AUGMENTED REALITY AND NON-PROFITS

SPEECH FOR

COLLEEN CLEVELAND

In 1837, the world was introduced to Hans Christian Andersen’s fairy tale titled, “The Emperor’s New Clothes.” In 1968, Andy Warhol coined the phrase, “In the future, everyone will be famous for fifteen minutes.” In 1964, Marshall McLuhan told us, “The medium is the message.” Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Colleen Cleveland; I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today. I am here to discuss augmented reality and how it can be applied in the world of non-profit organizations. Let’s face it. The future is now.

You may be wondering, “What is she thinking?” I’ll tell you. The above three examples work to illustrate some of the technologies and circumstances throughout our collective social history that have worked to inform the lives we live today. The emperor was told that his “tailors” would make him a gorgeous suit that would be visible to only those smart and wise enough to see it. Warhol predicted that in the future, we would all be our own brand; and even if only for a while, our identities will be elevated and public, and Marshall McLuhan’s statement prophesies the unique role of various media to get the message across. Upon careful review, we can see that all of these theories represent essential aspects of augmented reality, except now, thanks to technology, the emperor wouldn’t be preening and parading in his underwear-yes we’d be able to see his clothes, thanks to the fact that “we have an app for that!,” people and organizations have the opportunity to have more prominent identification, and technology provides innovative means to share content with the public. Just remember-as we evolve technologically, we do not have to lose sight of **the emotional value of augmented reality**.

Thanks to this new technology, we, as educators, researchers, and media professionals no longer have to rely on simple means of conveying brand identity. Decades ago, in the early golden years of advertising, key corporations learned to convey a message instantly and simply, with a logo. That logo told a story and the public absorbed the imagery and meaning as If it were a new alphabet. We learned the difference between an eye (CBS) and a peacock (NBC) when choosing a television channel, we knew which brand of gasoline sported a triumphant winged red horse (Mobil) and the mid sixties introduced us to the golden arches of McDonalds. If that was in our sights, we knew instantly there was a fast food revolution brewing and we would have the option to get inexpensive and tasty food in a matter of moments.

Those logos and advertising theories trained us to identify. In today’s day and age, although technology holds a promise that “less is more,” we now actually have the capability to do more with less. There are logos representing today’s brands that provide instant recognition for us, but thanks to Smartphones and other devices, most of us are literally connected to media around the clock. The opportunity to establish and reinforce brand image is virtually endless. The chance for non-profit organizations to offer an appeal to the public’s emotions is unprecedented.

(**Slide 1**) We view simple logos and know the subject’s story-superficially. We see PBS and we think quality programming. WWF beckons images of humane treatment for animals, and so on. The branding is pervasive and instantly identifiable. Think about it. How many of these charitable causes have YOU given to based on recognition? Do you remember when you first heard of these non-profits, or how their causes affected your lives? There are lesser-known charitable organizations that support noble causes as well, but we may not be as familiar. (**Slide 2)** We may see the logo for Project Red or ONE.org, but what is it? What is the mission? Can you imagine having the ability to use your phone, scan the otherwise mysterious logo, and learn upon doing so that ACTION IS THE ANSWER and that we are all responsible for ending hunger and poverty, no matter where we were born? Through organizations like ONE, and with the benefit of augmented reality to provide much needed information instantly, the public has the ability to chose to participate right there, right then, in real time, to learn how to make a difference. Think of the power that places in the user’s hands.

(**Slide 3**) We are used to the influence of branding in our retail environments. A visit to any supermarket becomes a master class in branding and product communication. Walking down the aisles we are met with a visual cacophony of product messages, but even though there may be aisles filled with a myriad of choices, “**In Tide We Trust**.” We got the message. The branding conveys efficiency, heritage, and reliability. We all need a caffeine boost or a snack now and again, and we know that if we see a green logo with a long haired woman with a star on her crowned head, we’ll be getting “The best coffee for the best you.” **(Slide 4**) Starbucks branding and logo recognition must have a really pervasive appeal. At last count, in December of 2012, there were over 18,000 locations worldwide with 1500 more planned in the United States. I’d say that little green lady is getting her message across!! (**Wait for the laugh**). There are other brands of coffee in our retail environment, but the branding and product reinforcement offered by Starbucks his an ironic effect on us-while providing a jolt if needed, it lulls us into a sense of security and familiarity and whether we like the product or not, Starbucks is usually a number one pick when it comes to finding a familiar snack or beverage, either at home or in a foreign environment.

(**Slide 5 is unreadable**) We, as consumers, have come to recognize and accept that, to paraphrase what Andy Warhol said, in the future, and present, each one of us is our own brand. We now identify celebrities and other famous people as brands unto themselves. If one likes a certain movie actor, one supports his or her unique brand. The “glitterati” have taken this a few steps further and offer themselves to the public as commodities-either with fragrances, jewelry, clothing, or other product endorsements, and the “cult of personality” has spawned even more branding. And we as the public, have learned to brand ourselves on social media to a certain extent. I would bet that each one of us is “Google-able,” and I bet we’d all get plenty of hits it we checked. Between Linked in, Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram, we’ve all become stars in the new media defined era.

So let’s recap. We recognize logos. We find the appeal in the back-story of the brands and products we favor. We have become our own brands and we’ve learned how to promote images and concepts and emotional content, even at a basic level, so why wouldn’t this new technology be incredibly effective for non-profits? Remember **the emotional value of augmented reality**. (**Slide 6-this is the adforum video-it shows both women getting punched**). People want to be emotionally engaged. We want a reason to believe and to give of ourselves and our hard earned time and money. The function of augmented reality is to superimpose images and information over tangible elements in real time. Think about scanning the unclothed emperor and seeing him with his splendid new suit. Augmented reality can dress the emperor, tell the story, and provide the emotional means to connect and empathize. In Munich, there is an organization that supports the end of domestic violence. Although we may see an ad showing a woman looking unphased and unaffected, which may not be much of a story, upon closer scrutiny with augmented reality technology, we can see the woman get punched in the face and we feel the bruises and scars left in the wake of a senseless attack. Suddenly we feel her pain, we wince at the thought that it could happen to someone we know, and we have become engaged in the cause and the hopeful resolution to the atrocity. Augmented reality inspired us to feel and to empathize.

(**Slide 7**) We can see the potential for emotional identification as we participate in the Jewish Time Jump. First we go to the Arch in New York’s Washington Square Park, an icon that has served New Yorkers as a meeting place and beacon for natives and visitors since 1889. As one trains his or her Smartphone on the landmark, images appear that tell the story of life at the turn of the 20th century. Thanks to augmented reality, we are transported back in time to the sites and hustle and bustle of a neighborhood learning to build itself into the greatest city in the world. We see video, narratives and newspapers of the day, recreating the sights and sounds of the people that created the path for other New Yorkers to follow. It provides us with a multi-sensory experience of life as it used to be, and truly takes us back in time. The app was built as a means to convey the history and impact of the Jewish immigrant experience in New York and the technology used forms a compelling means to relate a rich cultural narrative.

We are fortunate to live in a very special era. As new technologies are being developed, and as we learn new ways and means to navigate in a tech rich world, the mandate is to support and promote new ways of communication. As I said earlier, we are connected to each other and media more than ever before, and our minds are learning to adapt to the onslaught of information. Augmented reality is truly a means to connect emotionally to causes and conditions and can be a highly effective tool for non-profits to accomplish further outreach in many ways-not only as a means to spread the mission, but to support each unique cause with connectivity as close as the palms of our hands.

Thank you all for the opportunity to share the potential of this exciting technology!