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At the outset of my design process, I knew that I wanted to create an application that would allow users to tell more contextually relevant digital narratives using location-based technology. I am constantly frustrated by the glut of meaningless digital media that is being created and shared online. I find the information encoded in these images so generic that they even become unappealing. If you have seen one picture of a cup of latte art, for example, you have seen them all. I often wonder if there is a way to make that picture of your morning coffee mean more to your audience than all of the other nearly identical pictures out there. While these pictures may be compositionally or aesthetically interesting, digital filters aside, they are unlikely to have a very strong narrative when they are so isolated and discrete. However, if your audience had a bit more context for this cup of coffee, maybe it comes the morning after a night out on the town or at the beginning of a near perfect day with a loved one, then viewers are much more

likely to connect and respond to your content. Additionally, I came to the conclusion that using location-based technology, and making location one of the requirements for accessing these pieces of digital media, would not only help media tell better narratives, but also enhance physical experiences by capturing a more specific or personal perspective on a location. A generic picture of Washington Square Park in New York City, for example, looks very much like every other picture out there. However, if it is understood that a creator and an audience member are sharing the same space, even if they are there at different times, it is more likely that the subtleties of a single user's perspective or an often overlooked detail of a location may be captured over the kind of "post-card image" we are so used to seeing.

Based on my research and analysis, I came up with a set of guiding principles which would inform my design process. These principles would not necessarily be hard and fast rules but would certainly help me focus my attention and keep me from getting lost down tangential rabbit holes that were outside the scope of my thesis.

- 1) Capitalize on the intersection of person, place, and time.
- 2) Use technology to create a venue or forum.
- 3) Allow for the sharing of information and ideas under the principles of the Attention Economy.
- 4) Augment physical location based on the idea of Information Capitalism.
- 5) Exploit self-identifiers and tribal activities.
- 6) Create a narrative centered on location-based experiences with geo-social networking.

Having settled on those key principles, I began my design process by considering the AOF method (Activity, Objects, Features) that Porter outlined in his book. I asked the key questions that Porter notes for any social design process: what is the primary function of my application or service?; what are the assets my audience is manipulating?; what are the key features of my application or service? I also looked at the current landscape of social media applications, such as Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, etc., to see what kind of features they offered, how their constituent components were designed and integrated, and what areas were untapped that my application could fit into.

One of the key conclusions that I came to was that few, if any, of these services allowed their users to create content as part of a narrative which was more in tune with the natural parameters of our lives. We live at the mercy of space and time. We cannot go back in time and re-do what we have done, and we cannot experience things outside of our current location. One of the biggest gifts the Internet has given is the ability to connect with one another across the globe. We are no longer bound by location. However, this has had the consequence of devaluing the connections we can make. What was once novel and unique has now become routine. We expect to see images or read stories online that occur far outside our immediate surroundings. But how much do we really understand about such information so isolated from its original context? And how much do we ignore this utter lack of true understanding and take our connections for granted?

As I considered this consequence, I noticed that all of the social media services I was looking at strove to circumvent the natural barriers of space and time. If a service allowed you to tag media by location, it was still accessible by anyone, anywhere. If an application allowed you to keep media in the order you created it, it simply showed up as a “stream of consciousness” that had no real context. If a website allowed you to connect or group pieces of media, they ended up as collections that did not have a very strong or specific narrative. Having a vague idea now of where my application could fit into the landscape, I stumbled upon inspiration from a very unlikely source.

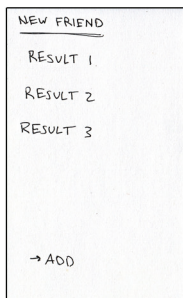
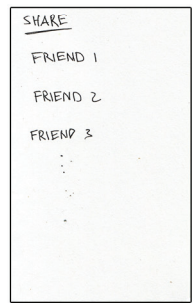
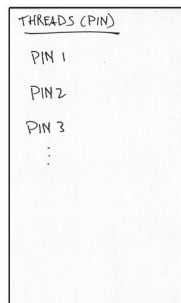
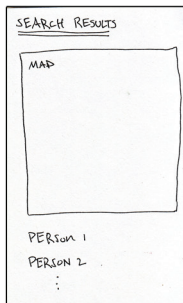
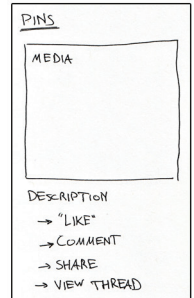
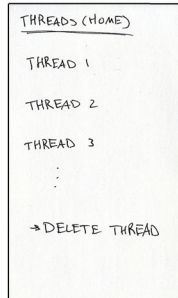
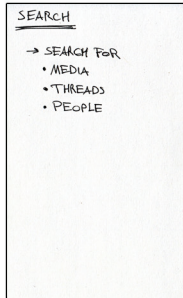
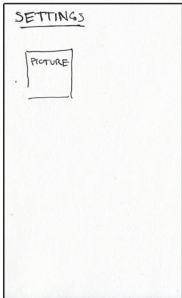
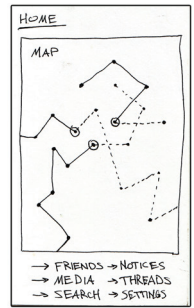
In Showtime’s hit program *Homeland*, the main character is a CIA agent who has become somewhat obsessed with tracking the location of one of her former targets. She does

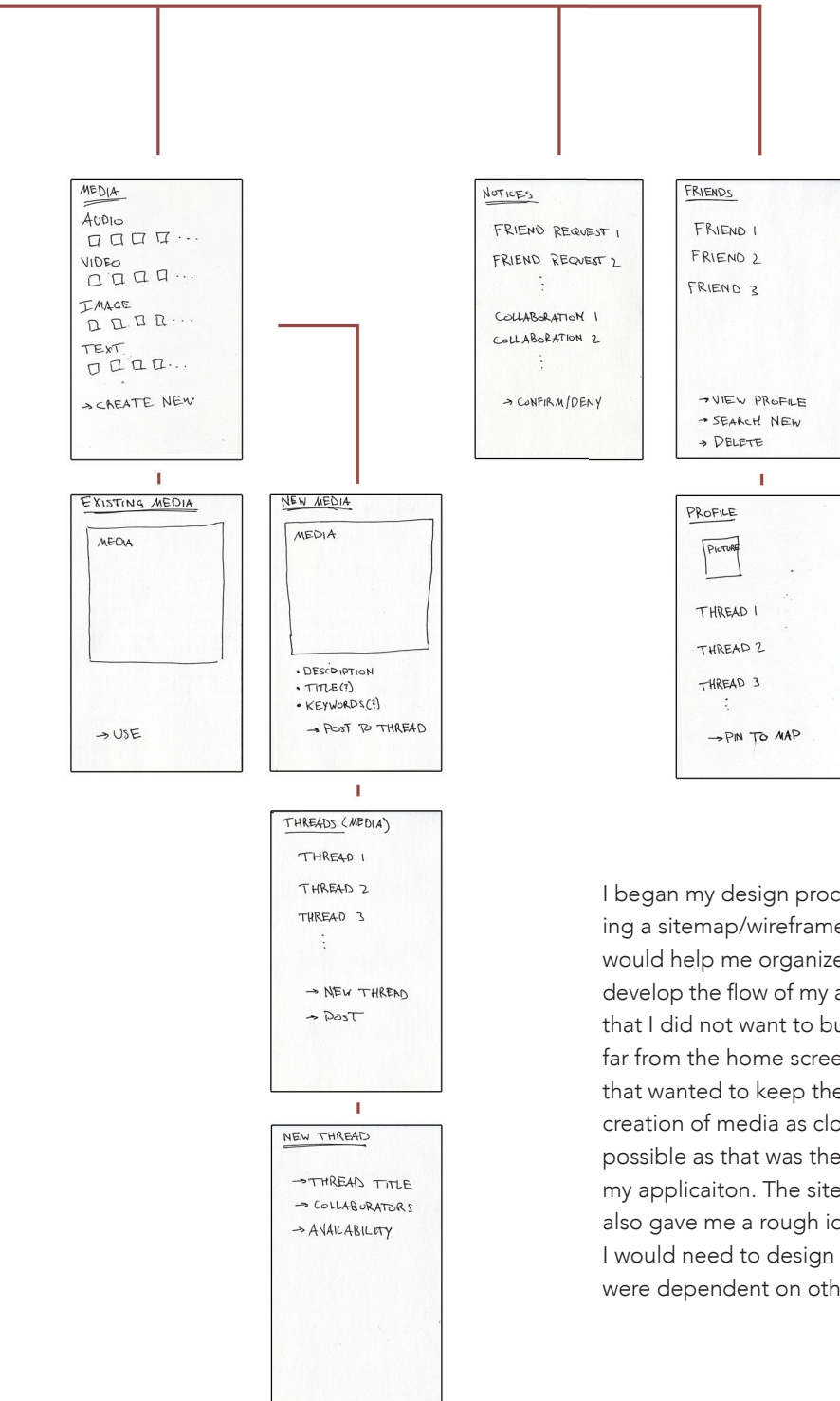
so by collecting news reports from around the world and connecting them with pieces of thread, plotting out her target’s location on a map. By doing so, she is building a narrative of his movements around the world, hoping to find where he is and what he is doing based on the pattern of his past actions. A single photo or news story about him in a certain country could be meaningless on its own. However, when it is connected to other location-based information that is, perhaps, part of a mission’s narrative, that one piece can now illuminate much more than it would on its own. This was clearly the model around which I could structure my application so that digital media too could be used to create more meaningful narratives. Sometimes, inspiration comes from the most unlikely of sources, even Sunday night television.



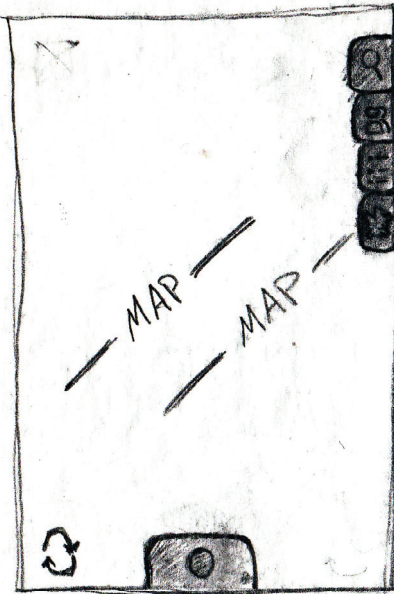
An example of the kind of narrative structure that inspired my design.







I began my design process by creating a sitemap/wireframe. This diagram would help me organize my content and develop the flow of my application. I knew that I did not want to bury content too far from the home screen. I also knew that I wanted to keep the discovery and creation of media as close to the top as possible as that was the main activity of my application. The sitemap/wireframe also gave me a rough idea of the screens I would need to design and which ones were dependent on others.



HOME

## ICONS

Q - search

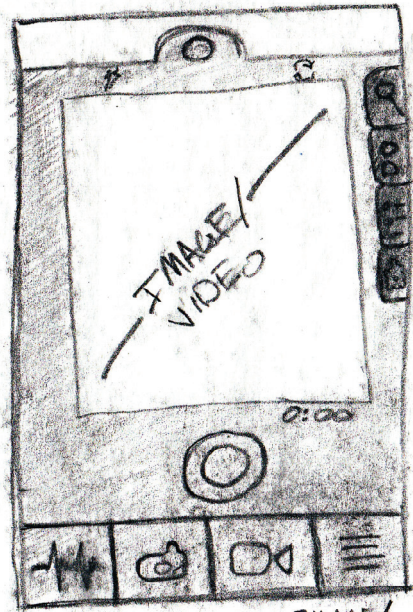
👤 - friends

🔔 - notifications

X ⚙️ - settings

◯ - new media

☒ - switch to personal view ↻



IMAGE/  
VIDEO

## ICONS

📷 - camera

📹 - video

≡ - text

🔊 - audio

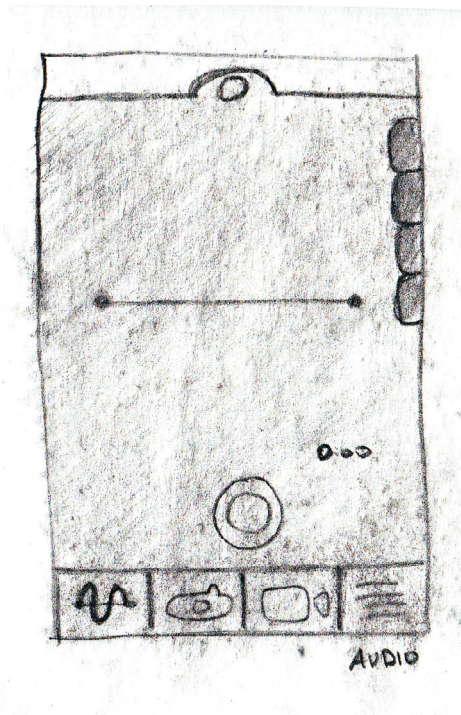
⦿ - record

(existing media)

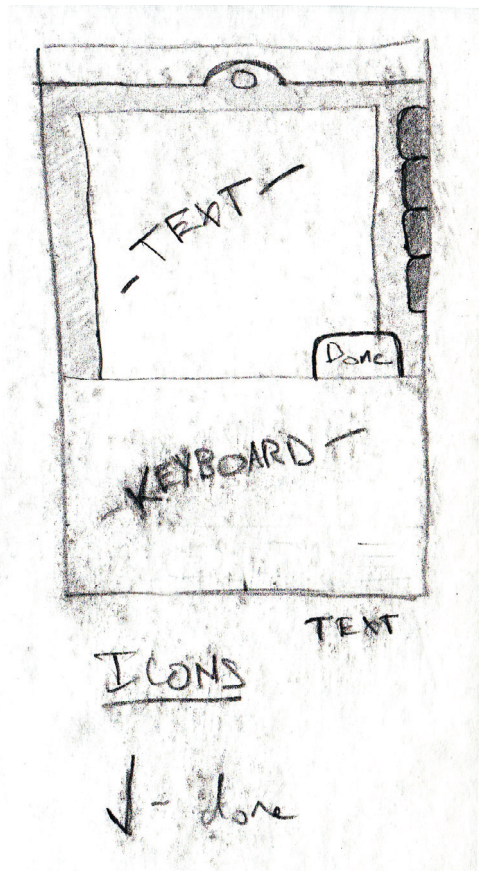
Home screen with possible icon design.

Image/video capture with possible icon design.





Audio capture.

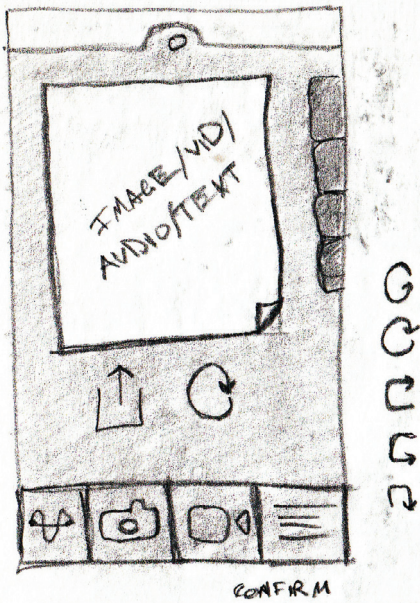


Text generator.

After my sitemap/wireframe was complete, I started sketching out ideas for some of the screens I would need to design. Because I knew that almost everything was secondary to a user's ability to explore other user's media on a map and to create their own media, I wanted to make those two actions immediately accessible from the home screen. As this was a location-based application, everything would be dependent on a map. I wanted to use tabs to store secondary features like a user's list of friends or application settings. I also wanted to have these tabs overlay on the map when selected. By doing so, the map

would always appear to be "in the background". I wanted to make sure that the design of the application would reinforce the notion that the map and its content are at the center of the application.

I thought that confining the application to just pictures and video, as many of the more popular services are, would be too limiting. The narratives I was hoping users would build needed to be more in tune with the ways we build the story of our own lives, using a combination of text, audio, and images. I knew this may present a challenge because I would have to deal with 4 types of media which, by their very nature, are not usually handled



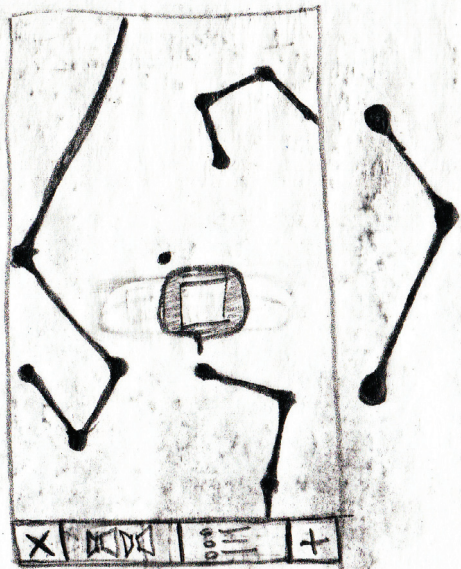
### ICONS

↑ - upload/post

↻ - redo

✓ - add description

Confirmation of media capture and upload.



### ICONS

+

- new thread

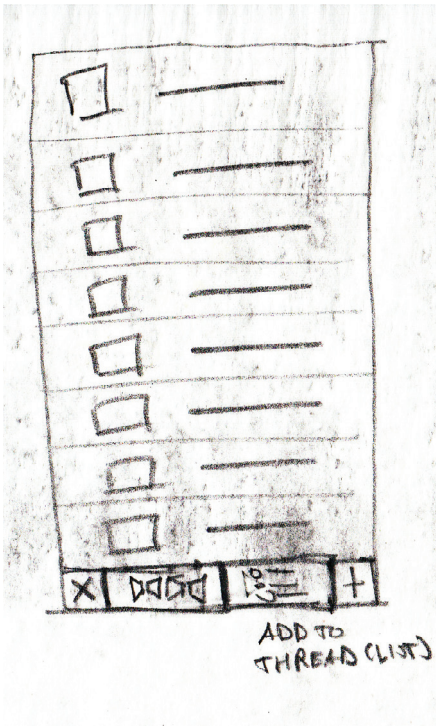
☐☐☐☐ - map view

○ - list view

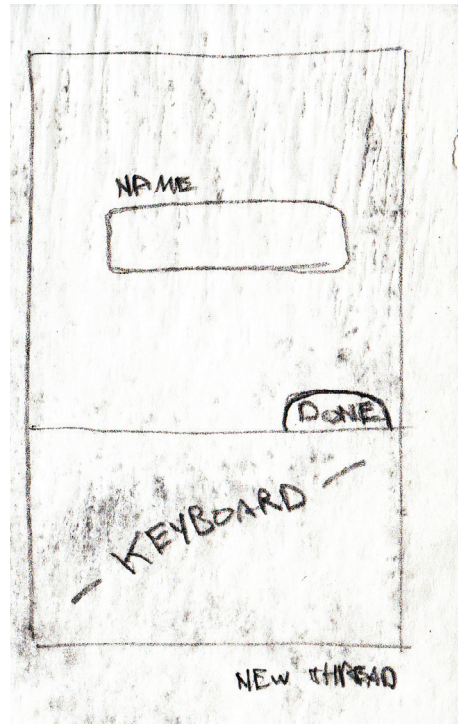
X - quit

Connecting new media to different threads using a map view.





Connecting new media to different threads using a list view.



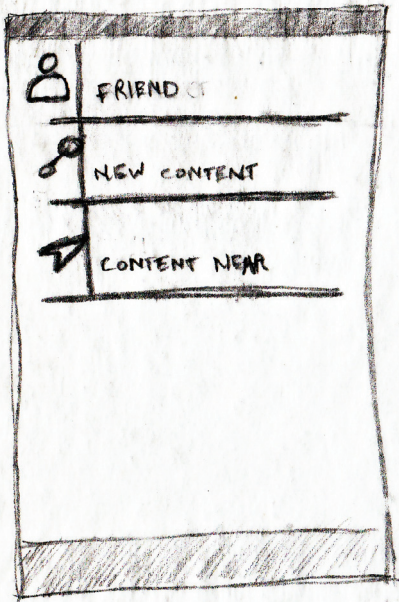
Creating a new thread.

in the same manner. However, I did not want to create too much work for myself, so I needed to figure out a structure for content creation that was flexible enough to accomodate these 4 types of media.

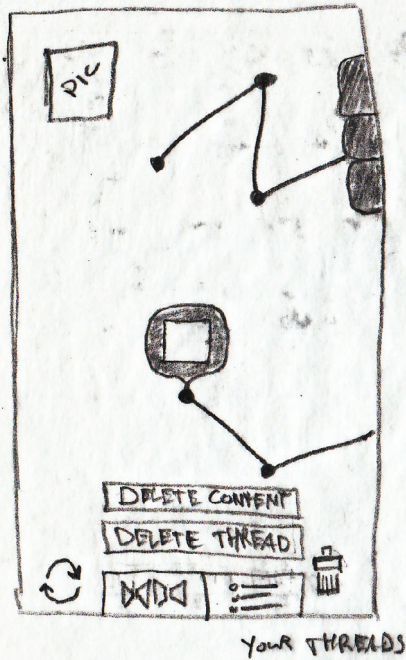
As I began working through the flow of my application, I realized that content management would be key to helping users sift through not only other user's media, but their own as well. Simply piling everything onto a map would get cluttered and confusing very quickly, so I would also need to design a more organized list view that communicated the same information but was easier to navigate for more linear thinkers.

Switching between these two views had to occur seamlessly, and this functionality would need to be readily accessible on the homepage.


Finally, I sketched a rough framework for the kind of notifications you may want to receive. Because the application was centered around a users ability to connect with other users and to explore content, I decided that those would be the two types of notifications you would receive. I had initially thought that users would also be able to collaborate on threads with other users in order to create joint narratives and form the kind of "tribes" that I researched..



Notification list featuring the three kinds of notices users would want to receive: friend requests, content that has been added to a thread a user is currently reading, and that a piece of relevant content is nearby.



## ICONS

 - delete

Viewing and managing your own content with the ability to delete individual pieces or whole threads.

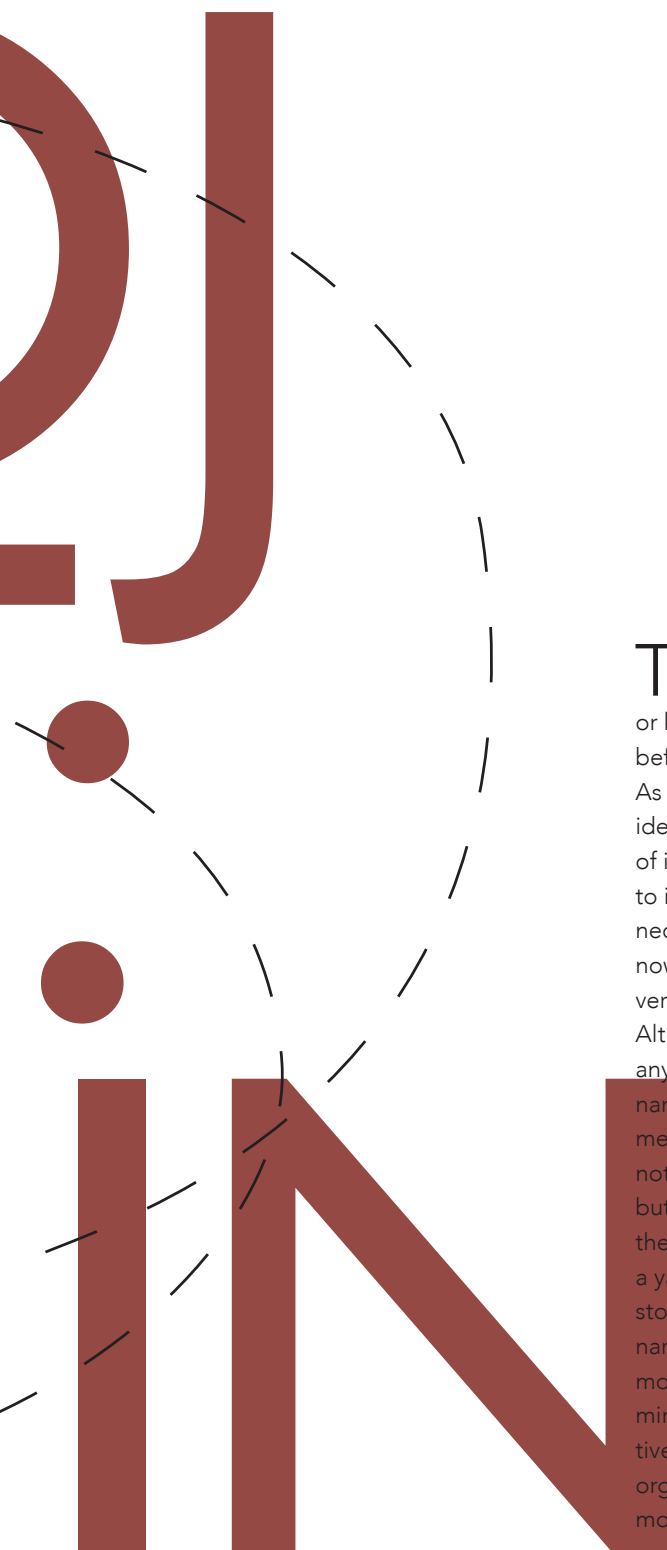
This, unfortunately, proved to be a little too complicated given the time frame in which I was working. Ultimately, if I were to include that feature, it would have had to be shorehorne into the designs and concepts I had already begun and would not feel like an integrated part of the application. I decided to shelve that idea and save it for a future implementation.

Having worked out rough ideas for nearly all of the features I wanted to include, I quickly sketched up a possible design for managing your own content. I knew that it would be relatively similar to how you explored other user's content with the added ability to delete individual pieces of media or whole threads entirely. After considering these initial sketches and making notes for what aspects or features needed to

be cleaned up, clarified, eliminated, or added, I began selecting typefaces, color pairings, designing icons, and everything else that goes into the earnest process of building the screens I would need for my prototype. As I got into more specifics of the interface design, the implementation of many of my ideas changed. While the design remained conceptually similar, some of the tabs disappeared and became icons, some of the icons became tabs, and the overall design became much more refined and streamlined. The final results of my efforts are detailed on the following pages, annotated with key design elements or features to give a more complete picture of how this application functions.

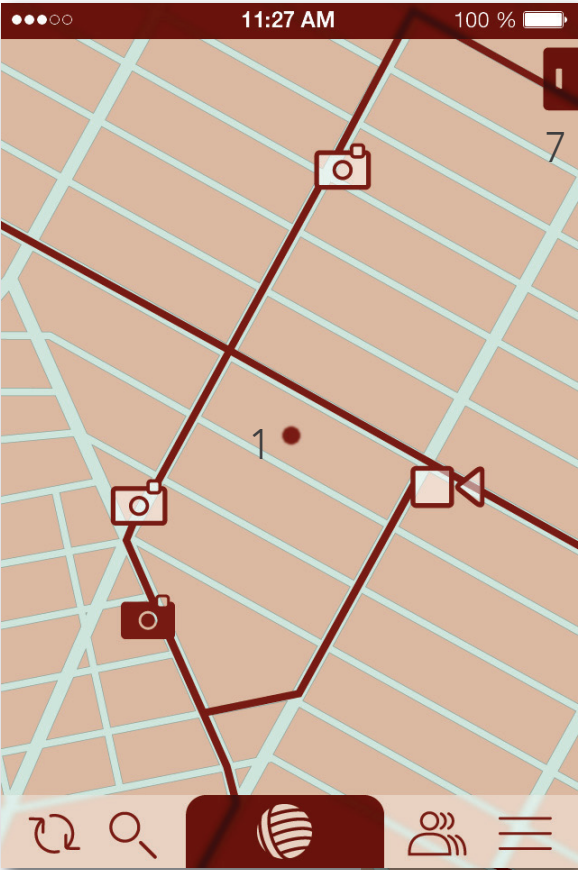






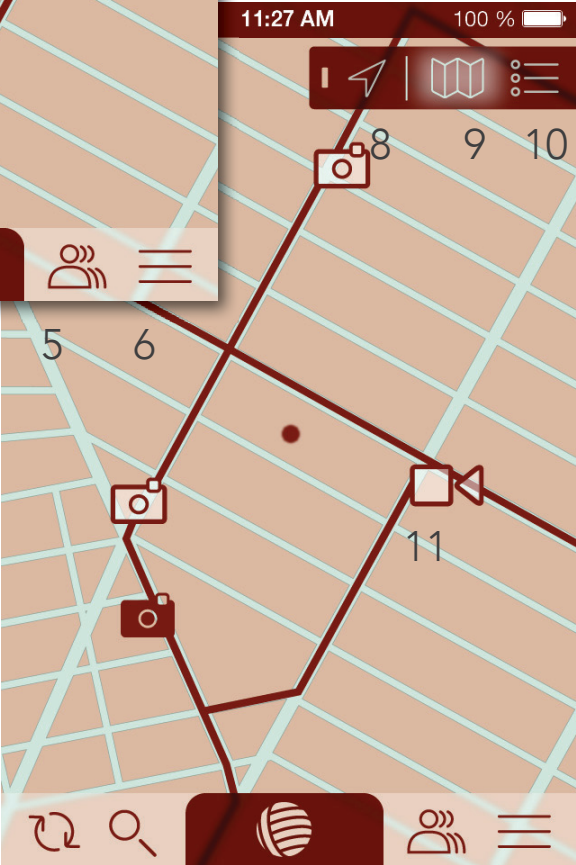
The word “skein” refers to a length of thread or yarn that is loosely coiled or knotted. It is the stage immediately before it is turned into a ball or a spool. As my application was inspired by the idea of creating a narrative where pieces of information, digital media now referred to in this application as “pins”, are connected in a sequence, digital narratives now called “yarns”, I felt that this was a very appropriate name for my project. Although I have never woven or knitted anything before, something about that name feels right. Not only is it short and memorable, it is very unique. A user may not know what a skein is on first read, but once they are aware, they will make the immediate association of “spinning a yarn,” a popular idiom for telling a story. The media that we create and the narratives that we want to tell are, at the moment, loose and uncollected in our minds. It is only after we take these narrative skeins and begin to lay them out and organize them that we are able to tell a more compelling story to our audiences.

# HOME SCREEN (Map View)



- 1. Your current location.
- 2. Switch between map with other user's content and a user's profile.
- 3. Search.
- 4. Tap at any time to return to the home map view. Pull up to launch the media generator.

- 5. Friend list.
- 6. Notifications.
- 7. Pull out to change between map and list views.
- 8. Tap to toggle map orientation between north/south and the direction a user is facing. Hold to return map to users current location.





9. Map view.

10. List view.

11. Unread pins are noted with a burgundy outline. Filled in pins are those which a user has already read.

12 Pin preview.

13. Yarn name. When you tap on a yarn, the selected path will be highlighted.

14. Swipe left or right to navigate through the other pins you have read in this yarn.

15. Media caption/description plus the profile picture of the user who generated the pin. Tapping on the picture will open that user's profile.

11:27 AM 100 %  
Threading Together an Outfit



15



Make sure you check out the 20% sale Star Struck Vintage Clothing. These throw back sweaters are good for business or

14

# HOME SCREEN (List View)



1. Toggle whether or not this yarn appears on your map. This will help keep your map clean and eliminate yarns you are not currently reading.

2. Yarn name and progress bar indicating how far along in the yarn you are.

4



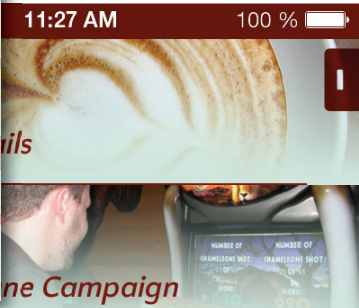
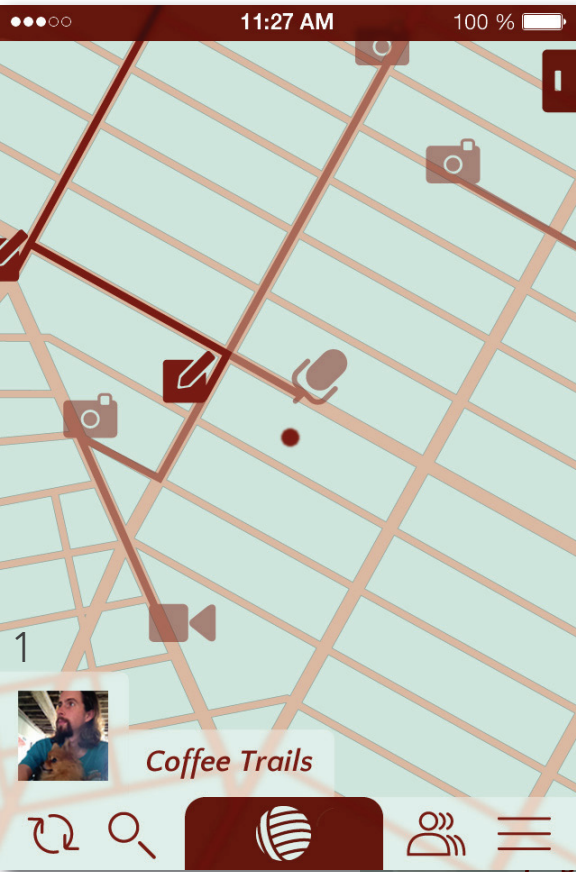
3. Swipe left or right to navigate through this yarn.

4. Media caption/description plus the profile picture of the user who generated the pin. As with map view, tapping on the picture will open that user's profile.

3

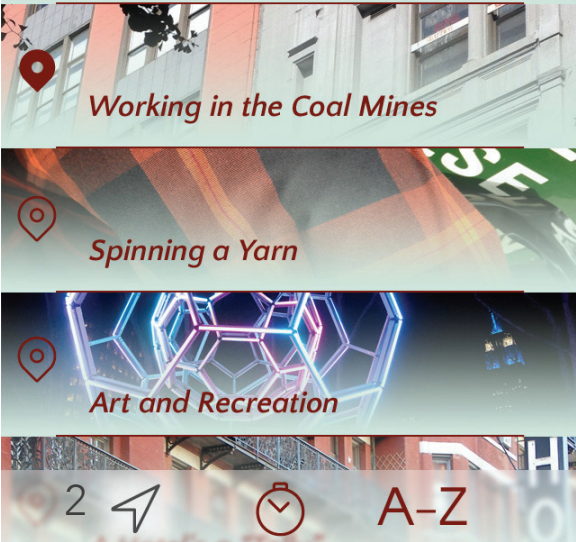


# PROFILE PAGE (Map and List View)



1. Tap your profile picture to manage your application settings.

2. Your yarns can be organized by three different methods: proximally, chronologically, or alphabetically. This gives users more flexibility to help them find the thread they want to review or manage as quick as possible.



FRIEND LIST

●●●○

11:27 AM

100 %

Michelle Abrams

Joey Bishop

Felipe Guzman

1 Ivan Ivanovich

Richard Ousman

11:27 AM

100 %

Bishop

rt Love Story: One

A Four Part Love Story: Two

2 A Four Part Love Story: Three

LES Style Wars

3



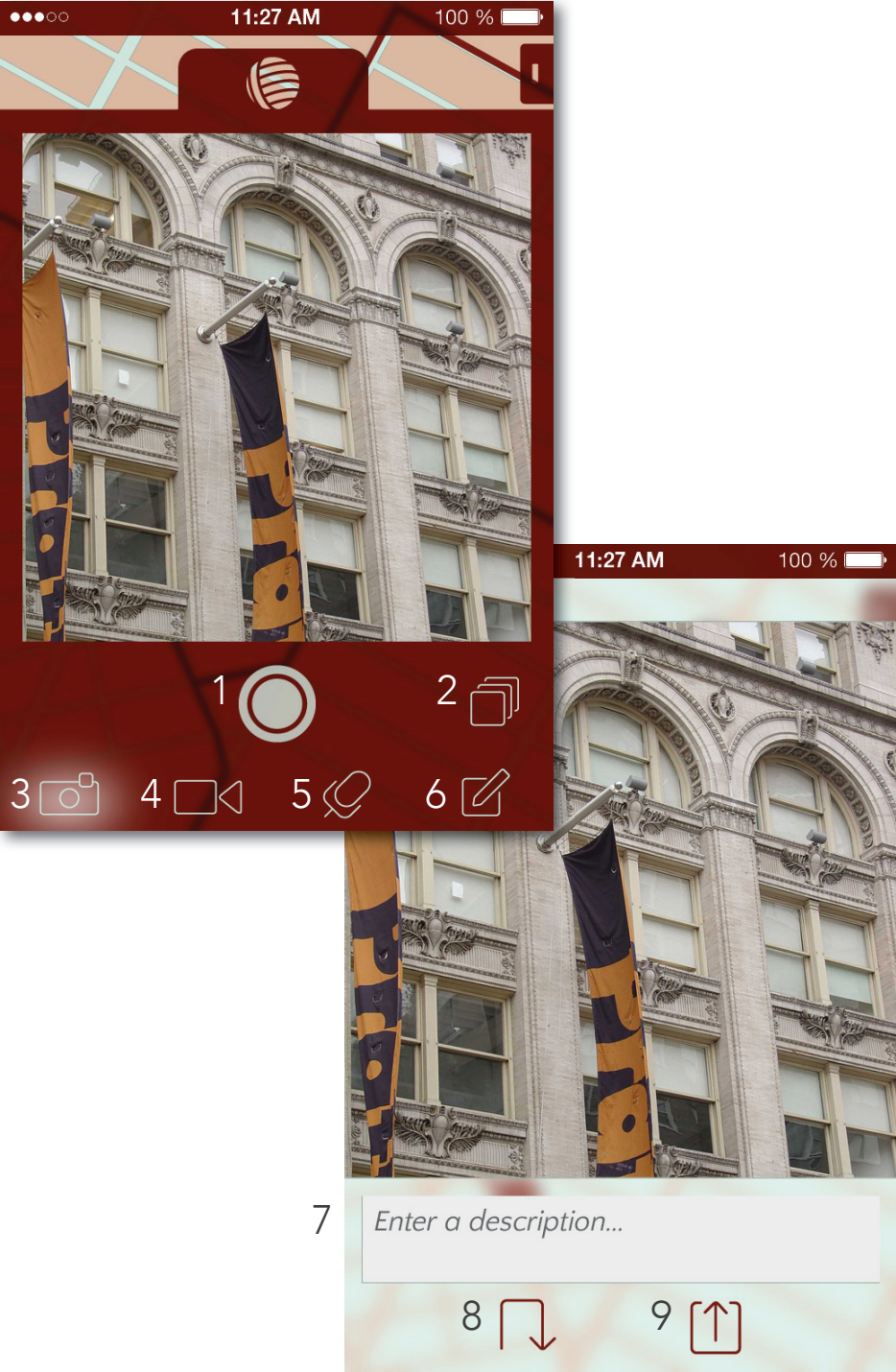
4

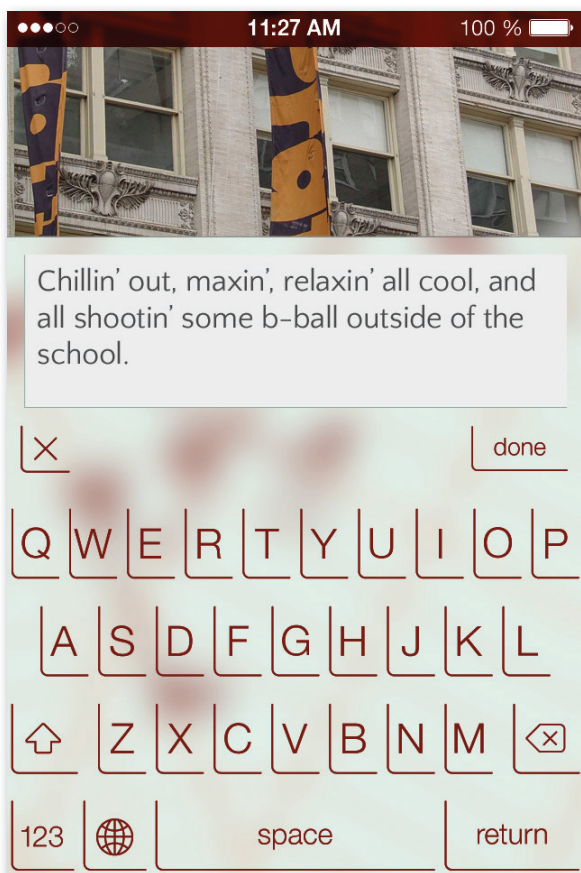


1. Friend.
2. Friend's yarns. Tap to reveal pins on this yarn.
3. Tap to reveal yarn in map view.
4. Swipe left or right to navigate through this yarn.
5. This particular yarn as seen in map view.



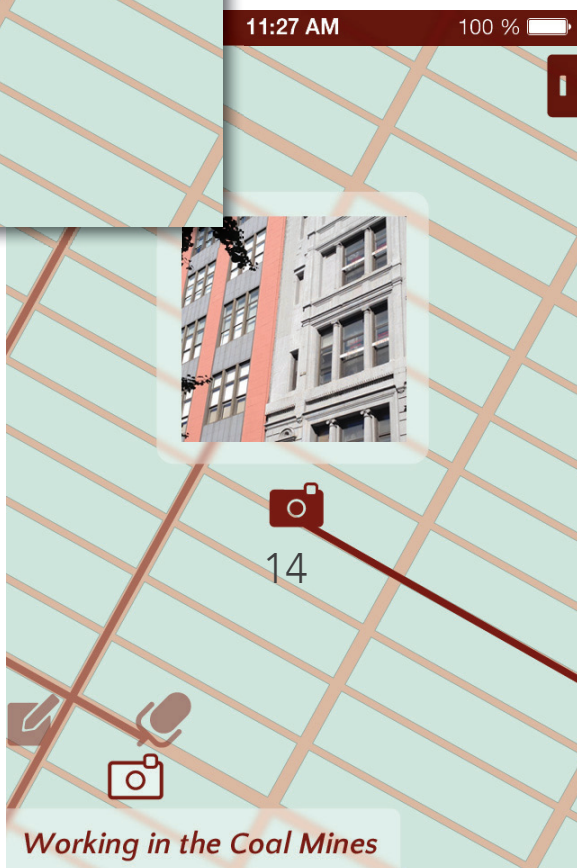
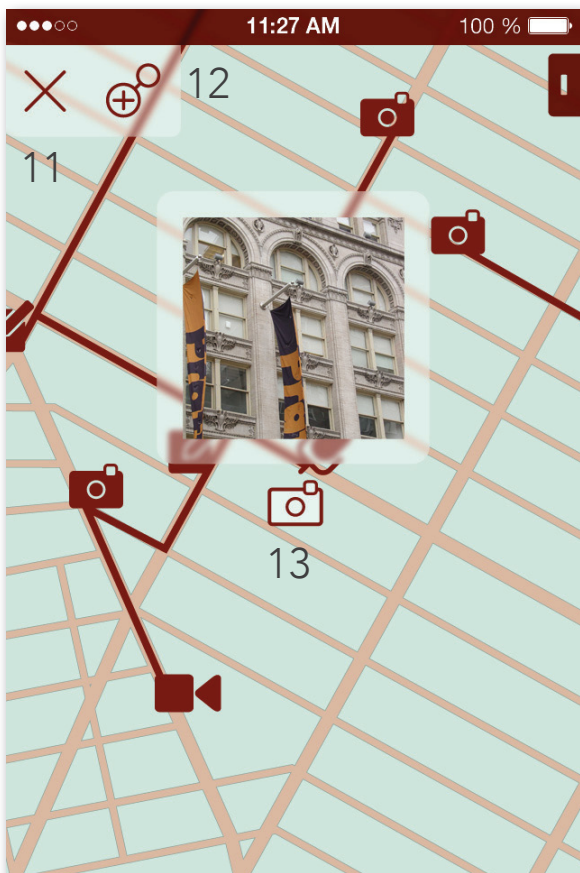
CREATE and CONNECT MEDIA





1. Take/record media.
2. Existing media library.
3. Select for photograph.
4. Select for video.
5. Select for audio.
6. Select for text.
7. Add description/caption to media once it has been captured.
8. Retake/rerecord media.
9. Upload.
10. Keyboard.

10

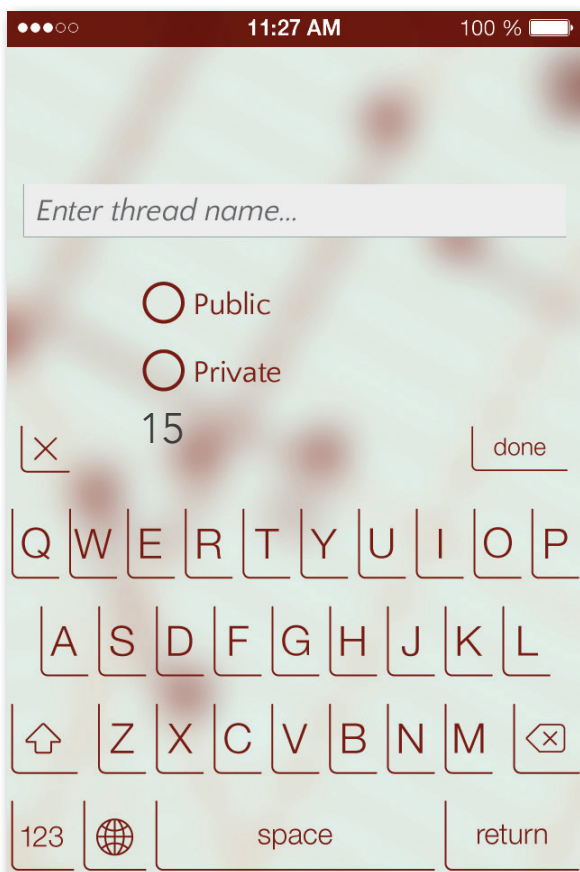


11. Cancel upload and return to home screen.

12. Create new thread.

13. New media on map.

14. Existing media and a preview image. Tap to reveal pins on this yarn.

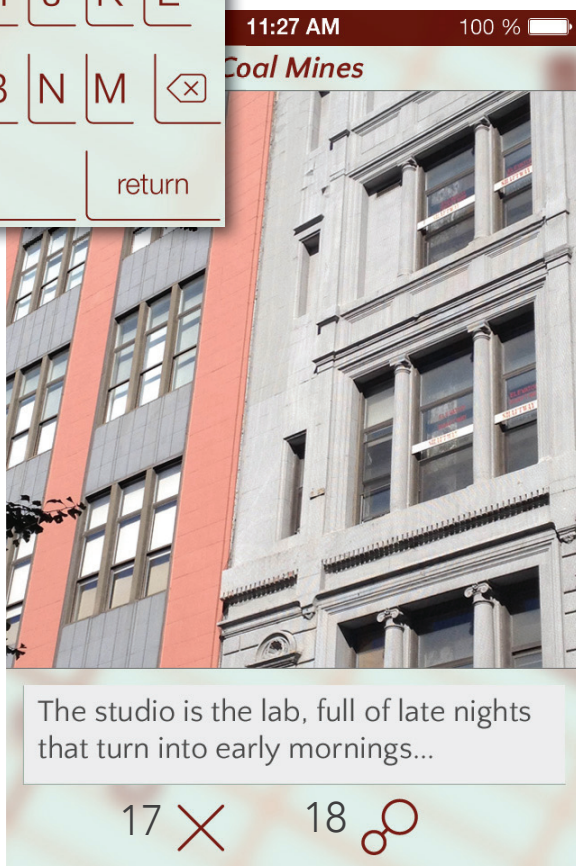


15. When creating a new yarn, establish the visibility, public for all users, private for just your friends.

16. Swipe left and right to see other pins on this yarn.

17. Cancel connection.


18. Confirm connection.



16

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At the end of this long process of research, analysis, design, and evaluation, it can be easy to get mired at a micro-level perspective, focusing on the small details of the interface or the small actions of individual user cases. It is important to take a step back and look at the total digital landscape. At their core, these social media services, current and future designs alike, are simply tools. They are a means for people to capture and share their particular view of the world around them. Users create pieces of content as a way of documenting or recording their personal journey though life. Ultimately, all this digital media is simply a conduit through which users can connect with one another. They share a small bit of their world with their network and, in return, gain an equally small glimpse into someone else's life. While it may not necessarily be the most personal of connections, it is certainly the most prolific kind available today.

All of these social media and networking services are merely a means to do what

we all naturally desire to do: connect with one another. Their interfaces simply exist as a veneer covering the same structure of intimately shared details and a mutual understanding about one another. At our core, we want to see our lives realized, our voice heard, and our existence confirmed. We want to create an impact in the lives of those around us. We want to know that, at some level, someone will know and appreciate that we were here. It is our need to make this kind of primal "I was here", or rather "I am here", statement which drives not only our desire for connections, but also the way we act online and the Internet operates as a whole. The metrics of the Attention Economy and the principles of Information Capitalism are a very quantifiable measure of the impact we all seek through our digital content. We can quantifiably see likes, comments, views, etc., as validation of both "I made this" and "I have been heard". By this measure, my designs have failed. My application provides no means for popular content to rise to the top, for users to appreciate certain pieces of content over another, and for those with a resonant voice to be clearly recognized. Nor does it offer a means for users to find and form the tribal bonds that have become such a keystone to how we identify ourselves on the Internet. Working out the initial framework for the application proved to be much more complicated than I anticipated, and I made a conscious decision to strip certain features away in favor of refining the ones I knew I would need. This is not to say, however, that my designs were a complete failure in this arena.

The principles of the Attention Economy and Information Capitalism are far more complex than merely recording visitors or counting comments. At

their core, these principles are based on impact, on effect, on a more deeper appreciation of the content you come across. One picture of third world poverty that goes viral and reaches 10 million views overnight is nearly meaningless if none of those 10 million viewers are inspired to do something. That is not to say that only media which comes with a call to social or political action has a place on the Internet. There is certainly still a place for cat videos, for pictures of brunch, and updates from your vacation. But, until that media has a meaning and impact beyond the superficial, it is simply distracting digital noise.

I believe that my application is an effective solution to increase the contextual and narrative significance of digital media. I have designed something which creates a new forum that allows users to capture and share information with each other. By using geo-location technology as the basis for how digital content is stored and accessed, I have accomplished my goal of leveraging location back into the digital experience. I have also augmented one's physical surroundings by turning location into one of the variables for accessing this kind of content. Finally, and most importantly, the design preserves the natural parameters of person, place, and time by creating narratives which are beholden to all three. While the proof would most certainly come from actual user responses, in theory, this application helps give digital media a deeper level of meaning and, hopefully, impact on its audience. However, these social networking services tend to take on a life of their own. At this point, we just have to put a little faith in the users.

