

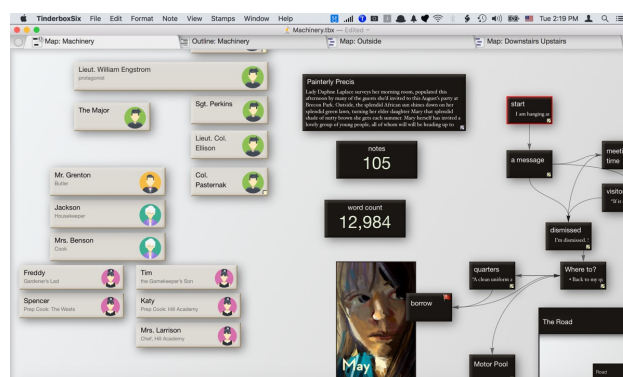
Narrative Hypertext Maps

Mark Bernstein

bernstein@eastgate.com

The goal of hypertext is the thing that wants to be said even before we know how to say it [1]. This is clearly the aspiration of hypertextual tools for research, note-taking and writing, and also for computing systems that help people think things through [2]. It is true for exposition and narrative. I think it is also true for hypertext readers, even for those confined to exploratory rather than constructive hypertexts¹ [12].

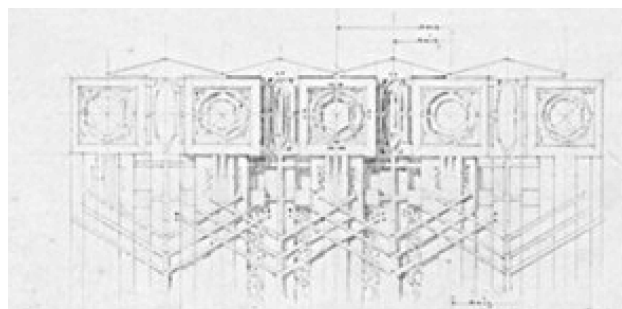
People use maps to navigate in hypertext fiction [6], even when the map is not really meant to be used. Yet our familiar boxes and arrows are not always either expressive or efficient [7,10]. It can be hard to squeeze more than a hundred notes or so into the human visual field, and matters get even worse in AR [8].



Extensive and Intensive Map Layout

It is useful to distinguish two distinct approaches to growth in hypertext maps. We may increase the height or breadth of the map, either adding new notes at the margins or moving existing notes to clear space for additions. Alternatively, we might add small notes in the interstices of the current map. A good pan-zoom interface can facilitate this sort of recursive division of the idea plane [9]. I call the former approach *extensive* and the latter *intensive*, though these terms are not entirely satisfactory.

In his *System of Architectural Ornament*, Louis Sullivan explored approaches to *sequences* that relate to intensive representations of narrative sequences [11]. Elements repeat as a sequence



¹ Notably, hypertext pioneer Paul Kahn has a new survey of timelines [4], a welcome supplement to [5].

across the page. Though each shares a common structure, each is also distinct. The horizontally sequence is repeated in the square roundels, each of which contains layers of nested elements, each of which is differently elaborated². We can easily image this as a framework for a narrative visualization, one in which each element is either a writing space or a potential lexia³.

We are, of course, most interested in the interplay between elements, as the space between lexia is where we naturally seek the thing that wants to be said. If it were already in a writing space, we would have said it already.

References

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² Note that, despite initial appearances, each of the square roundels is handles its interior differently while structurally rhyming with the others.

³ When instantiating intensive layouts, it is often convenient to create a batch of writing spaces in a single operation, filling them in as need arises. This is also a useful way to suggest the structure of a hypertext that is in the process of becoming.

