
tap2post, 1-photo / day group blogging

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Abstract

This paper explores publishing to connect and self-document a community, especially through new forms of online connectivity (via phone apps,) participatory documentary practice of the artist, and spotlighting a group of individuals.

Keywords

Blog, blogging, publishing, connectivity, self-publishing, document, process, group, participatory art, photography, social media, mobile media

ACM Classification Keywords

J. Computer Applications: J.5 ARTS AND HUMANITIES
Subjects: Arts, fine and performing.

General Terms

Design, Documentation, Experimentation, Human Factors.

Introduction

Tap2post, tap2post, (or t2p, can be used as a noun or a verb) is a group photo blog that constrains users to one photo per day, to be uploaded via mobile phone (with camera). It is used to connect and document the lives of the members of the group. There is a shared website feed collecting the images, and easy upload via a free phone app. Any group can use tap2post, but for SigChi, I am suggesting a user group of conference featured artists.

Tap2post was accepted and exhibited at Parsons Festival 2011.

A Brief History of t2p

Tap2post started as a one-touch blogging application that alerts users at a set time each day to snap a picture that would automatically load to their individual blogs. Social connectivity was a feature, but the user group was open ended, intended for general use.

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A few images collected from tap2post/dt

Social photo blogging is a huge industry right now, with millions of dollars and hundreds of employees working to produce apps to connect people. Wired paints the scene at one such app, Color: "Dozens of energetic young people work on long tables loaded with computer equipment."¹ But what could I develop as one person?

In user testing my app, it became clear that a guiding objective was necessary for a group blog. I created tap2post.com/dt and invited members of my class, the MFA Design/Technology department at Parsons the New School for Design. They were instructed to t2p a pic per day of their process and works in progress for the month of April, leading up to thesis/final projects. In one month 75 of 150 possible users contributed to the project with over 500 photos, and over 200 comments (feedback loop).

There was also a group photography show that was accepted into Parsons Festival 2011. I chose to highlight the scope of the project by printing a grid of all the photos collected, arranged chronologically.

Research

To begin my exploration of photo blogging, I delved into photo blogging through history from what I called "pre-Flickr" photo blogs to present day hit phlogs (slang for photo blogs.) I presented my research to a New Media Art class and focused on snapshot art popularized from Karlheinz Weinberger in the 1950s to Jessica Yartofsky in 2011.

Weinberger was part of a retrospective at the time at the Swiss Institute in New York, an exhibit I attended: Weinberger's obsessive cataloguing of these "half-strong" artists from the "Halbstark" community with

photos of their culture, events, style, fashion. It was as if, had he not photographed the movement, it would have never happened.

Yartofsky is famous for blogging photos for eastvillageboys.com and recently published *I Heart Boy*, a collection of photos of boys, friends, students. I met with Yartofsky for coffee for a couple of hours and asked her about connectivity. Yartofsky talked about the importance of connecting to an artistic community, and publishing on a regular basis, and staying in constant contact and circulation.

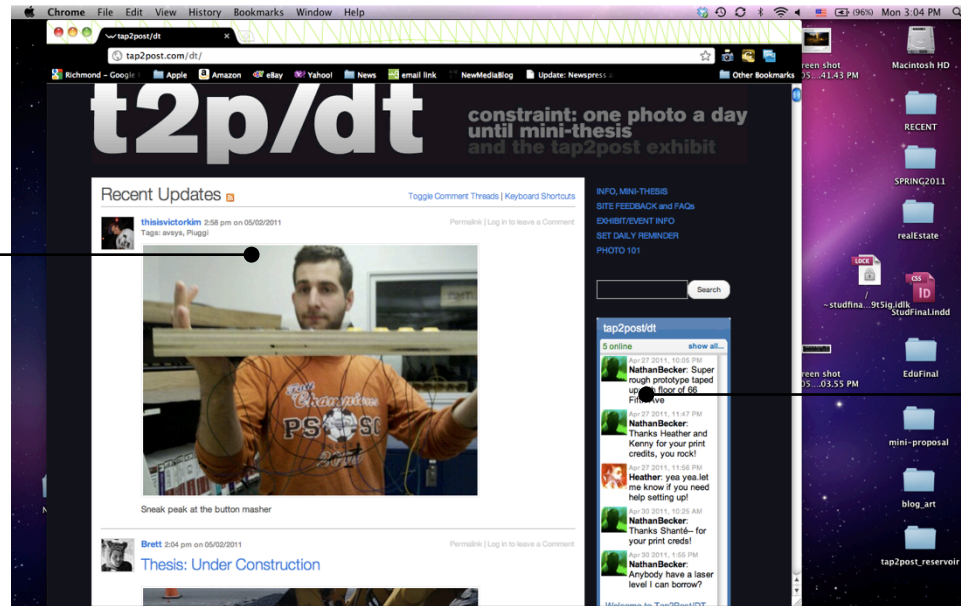
She emphasized that as a student at Parsons, she was told that snapshots of friends were too commercial, but now her book is in shops next to Nan Goldin. I also met Nan Goldin on this exploration and talked to her about my project.

From the New Museum artist profile for Elizabeth Peyton: her work is "at the service of the culture it captures. Celebrating the aesthetics of youth, fame, and creative genius."

Warhol's Wikipedia entry, "An obsessive photographer, it is estimated that Warhol made between 60,000 and 100,000 snapshots in his lifetime. The camera functioned as his sketch book, diary and means of communication."

Jonathan Harris' photo a day blog was breathtaking, and got me thinking about what photo social networking tools I could develop that would connect artists. Tap2post was born, for 100 NYC artists I knew, the Design/Technology students at Parsons.

The freshest content appears at the top, with daily updates and comments. In this photo, a non t2p-er appears as the subject of the photo. Even though you can't win everyone over, you can still reach the scope of the group given the close proximity. Here we get a glimpse of a physical computing project underway for thesis, and the next image appears to be a thesis "under construction." Please see <http://tap2post.com/dt> for a true view of the project.



Homepage design options are customizable for each group. This is an optional chat room. Search bar, author photos, common themes, etc. can go here.

tap2post.com/dt. This website became the online real-time yearbook for a whole department of students with an exclusive look at process, works in progress, a platform of connectivity told democratically for DT students by DT studs.

Functionality

The general mechanics are a daily reminder to post a photo, and ease of use: a few taps on your phone to take and post a picture, and you're a contributing artist. Your work will be displayed and maintained by tap2post. The reward far outweighs the effort.

The once a day fresh content becomes habitual to view and produce as momentum rises.

Successful User Testing tap2post.com/dt

I built an open source PHP site to collect group photos. I posted from my phone via a free app for iPhone. There is an equivalent for other smart phones. I invited my closest friends in DT to start uploading a photo per day, which caught on like wildfire. I distributed flyers that said "Find out what you've been missing." As more people started t2ping, the content became an exclusive look into the eye of the DT student. Everyone was

Ease of use and mobile accessibility makes tap2post a painless way to connect.

seeing what was being posted in real time, and requests to add users came in as fast as I could process them.

Through my own advertising, proselytizing, and general user word of mouth, in one month, I got 75 of 150 possible users, over 500 photos, and over 200 comments. Tap2post was a success:

Professors were talking about t2p. Even the head of the DT school David Carroll was quoted by Tami Evnin via email as saying, "Dave talked about your project in our [class] this morning. He said it's a good example of user testing and he even said, "I went on and thought, oh, THAT'S where all of DT is." Carroll copied me in on an email with the following:

"Nathan's major studio 2 project is righteous: see <http://tap2post.com/dt> It's an amazing glimpse into the MFADT culture at play."—*Dave Carroll to a DT applicant*

right·eous 1. (of a person or conduct) Morally right or justifiable; virtuous. 2. Perfectly wonderful; fine and genuine.

"I love your enthusiasm and your project is very cool... I LOVE it and I think it will be a hit."—Anezka Sebek, professor and former DT head. Clearly there were more viewers than just the DT students. Because I impressed the right people, I was accepted into Parsons Festival 2011 and started prototyping the exhibit.



Printing large format and grid photos to prototype the exhibit.



Tami Evnin's live tap2posting during my presentation on tap2post. Meta live user spontaneous demonstration for my lecture.

Author avatar stickers identify artists and their posts at the tap2post event. The official Parsons Festival signage.

Role of the Editor

Creator, Engineer, Curator, Administrator.

Managing a tap2post group requires being available for every user concern. So far, I have been the only one to accept the role as editor, thought the future of tap2post is open to other groups and editors.

For now, I invite and urge people to participate. I set up their accounts and answer any questions about uploading. I provide feedback, and make sure the content is never abusive. I can provide site customizations specified by the tap2post group.

Then, a show is the culmination of the experience, an event to celebrate the reservoir of images. I curate, print, and hang the photos in a gallery. Production cost depends on budget, but the bigger the better.

The historical impact of tap2post has yet to be proven, but I suspect that like Weinberger there may be a historical added value.

User Feedback via Facebook



The screenshot shows a Facebook feed with the following posts:

- Parnika Agarwal** has made tap2post.com/dt my new home page.
- tap2post/dt** (tap2post.com) very soon - ups attempted to deliver the last of the sensors I need to complete the prototypes today. hopefully I'll be here to get them tomorrow!
6 hours ago · Unlike · Comment · Share
You, Robear Yang, Shanté Pierre and Katherine Maguire like this.
Robear Yang it's now one of my bookmarks about an hour ago · Unlike · 1 person
- Brian Putz** Check out inspiration and works in progress from Parsons MFA-DT students. compliments of Nathan Becker
[tap2post/dt](http://tap2post.com/dt)
tap2post.com
- Victor J. Kim** Look into the eyes of a Parsons MFA Design & Technology student. From Nathan Becker
[tap2post/dt](http://tap2post.com/dt)
tap2post.com
I'm ready to roll out t2p to ALL DT as a participatory art (and research) piece. Not sure how much time I need to spend on marketing/begging, but please encourage others if you're into the experience. Thanks.
- Hilal Koyuncu** Tap2post/dt is the new facebook!
5 hours ago · Unlike · Comment
You, Michelle Kirby, Nicolas Cinquegrani and Kate Watkins like this.
Katherine Maguire tap2post contest!
2 hours ago · Like
- Katherine Maguire** <http://tap2post.com/dt/> go go go
[tap2post/dt](http://tap2post.com/dt/)
tap2post.com

Artist Event/Exhibit

One of the payoffs for the participating artists is a group show displaying their posts as photo prints. The event brings everyone together to see posts and the scope of the initiative. At the last tap2post show for DT, the artists wore stickers with their avatars.

Future User Prototypes

t2p/tsw: transsexual sex worker

I have begun an exploration with a sex worker support group in NYC that might sponsor tap2post in their community. I propose pictures by, of, and for trans sex workers, because I believe they are a group that might feel uncomfortable on Facebook, or posting pictures of their work on such a corporate site.

Although there is an ethnography aspect to the project, my objective is to see art through the lens of everyday life. I would love to exhibit these photos in a proper gallery in Chelsea with a huge event for the artists. They can all split the profits of a sale.

I am open to establishing a tap2post for any community with interest. I would like to democratize the process either through a publicly available app or an open source DIY (do it yourself) template. Both options are on the near horizon.



t2p/dt exhibit: all the artists and t2p supporters were invited to the opening reception to see the project, with wine in hand. Artists wore avatar stickers to identify their works. All images copyright tap2post, and the individual tap2post artists.

Acknowledgements

I thank Katherine Moriwaki and her Interactive Studio along with the MFA Design/Technology department for the original prototype of tap2post/dt in April 2011.

Citations

[1] Levy, Steven. "Color Me Fascinated: A Photo Social Network for the Here and Now" in *Wired*. March 23, 2011. The citations appear inline, but I could flush this out a bit for publication.