

The not so Ximpel-Su Experience

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Intro

The assignment given to us was to create an interactive video application using the eXtensible Interactive Media Player for Entertainment and Learning also known as XIMPEL. Me and my partner in crime Michelle Tjoe A On chose to make our project about our motherland Suriname, after going past the possibilities to make it about basketball since it was NBA playoffs season. It seemed right. We wanted to inform the rest of the class and anyone else who viewed our App, about the history, culture and many other things our country has to offer. From the beginning on, I wasn't all too worried about the material we would have to gather to put in the application. We both grew up and went to school in Suriname so we knew what was important and what wasn't. No, the thing I was more worried about, was the way XIMPEL handled and how it should be used, since I'm not the most gifted of programmers.

The question is, whether it would have been better to use a program other than Ximpel.

method of approach

We started out with a story graph which later changed due to the long (countless) hours of programming it would bring along with it. We explicitly wanted that the user would have to go past all the videos to get to the end. After all, how informative will it be, if you're only going to watch half?

Then we moved on to the videos and would work from there. Videos were made from material found on youtube.com after reading about the stuff we would need from other websites like Wikipedia.com. With a program called Windows Live Movie Maker, we put them together with music, text and other pictures we wanted to use. Later problems arose because of the file size of each movie. These couldn't be too big because we would later upload these videos on the school server. Therefore we had to make them smaller using video compressors.

We already had a basic idea of what could be done with Ximpel due to the many fun examples shown to us in our interactive multimedia class. As I said before, I still need to learn a lot about programming and so did my partner. This wasn't going to be an easy task. The easiest way in my opinion was to study an example and work from there. After reading a lot about the rules to construct a basic Ximpel application, that is the syntax, it started to become a little more clear. Coming across an example named Ximpel tv, it seemed like the easiest way go, but then we couldn't do what we wanted to accomplish by having the user view all the videos. The example we used was that of Timelessfuture. We wanted to recreate a type of Dvd menu structure where you can choose one video and have that one disappear after it has been viewed. With our new and improved storygraph tree, I got to work. Here is a part of the code used in our program.

```

<subject id="history" leadsto="history">

  <description>History</description>
  <media>
    <video file="history">
      <question starttime="1" duration="12" closebutton="true"
        binary="true" pause="false">
        <label>Is de slavernij afgeschaft?</label>
        <rightanswer>true</rightanswer>
      </question>
    </video>

    <picture file="Untitled-1.jpg">
      <overlays>
        <overlay>
          <overlaycel x="80" y="380" width="130"
            height="130" leadsto="famouspeople" textcolor="#4e8062"
            hover_textcolor="#253a5b" background_alpha="0" alpha=".7"
            hover_alpha="1" textsize="28" hover_textsize="30"
            image="famouspeople.jpg"/>
          <overlaycel x="600" y="70" width="130"
            height="130" leadsto="food" textcolor="#4e8062" hover_textcolor="#253a5b"
            background_alpha="0" alpha=".7" hover_alpha="1" textsize="28"
            hover_textsize="30" image="food.jpg"/>
        </overlay>
      </overlays>
    </picture>
  </media>
</subject>

```

In this part the first optional branch “history” is described. After having viewed the clip about the history of Suriname, you are given the ability to choose between famous people and food. These two options are implemented by using what Ximpel calls overlays. The name says it all. Also worth noting is that during the video a question comes up, if the Slavery in Suriname is over or not. Answering this gives you points which are calculated and reported later on.

Problem shooting

The most annoying problem encountered, was that one of the videos we had made with Windows Live Movie Maker could for some reason not be saved. We unfortunately solved this by settling on another video which maybe was less in quality. Also the code we used had the Ximpel App displayed in a smaller window than desired. This would not be convenient for the user and made the whole

project less in quality. Fortunately this was solved by looking at the Ximpel basic package code. Another problem found was that the file "make_ximpelApp-offline_with_SWC" did not work at all. This problem was not fixed.

Summary and solutions

I do have to say that I enjoyed working on the project. It was good to see the step by step progress of all students work. A lot were humorous which kept the classes fun and exciting. I am also happy to say that the codes and programming are a lot more understandable. I would like to see more examples of Ximpel. This would give the people, like me, who aren't that good at programming more space to achieve more and make more creative applications.

Sources

<http://www.wikipedia.org/>

<http://www.youtube.com/>

<http://www.google.com/>

<http://www.cs.vu.nl/~eliens/im/resource-im.html>

<http://ximpel.net/>

<http://www.timelessfuture.com/>

<http://explore.live.com/windows-live-movie-maker-help-center>