

White Glove Tracking

Creating a data source together one glove at a time.

A Rhizome commissions project by Evan Roth and Ben Engebretson
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Overview:

There are 10,060 frames of video in Michael Jackson's 5 min 35 sec nationally televised landmark performance of Billy Jean. The White Glove Tracking project (W.G.T.) is an effort to isolate just the white glove from this moment in pop-culture history. Rather than write unnecessarily complex code to find the glove in every frame of the video we asked for the assistance of 10,060 individual internet users to simply click and drag a box around the glove in one frame. In the end this data will be shared freely for all to download, visualize, and use as an input into other digital systems.

W.G.T., much like Nasa's Clickworks project, is an exercise in crowd sourcing. Interested users can donate small bits of time by analyzing single frames within a much larger video (in this case the first televised performance of the Moonwalk). This enables the production of information that otherwise would be prohibitively labor intensive. Working under the principal that useful data can be gathered by asking internet users to perform "...tasks that require human perception and common sense, but may not require a lot of scientific training."

(~NASA)

White Glove Tracking Is an open source initiative which shares both the source code and the resulting data.

Database:

The backend of the WGT project stores the frame information submitted by the users. Users can either contribute anonymously by simply making a glove selection or can opt to login (by

volunteering their email address) whereupon the subsequent frames they submit will be credited to them. Additionally, once a user is logged in, if they enter a screen name, they will be credited by that name in both the top users section of the site and in any credits we make for projects based on the data set. The top ten users (a group who each submitted more than 1000 frames) will also get prints of future work made from the data source they helped create.

The Launch:

When the WGT project went live it was intended to be a silent launch for a couple of days of beta testing and refinement. Somehow (we're not sure how really) it was quickly picked up by Metafilter (<http://www.metafilter.com>) so we were forced to go public with the site immediately. Metafilter comments did help us by suggesting that a randomized frame rotation would be more interesting / entertaining than our then incremental system; this seemed to be a good idea which we quickly implemented. The next day it was picked up by Digg and traffic simply rocketed. Being on the front page of Digg is always good for your hit counter, but May 4th was a particularly good day for traffic as Digg was in major media news for publishing the HD DVD crack the day previous. At one point there was a good 10 second delay in loading the page (which Digg users rightly complained about). After the initial spike, traffic leveled out to a high plateau and frames were quickly logged. As you can see from the plots below, both registered users and the number of unique frames submitted grew quickly after the unintentional launch.

The site was well received on social bookmarking sites which was critical to its success and rapid expansion. By the end of the 8 days the WGT project had exceeded the KiloDigg benchmark with 1086 Diggs. Del.icio.us users briefly propelled the site into the daily popular links as well. By the time we took the frame submission portion of the site down over 165,000 unique frames had been submitted and exactly 1,500 users had registered their email with the site. Countless more submitted frames anonymously. The top user submitted over 1/3 of the 10,060 frames alone! All in all, the site's popularity exceeded the expectations of the authors and completed in 24 hours what we had estimated to take several months. This was an eye opening experience for us to witness just how powerful a crowd sourcing project can be when it goes viral in the web. We consider the data collection aspect of the project a complete success and have Rhizome to thank for the opportunity.

Contagious Media & Crowd Sourcing:

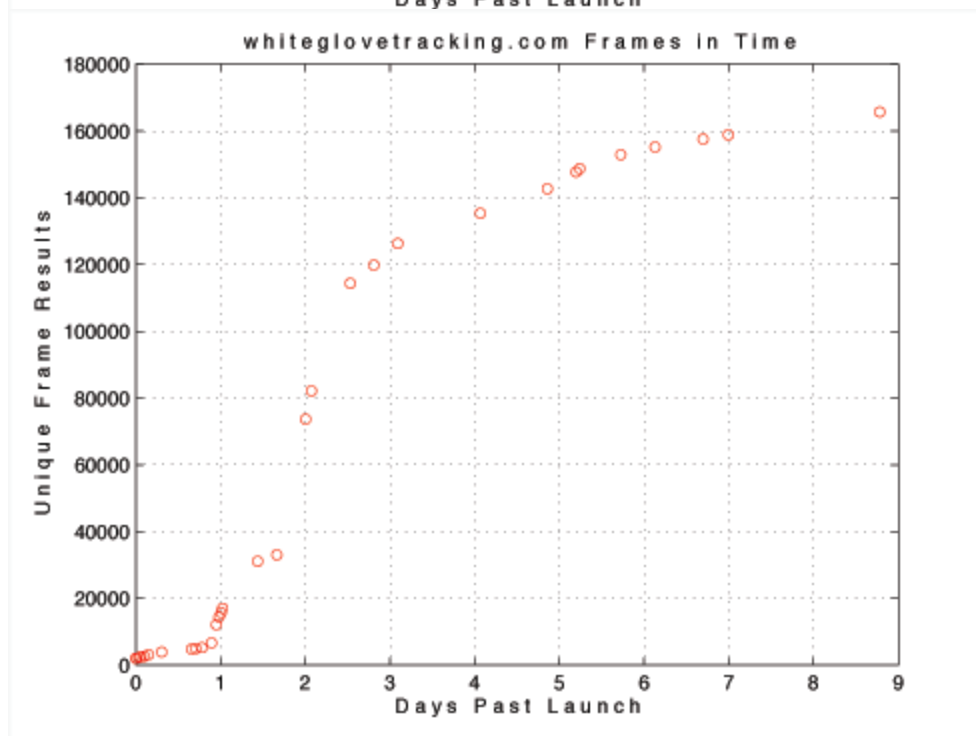
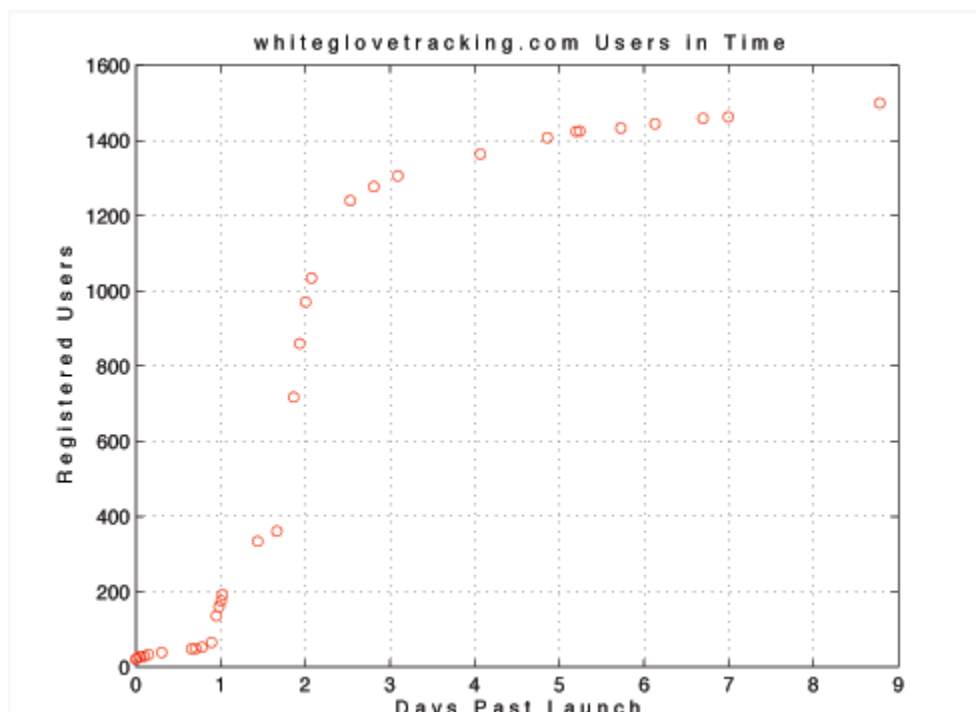
Crowd sourcing projects typically rely on two types incentive for participation: 1.) monetary, as is the case with Mechanical Turk (<http://www.mturk.com/mturk/welcome>), 2.) or the sense of taking part in something large and important, as is the case with NASA Clickworks or SETI at home. The White Glove Tracking project is neither of these. As Digg user 'pile' stated in the comment thread, "It's great that we've cured cancer so we can now dedicate resources to other important projects like this." WGT was meant to serve as an example of how crowd sourcing can be used for playful and creative purposes. The ridiculous task of isolating the white glove allowed the data collection process to become fun and viral. The amount of data collected in 24 hours is a testament to the power that crowd sourcing can have when it is done in conjunction with contagious media.

Openness and Moving Forward:

Whit Glove tracking is an open project in three ways: 1) The source code used to generate the data is available, 2.) the data collection process was done openly and collaboratively, and 3.) the

resulting data set will be released for others to use in whatever way they see fit. Steps one and two of this process are complete and in the coming weeks we will enter phase three. We plan to release the data set as a text file as well as a processing and Open Frameworks project. It is our hopes that the visualizing of the data will be as fun and popular a task as collecting the data. Ideally we would have enough people creating visualizations and mash-ups that we could curate an exhibition of work all created from the same data set. In the end it will be a random group of people visualizing a data set created by a different random group of people. Our main role in the project is simply releasing a video with an interface that allowed others to get involved.

Below is an appendix of screen captures from the server during the peek of data collection around May 4th, 2007:



2720 diggs

Digg readership DOUBLES from HD DVD fiasco -- reaches world's top 40 sites

Internet traffic to Digg.com was doubled by the firestorm of controversy surrounding the release of an HD DVD decryption code, according to a monitoring service. The furore appears to have temporarily boosted the social networking site into the world's top 40 most visited websites. Competing websites, such as Slashdot and Reddit, also benefited.

Overview >

Visits for all visitors

May 1, 2007 - May 7, 2007

Export | Email | Add to Dashboard



36,316 Visits

Date	Percentage	Visits
Tuesday, May 1, 2007	0.01%	3
Wednesday, May 2, 2007	2.02%	733
Thursday, May 3, 2007	11.21%	4,072
Friday, May 4, 2007	70.24%	25,507
Saturday, May 5, 2007	8.86%	3,217
Sunday, May 6, 2007	3.73%	1,377
Monday, May 7, 2007	3.87%	1,407

All traffic sources sent 36,316 visits via 292 sources and mediums

Show: Source Medium

SourceMedium	Visits	Individual SourceMedium performance: Avg. Time on Site
digg.com / referral	21,653	00:04:03
(direct) / (none)	5,835	00:02:34
lottle.org / referral	2,046	00:03:36
google.com / referral	815	00:03:57
waxy.org / referral	690	00:03:16
n9e.com / referral	653	00:01:24
metatiller.com / referral	506	00:02:04
bloglines.com / referral	362	00:03:38
yesbutnobutyes.com / referral	352	00:01:59
cynical-c.com / referral	349	00:02:56
stumbleupon.com / referral	313	00:01:52
rocketboom.com / referral	237	00:03:23
putalocura.com / referral	226	00:02:48
sprflesion.com / referral	209	00:01:24
delicious.com / referral	173	00:04:47
computerarts.co.uk / referral	169	00:02:27
dogodot.us / referral	135	00:04:05
duaganiror.com / referral	119	00:03:32
google / organic	96	00:06:18
minevsonline.com / referral	63	00:04:59
netvibes.com / referral	60	00:03:44
inkbunnies.org / referral	59	00:02:38
communities.canada.com / referral	56	00:01:25
mitron.com / referral	48	00:06:30

All traffic sources sent 36,316 visits via 292 sources and mediums

Show: [Source Medium](#)

Site Usage		Goal Conversion		Views: [Icons]		
Visits 36,316 % of Site Total: 100.00%	Pages/visit 6.50 Site Avg: 6.50 (0.00%)	Avg. Time on Site 00:03:35 Site Avg: 00:03:35 (0.00%)	% New Visits 92.04% Site Avg: 92.04% (-0.01%)	Bounce Rate 29.58% Site Avg: 29.58% (0.00%)		
SourceMedium	Visits	Individual SourceMedium performance: Visits				
diga.com / referral	21,653	59.62%				
(direct) / (none)	5,835	16.07%				
kottke.org / referral	2,046	5.63%				
google.com / referral	815	2.24%				
waxy.org / referral	690	1.90%				
ri9e.com / referral	653	1.80%				
metafilter.com / referral	506	1.39%				
bloodlines.com / referral	362	1.00%				
vesbutnobutyes.com / referral	352	0.97%				
cynical-c.com / referral	349	0.96%				
stumbleupon.com / referral	313	0.86%				
rocketboom.com / referral	237	0.65%				
putalocura.com / referral	226	0.62%				
spfdesign.com / referral	209	0.58%				
delicious.us / referral	173	0.48%				

