

Department of Archaeology

Can a chatbot change our perceptions of the past?

Posted on 9 May 2019

York lecturer and two York alumna publish co-authored research on creating rules-based chatbots for heritage sites



An example of a question posed by EMOTIVE's Bot of Conviction to provoke conversation about the human past. Credit: EMOTIVE Project - www.emotiveproject.eu

After two years of development, Senior Lecturer Dr Sara Perry, and two of York's MSc in Digital Heritage alumna, Angeliki Tzouganatou and Sierra McKinney, alongside three members of the EMOTIVE Project (www.emotiveproject.eu) team, have published their research into developing 'chatbots of conviction' for archaeological and heritage sites. Presented at the 2019 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems in Glasgow this week, the full-text of the paper is freely downloadable from the ACM Digital Library (<https://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?doid=3290605.3300857>), and a teaser video has been produced to introduce audiences to the concept behind the project, and to pique interest (<https://youtu.be/iHxDpSWZo-4>).

Inspired by Mark Sample's and Shawn Graham's calls to build bots that provoke people (in constructive fashion) to question and act responsibly on their values, beliefs and prejudices, the team has developed and evaluated patterns for producing 'bots of conviction'. These are simple rules-based chatbots whose communicative design works to foster in users challenging – but productive – forms of dialogue and reflection. Drawing on findings from the complex archaeological site of Çatalhöyük, the chatbot discussed in the EMOTIVE team's research leads its users through tough questions around common human concerns: death, privacy, equality, power, and more.

PLEASE CITE AS: Roussou, M., Perry, S., Katifori, A., Vassos, S., Tzouganatou, A., McKinney, S. (2019) Transformation through Provocation? Designing a 'Bot of Conviction' to Challenge Conceptions and Evoke Critical Reflection. In CHI '19 Proceedings of the 2019 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, Glasgow, Scotland, 4-9 May. New York: ACM. Paper No. 627.



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