Preserving Holocaust stories through 3D technology

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It seems that a few groups consistently struggle with how to incorporate and use new technology in a manner that is both appropriate and effective for their brand. They often fall short and take advantage of the “next big thing” only to find it doesn’t work or hasn’t been adopted by enough of the public to make a difference. Things like holograms at the airport or using QR codes for anything, ever. But once in a while, the big guys hit the nail on the head.

The New Dimensions in Testimony [1] is a project attempting to preserve the stories and memories of holocaust survivors in the form of holograms that respond to questions with relevant stories or answers. Various groups have been scrambling to record stories of holocaust survivors as the generation ages, and it’s a challenge to simply get the information, let alone make it dynamic in presentation.

The project is a collaboration between USC Shoah Foundation and the USC Institute for Creative Technologies, in partnership with Conscience Display.

Using the Institute’s Light stage technology, researchers record interviews with survivors using seven cameras for high-fidelity playback, which are then converted into images that can be projected in 3D. Perhaps the most engaging part is the use of natural language technology, which means that the people will be able to engage with the projection by asking questions, and the projection will respond with a corresponding story or answer. None of this is really new technology, but it’s a new way to use it.

This will be a great tool, particularly for school-aged children who might have issues grasping the connection between written stories and the actual people who lived them. Future generations won’t have access to the actual survivors, and notes and videos can only preserve so much.

“Years from now, long after the last survivor has passed on, the New Dimensions in

Testimony project can provide a path to enable young people to listen to a survivor and ask their own questions directly, encouraging them, each in their own way, to reflect on the deep and meaningful consequences of the Holocaust," according to the USC Shoah. "The project also advances the age-old tradition of passing down lessons through oral storytelling, but with the latest technologies available."

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[1] http://ict.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/overviews/New%20Dimensions%20in%20Testimony_Overview.pdf