Voices of the '30s:
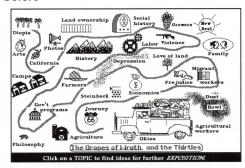## A Case Study in Interface Design

Abbe Don, IN CONTEXT

Nathan Shedroff, Vivid Publishing

Pat Hanlon, a high-school English teacher and Bob Campbell, a high-school librarian, developed the original HyperCard/videodisk prototype in order to teach students about John Steinbeck's novel, The Grapes Of Wrath. They used photographs, oral histories, and archival film footage transferred to videodisk to provide the students with an emotional and experience-based understanding of the time period. They also included essays and activities that helped the students make connections between the social and political issues pertinent to the 1930s and those same issues today.
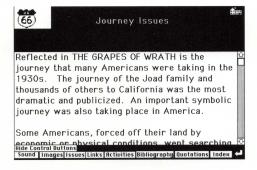
The prototype grew organically from 1985 to 1990 as it was used in Pat's classroom and as the features of HyperCard changed. The main design criteria was to keep the system open-ended to encourage the students to browse and engage in exploratory learning as they made their own connections between different elements provided in the database. The students also added material, especially to the bibliography.

Voices of the '30s integrates documentary photographs, newsreel footage, historic speeches, folk songs, and text as it brings to life the 1930s and the Great Depression. The HyperCard-based CD-ROM enables students to browse casually or search for specific information in the Resources section while the activities encourage students to pursue independent research and to make connections between the social, political, and cultural issues of the '30s and many of those same issues that are relevant today. The SIGGRAPH presentation includes hands-on access to the final product side-by-side with a custom interface that describes the design process as the project moved from "labor of love" prototype to published product.
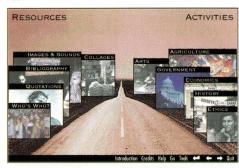
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- James Cottle, James Cottle Photography
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Before

Before

After

After

Part of the designer's task is to listen to the varied viewpoints from other team members and to explore concepts which appropriately incorporate their input while encompassing as many design criteria as possible.

— Bill Schaaf

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Marketeers seldom can tell the difference between facade design and a truely engineered design that "works" from every angle. They never do appreciate the latter because it tends to sell itself.

— William Chapin