieve the texture that is found on the box, a texture that evokes a technical look and to make the material a central focus of the design.

CHAPTER ONE THE DOCUMENTS (Figure 6)

The concept for chapter one utilized the ideas presented in the research area of 'priming'. This chapter was designed to set the scene, the mood and the atmosphere of the story as well as providing background knowledge and information for those less familiar with the events and period in which this story is set. The content of the chapter are the initial findings, conversations and developments within the *Manhattan Project*, the names of the development and testing personnel involved in creating the first atomic bombs.

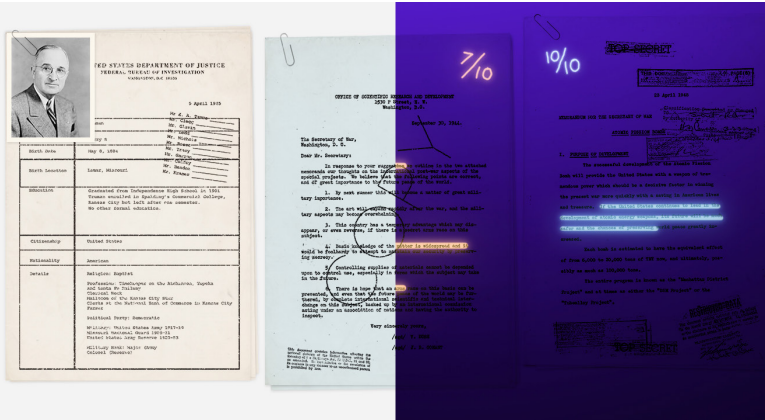


FIGURE 6

Although the preparation of false documents was initially considered, it was decided to use classified government documents as the centerpiece of the story. Using established gaming practices (Krajewski 2015) the audience was asked to play the role of a news reporter who had been supplied with 'leaked' documents from a highly secret government project in the 1940s. After a number of iterations, discussions and thought experiments, the audience's task was further refined to that of determining the 10 most important documents from which they could understand the *Manhattan Project* and so be able to write their story. The search and selection of the documents had to be done in 10 minutes.

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be able to write their story. The search and selection of the documents had to be done in 10 minutes. Then it was decided to provide a means for them to check their choices after the time is up. Each document was given a rating out of ten and marked with invisible ink. After the 10 minutes, the audience could use the UV torch included to reveal the ratings of their chosen documents.

This activity, designed to be the priming of the audience was inspired by the pre-shows of the ANZAC hall (Lorentz 2006). The audience is situated within the thought environment and world of the women and men involved in the project from 1939 to 1945. To further set the atmosphere of the period and so enhance the experience, a radio station playing period music and news reports could be implemented within the app, simulating the experiences derived from Immersive Theatre.

CHAPTER TWO THE CARD GAME *(Figure 7)*

The concept for chapter two was to place the audience in the thought space of those deciding whether to drop the atomic bomb and if so, how, when and where to drop it. The idea was to develop an activity that could effectively make the audience feel the confusion, the time tension and the unknowns associated with the decision to drop the bomb. After much thought and discussion, it was decided to again call upon gaming principles (Krajewski 2015). It was decided to design a card game that was able to ask a multitude of questions of the audience rather than the single question of whether to drop the bomb or not. A further iteration on the card game was to design it to have an extra 'action' or 'chance' deck. After, it was decided to use the roll of a dice to direct selection of either the action or the question card. The dice also provided the atmosphere of chance and randomness to the game, and negated any prior attitudes the audience may have on the dropping of an atomic bomb. The audience's decision or required action taken after each card selection was recorded by selecting a card from the third deck and placing it with either its black or its white face showing. Once again a time limit of 10 minutes was set for this activity

to again heighten the experience and represent the limited time frame of the real decision making process in 1945. A count of the white and black facing cards at the end of the 10 minutes decided whether the audience would drop the bomb.

The game was also designed so it could be played either solo or as a group both within the actual card game and by also supplying the results of the game to the *Capsule* Application whereby at the end of a certain time period (week, month, etc.) the world could decide whether or not to drop the bomb, proving once again that the decision was made by a committee not by a singular person and also developing a sense of 'connected immersion' within the overall concept of the box. This sense of 'connected immersion' was echoed throughout the experience of the box allowing the audience to record, submit and interact with each other's responses, ultimately developing a community.



FIGURE 7

CHAPTER THREE EXPLORE HIROSHIMA

Chapter Three is the most complicated chapter of the experience and ultimately the ‘climax’ of the experience. This chapter was designed to allow the audience to explore their home city or town and see what devastation would be wrought if the Hiroshima bomb was dropped on it. This concept evolved from the complex idea of using augmented and virtual reality. As this technology is still not widely available nor yet feasible for use in public environments, an alternative was explored of simply using a GPS mobile phone app along with audio experiences to place the audience within the setting of Hiroshima.

Jason Patterson’s augmented reality rules of ‘switchy users’, ‘screen chaos’, ‘technical issues’ and ‘general skepticism’ were used to help inform the development of a clean, easy, and simple experience for the end user. The concept of ‘switchy users’ helped to inform the decision to develop a way for users to jump in and out of the chapter as they pleased, much like the popular mobile gaming augmented reality app *Pokemon Go*. The user could open the app and through using GPS navigate themselves to the closest waypoint at any particular time. Also by making the app accessible to anyone at any time, it allowed the audience to jump into the story at any moment and jump out when needed.

Similarly ‘screen chaos’ was limited by developing a ‘black out’ vignette over the information, providing only the closest selection of waypoints rather than all available ones at once. As technical problems can arise with any new development, it was decided to limit their effect through design. The decision was made to utilize small levels of data by restricting the experiences to audio tracks, and using technology known to the audience. Thus by making the experience as easily accessible as possible, general skepticism can be lowered to a point where the audience can try out the experience without needing to fully submit to the concept.

Further investigations of this concept suggested there was a need to develop an activity for those who may not be able to access the outdoor activity. From the comfort of their own home they could do a paper based activity. It would be a less intense experience, as rather than sensing the destruction zones in their own environment, the paper based activity would use maps of modern cities with the blast radius and important or iconic sites from Hiroshima overlaid on top. Both activities would allow audiences to read or listen to stories told by historians, citizens of Hiroshima from the time of the bomb and news reports.

CHAPTER FOUR PAPER CRANE ACTIVITY

To provide somewhat of a conclusion to the story and to allow the audience to reflect, think and process the intense stories that they have just bared witness to, the final chapter of the series was designed as a peaceful wrap up. From the very beginning of the project the aim for this chapter was to get the audience to fold a paper crane, an item that has come to symbolize the Hiroshima bombing and the hope of the Japanese people for future peace in the world. To create an immersive experience a radio station would also be developed, allowing the audience to listen to radio reports of the bomb dropping from around the world.

Then, once they complete the experience of the box, the audience would be invited to bring along their paper crane they fold to the exhibition hall to be placed on display, thus encouraging them to further their experience within the museum. This final activity completes the priming of the audience for the museum space. It educates and sensitises the audience to a dramatic decision and its consequences.

ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS PROLOGUE & EPILOGUE

To begin and conclude the experience, information booklets were written and designed to provide background information. The Prologue discusses the beginning of The Pacific War in the 1941, whilst the Epilogue tells the stories of the development of atomic weapons and bombs from 1945 to the present day. These documents sit alongside the documents included in the chapters telling a written story and providing additional content for the audience to explore if they so wish.

Originally these chapters were to be displayed consumed through video content, stylized similarly to the identity of the box and that of traditional media formats from the 1940s, however due to time restrictions and content accessibility the decision was made to forgo the video presentations and develop a collector's style booklet telling the story.

CONCLUSION

Through a process of theoretical and material research as well as prototyping and user testing this project evolved from a concept of telling museum experiences outside of the museum space to an immersive experience telling the story in a capsule that could be sent out to the audience in a subscription service. By harnessing key elements from the areas of immersive experiences, augmented reality, priming experiences and world building, a story of historical value can be told in an engaging, theatrical and immersive way.

This project shows how technologies from the realms of general, themed and interactive entertainment, education and performance can be applied effectively to the GLAMs sector. The project is a prime example of where story telling mixed with gaming and play acting can provide audiences with unique immersive experiences. Via gaming or acting modes audiences are immersed in the uncertainty and fearful times of the United States of America during World War II. The first two activities have no predetermined outcomes; the results depend on the audience. The final two activities are free of chance and illicit more sober thoughts and feelings. In addition to these audience immersive experiences, the box was designed to also showcase how museums can expand their reach. The box is a priming device for the museum to reach out to more people than those who visit the museum. A subscription box of this design would allow an audience, no matter where they were situated around the world, to be engaged and informed of what the museum has to offer. Its simple but flexible internal design allows the box concept to be adapted to tell many different stories with varying activities based on key points in the selected story.

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