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Hannah Rudman looks at emerging digital technologies and what they mean for live events

Sir Tim Berners Lee, the inventor of the World Wide Web thinks that there is a third iteration of the web emerging (web 3.0?): big data, the internet of things, and 3D printing are all a part of the wave of emerging technologies that once again will disrupt where we are at now, and make a steep change in our world. (For comparison, think of the impact on our lives of the two-way social media technologies of web 2.0, web 1.0 now refers to the time when webpages were mainly static information).

These emerging digital technologies will potentially blend together with the latest product and fashion design to ensure new wearable connected computing screens, such as 'Google Glass' ('smart spectacles'), and smart watches, take off. Until now our technological tools were external additions, largely separate from our bodies. Today they are evolving on a new path integrating with our physiology; we are effectively 'hacking' the human body and the senses.

So what does wearable computing mean for live events? When our digital devices are no longer something we carry with us, when they've become a part of our person as an accessory or jewelry, what does it mean for live event content and experiences, or communications?

First, it may well help the established

technology of augmented reality (AR) take off. It is likely that you already use AR - perhaps when shopping - on your smart mobile device. If a product has the right kind of bar code, QR code, or symbol, you can point your phone or tablet's camera at the product and see a layer of information about it, like prices of the same product at other stores in the area or on the Internet. Or perhaps you've seen a car in action after pointing your camera at a static newspaper or billboard ad. You might even have had a cultural experience like visiting the

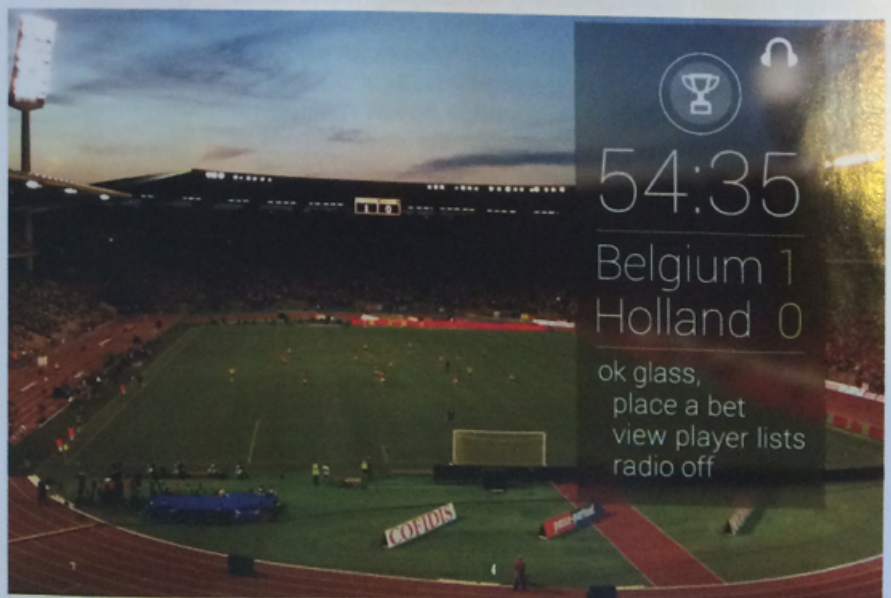
Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Arts enhanced by AR.

However, consumers have largely rejected QR codes, because they demand reader software be installed on their device, and therefore they are not intuitive to use. Emerging technologies like 'Google Goggles' and 'Clickable Paper' are intuitive - you simply click on an image with the smart device's camera, which is then recognised by the inbuilt technology to produce the AR layer.

It needs to be easy for the end user, so imagine if AR could happen directly in front of your eyes - that is the idea behind Google Glass. Already, the military, policing, and medical professions use head mounted sets that are AR capable to receive more and better information about what they are seeing and doing. These wearable computers are about to emerge in our leisure and personal lives and could get AR into the hands of everyone.

Although Google Glass is currently limited to about 1,500 prototype spectacle-like head mounted sets, they are likely to go on mass sale later this year. The official trailer for Glass has so far been viewed well over 20 million times, which suggests that the product already has a market! It is easy to see from the trailer how wearable augmented reality will enhance our lives. Users will be able to receive live directions, take and receive photos and video, have real-time translation information overlaid on things they are looking at, such as signs in foreign languages, all instantaneously and effortlessly.

Of course, there are worries about how ever more intimate and intrusive the digital world becomes, and about how much we are offloading onto the internet, and pulling from it - if I can pull a piece of information into a users line of sight when needed, why bother





The AFL Glassware app will let Google Glass wearers look to the screen above their right eye to see a current AFL match score, or time left on the field.

conscientiously remembering it? Will users become too compulsively dependent on being connected? What about if the data they are viewing is hacked? Would smart glasses be used to collect data for Google, governments or others? There are other social issues too, such as how to deal with the darker side of the web like porn, privacy infringements, and intrusive advertising still needing to be cleared up.

Simultaneously, it is easy to see that removing from the interface of the device that you must carry round to access, record and compute data, and making it a part of you – through a wearable accessory – is extremely compelling. A transparent heads-up display that helps users engage more with the world around them, rather than sucking them away from reality via a screen on a device.

This is the exciting potential for live events. People that want extra levels of engagement with digital content around an event will be able to access it without it intruding on the pure live experience of others. Think of those annoying concert-goers that seemed to spend the whole concert on their mobiles, messaging, tweeting, and looking at the concert through their screens, obscuring your view with the glare of their device? It is history: their wearable smart specs will give them a tweet ticker in the lower third of their vision, straight ahead is their viewfinder for the pictures and videos they want to take and share.

What about those flutter-loving folk at the horses, football, or tennis that use real time gambling services on their mobile devices to enhance their enjoyment of an event? If it is in front of their eyes directly, then it is not something you have to endure as well.

In addition, Google's development labs are working on smart contact lenses – initially to give sufferers of medical conditions like diabetes a non-invasive glucose monitor, but it will only be another couple of development steps to link them to smart devices worn elsewhere on the person, like a watch.

While this will likely take about five years to achieve, it is clear that technology is evolving to become more personal and discrete (and less about showing off our financial and fashion capacity, which is the consumerist trap we are currently sucked into, always needing to have the latest device to be seen as on fashion, or up to date!).



There are opportunities to creatively enhance live events and create new forms of live experience - that happen in front of our eyes, and enliven our senses - but that are actually imagined. For example, Selfridges of London is selling the architect designed £300million superyacht by Zaha Hadid, the biggest and most expensive item ever sold at Selfridges.

However, the yacht is not there, rather, a 'virtual yacht' is anchored to a physical location via a 2D 'marker' pattern that tells the software where to place the object. This means customers can walk round, and even through, objects as if they were really there. Visitors will be able to explore an augmented reality scale model of the 90-metre yacht using a tablet computer. Similarly, crafters and jewellers are showing their work in this way. By placing a blank band of paper on your wrist, you can try on different watches and see your own wrist modelling them through the screen. The potential of this for live event promoters is as a selling mechanism for an otherwise intangible offer: AR can create a sample or trial experience.

These technologies are so engaging, and used in the leisure sector could: immerse and emerge people in historic culture; place them in the middle of a sports strategy on the field; or immerse them backstage at the theatre - in real life as a live experience, enhanced by digital technologies. Seamless participation, the continued convergence of content across platforms, is changing the way we currently interact with the live event.

Frictionless transactions will also cause some chaos for live events. New gesture driven interfaces that the new PlayStation and Xbox consoles already have and that wearable computing is likely to utilise, and fingerprint driven interfaces like the iPhone 5S contains, will have impacts that we're not quite sure about yet. The idea is to make purchasing from and with your mobile or wearable device seamless, through only requiring your thumbprint or a gesture - rather than a login and password. What will the implications of this technology be for the type of sales interactions we offer in the leisure sector?

Disruptive digital technologies continue to emerge apace, constantly evolving public behaviour, and therefore general cultural, social, and economic norms. Many live experience creating venues, organisations, and companies find themselves trying to do too much, with too little, too often on their own, in order to keep delivering core products, services and experiences for public engagement, enjoyment and participation. Digital development support is much needed by the sectors that run live events if we are to make the most of the constantly emerging digital opportunities.

Hannah Rudman is passionate about the power of creativity and culture to make humanity more human, civilisation more civil, and society more social. She's also passionate about the opportunities existing and emerging digital technologies create to ensure that the live lives on.

Hannah is delivering the keynote speech at 10th Annual Ticketing Professionals Conference being held in Brisbane between 17th and 19th February.

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Using Unity technology, Technogym has released the world's first Google Glass controlled treadmill