

Supporting Village Community through Connected Situated Displays



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Investigating the ways that public, digital displays can help **support rural communities**, by improving communications or fostering a sense of history and identity.

Working in Wray

Wray is a small village in Lancashire with a population under 500, known locally as 'The Scarecrow Village' for its annual scarecrow festival.

The village offers a uniquely suitable environment for studies of community displays; since 2004, the entire village has been covered by a wireless mesh network installed as part of another university project, providing excellent connectivity and fostering considerable goodwill and enthusiasm towards our work.

Throughout our work, we've visited the village regularly, attending community events and organising workshops to allow the *co-realisation* of display designs with residents.



The Wray Photo Display

The Wray Photo Display was first deployed in August 2006, intended to act as a *technology probe* to explore the environment, field test our technologies and help to inspire design ideas and feedback from members of the community.

Residents can upload images using a website, which are then displayed on a touch-screen display in the village post office for everyone to see. The images uploaded so far have strongly represented the village's history and important community events, particularly the scarecrow festival.

Feedback that we've received has indicated how residents have enjoyed these photos, and feel the display could be helpful for new residents moving into the village.



Future Work and Outcomes

Our research goals include the development of rural display prototypes, the evaluation of various design and interaction techniques for these displays, and achieving an understanding of rural communities as a deployment environment.

To achieve this, we will continue development of the Wray Photo Display, based on feedback from residents and our own observations of its usage, before beginning work on a new display design for the village offering more services.

Although photo sharing with the display has been well-received and shown much potential, there is much more that could be achieved with community displays. Possible features might include local news, advertisements, an events calendar and other community information.

While this could be provided through a website, the use of a public display makes these services accessible to those without easy Internet access and provides peripheral awareness when passing by.

We intend to continue working closely with residents during the design process, taking into account the lessons learned from the Photo Display.

The design and evaluation of the next display will form the core of this project. It is intended that design work with the community will begin in summer 2008, aiming for deployment during 2009.

"A great way of recording a living history of Wray"



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