

Abstract

Sohail Dahdal

**Interactive Documentaries as
Immersive Digital Space**

This paper examines interactive documentaries ability to create immersive digital spaces that serve as a virtual contact zone between the subject of those documentaries and the audience. We identify four distinctive types of interactive documentaries: Web, Virtual Reality, Serious Games and Location Based Documentaries. For each type we examine one documentary and the audiences' reaction to the experience of interacting with the documentary. Drawing on Allport's social contact hypothesis (1954) and more specifically on Pratt's concept of a virtual contact zone (1991), we examine the relationship between the digital space, the subject of the documentary and the audience. This relation if not driven by the new technologies like virtual and augmented reality, then at the least it is influenced by the new resulting space. Latour, comments that "we do not assume these digital spaces to be borne in a social vacuum" (1991), in this case the power of new technologies in relation to the telling of factual stories in the digital space is transforming the audience experience from passive lean back to an active in-space immersive experience. The paper concludes that the relation between the technology creating the digital space and the audience experience of the story creates an immersive digital contact zone where the audiences are immersed in the story and are able to experience the story within the parameters of that space, this is the most powerful in virtual reality documentaries and promises to changes the experience of watching factual content.