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English 197

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Project Proposal

Imagine reading an eBook and there is a song referenced in the text. Would you rather take the time to get on a computer and search the song, hunt on your phone for the song, or simply have the ability to click on the name of the song and instantly it begins to play? In this digital age, there is a continuing demand for faster, more efficient means of acquiring information at the drop of a hat. Although it only takes a minute to open a new browser and search for the desired information, it is still not fast enough. This poses even more of a problem with literature. The reader is forced to remove themselves, if only for a minute, from the work they are reading to find whatever reference they need—a reference that may turn out to be an integral part of the novel. This can cause a break in focus or a distancing from the text. With the Book Visualization Project, this would no longer pose a problem. Whenever there is a reference to an outside source, whether other it is literary work or a film or a song, that particular piece of media will be embedded in the text of the eBook, and all it takes is a simple tap or click to open that reference. Thus, readers can—with more speed and ease—view the outside references of a text without having to leave the book. This application means to combine the digital platforms that are already available to users and create a more inclusive reading experience—digital footnotes if you will. The Book Visualization Projects is an attempt to enhance the digital reading experience, and allow for a more dynamic understanding of literary works of all kinds.

The Book Visualization Project was inspired by the literary web tool BookLamp.org. Book Lamp is a project that attempts to give readers the best possible recommendations for literary works based on internal data such as pace, tone, etc. It is basically the Pandora Radio of literature. After using Book Lamp, we were motivated to create a similar web tool. In our original concept, we aspired to design a website that would archive all types of media related to written works. For example, if one wanted to find a painting related to Dante's *Inferno*, they would enter the title of the book into a search box and... voila!; they would be presented with a compilation of paintings, sculptures, videos, music, and any other applicable types of multimedia relating to the text. However, we realized this idea was a bit far-fetched and not specific enough to a reader's needs. Through further discussion and evaluation, we landed on the concept for the Book Visualization Project. Instead of a website, the idea had morphed into an app made for eBooks.

The Book Visualization Project is a useful application that would help readers of all ages better understand and grasp the written works they are reading. This application would include embedded hyperlinks within the text related to the outside media references (Figure 1). The references would hit a high range of genres, including songs, movies, other works of literature, influential historical or pop culture figures, etc. Each link would then bring up a small pop up box with the appropriate information without exiting the text itself. These links would be either user-submitted (and admin approved) or they would be provided by the authors, publishers, etc. The pop-up box would also include readings similar or in correlation with that reference. Thus, a reader can purchase an eBook with preloaded hyperlinks, or if they feel the need to, they can create outside reference information themselves and submit it to be added to the eBook. This would be particularly useful in the genre of science fiction and fantasy novels, which often take

place in non-earthly worlds or in an Earth that has been altered, with author created languages, creatures, and settings. Authors would also have the option to include maps and illustrations of the worlds they have created and what happened to the characters there within the story (Figure 2).

Readers could also submit their own artwork to be included with the eBook, however reader submissions would have to be approved by the administrators of The Book Visualization Project as well as the publishers of said eBook. Outside media such as videos and songs would also be embedded as a hyperlink so that the reader would again not have to leave the text. For a song, the embedded hyperlink would play the song being referenced (Figure 3). For a movie or video reference, a clip or trailer of the movie/television show/etc. being referenced would be hyperlinked and again play within the pop-up box. The eBook would also come with further reading suggestions based on the hyperlinked content within the text the reader would have just completed reading, which would come at the end of the book along with other extras (Figure 4). This is our nod to the BookLamp.org project. These extras would not only broaden the reader's mind, but also bring these other works more attention.

Our world today is a melange of medias. Books are becoming more involved with the digital era, an era which has been upon us for some time. As a reader, it is a challenge today to focus on books as well as the outside sources of media and historical and pop culture references that are becoming such an integral part of modern literature. The Book Visualization Project aims to aid in this epic struggle of literature versus technology by neatly marrying the two. This way, as we move away from reading physical works of literature and dive deeper into digital works, readers will be able to comfortably have an engaging—one might even say interactive—reading experience.