

# CubeBrowser

*a cognitive adapter  
to explore media databases*

*One of the crucial issues for me  
currently seems to be to reconstruct*

*the tension between a networked topology  
and a basically linear mode of discovery.*

Taken from "Songlines"  
Hartmut Winkler, 1994

In Warnke, M. and Coy, W.,  
HyperKult. Geschichte, Theorie und Kontext digitaler Medien  
Volume published 1997, pages 227–239  
Frankfurt, Georg Christoph Tholen.

**CubeBrowser** is the concept for a cube with six digital screens that makes it possible to browse online databases like Flickr.com. The control of navigation is exclusively accomplished by performing manual actions on the object, which creates a playful way of discovering image collections that are networked by tags.

Viewing photos has always been based on analog objects before digital imaging came up. Discovering your photosets with friends was not tied to a monitor, but to analog photos that were probably cluttered all over the floor: tangible as well as easily showable and sharable.

Why not bring back this easiness and combine it with the positive sides of digital technology? CubeBrowser is running independent of the desktop, where we are usually experiencing web media today. It is also not bound to a screen that is controlled by mouse, keyboard or remote control, which distracts you with overloaded functionalities and would be hard to learn. Controlling CubeBrowser is just as easy as turning the cube in space, and thus allows for a more convenient way of interaction as well as a larger accessibility to people of all ages and abilities.



Conceptual illustration



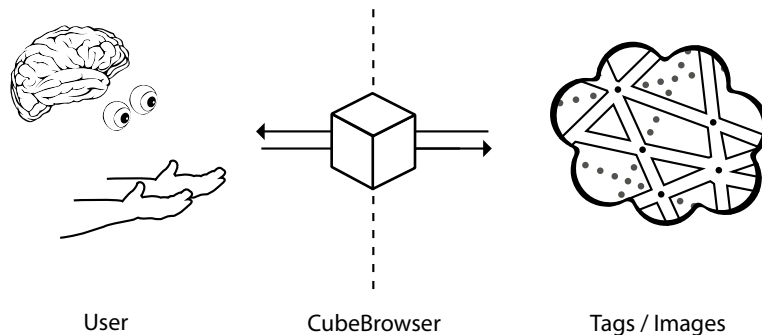
The second edition of CubeBrowser carries six screens inside a wooden cube

## Browsing concept

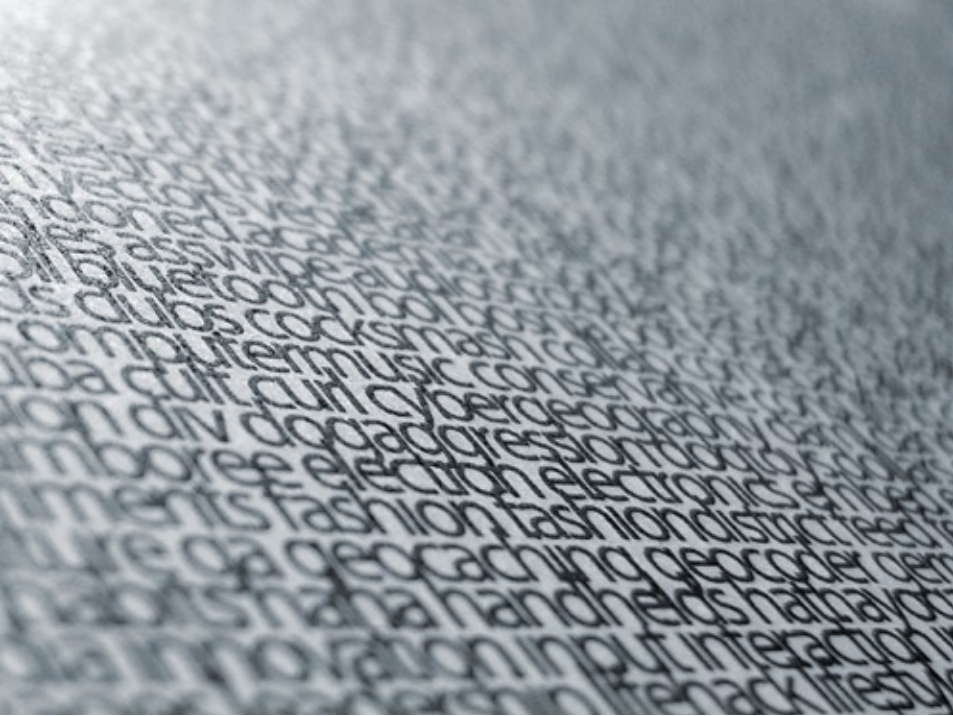
The goal of this project is to provide a way of browsing that allows you to stroll without a goal but with the chance for an inspiring surprise. This approach of browsing is like finding a way through a labyrinth. At each branch, you can keep on going on your path or choose to do a shift in your direction, bringing you on a new path.

Tags can also span paths through content on the web, since they connect similar things together. And in the case of Flickr, images do not only have one single tag, but several ones. While exploring the database from image to image, you can branch off to other tags that are associated to the current image and will then lead to yet other images. This makes it easy to dive into the wealth of public images that the World Wide Web offers.

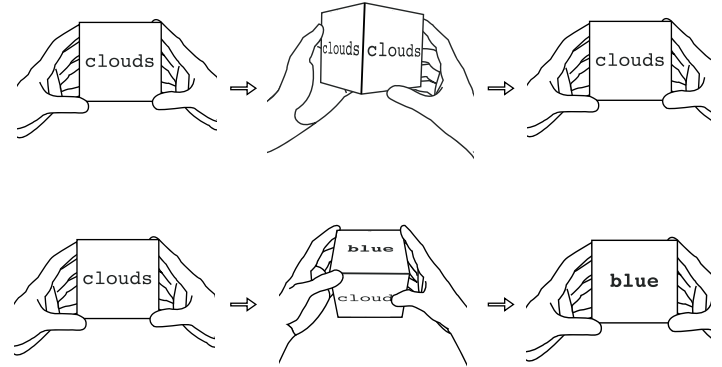
## Cognitive adapter



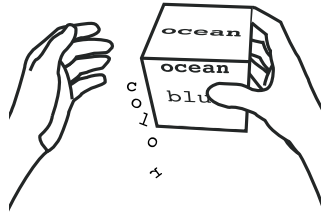
CubeBrowser connects the local cognitive experience of a tangible interface to the socially distributed cognition within the web, which is fed by millions of people who are publishing and annotating media content.



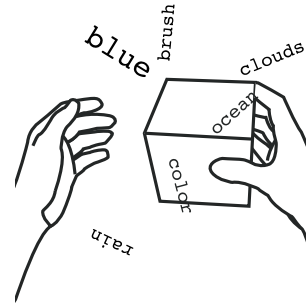
## Navigation concept



CubeBrowser is input and output in one object and thus gives immediate temporal and spatial feedback to the user. Turning the cube left or right navigates through images for a certain tag, while turning it up or down brings you to semantically related or previously selected tags.



A little push switches through the available tags of the currently viewed image, which will be previewed on the top face of the cube. This offers you the possibility to branch off to other trails of navigation through the database, since you can select the keywords you want.



Free navigation always holds the risk of getting lost, but if you issue your moves in reverse the CubeBrowser principle guarantees to bring you back exactly to where you came from.

Additionally, a strong shake resets your navigation and starts a new trail with a new tag that is selected from a list of popular keywords at Flickr.



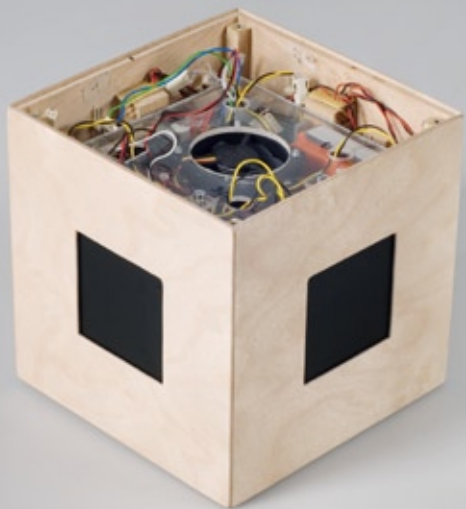
Testing the second edition of CubeBrowser





The first edition of CubeBrowser used a 3D simulation to visualise the interaction principle

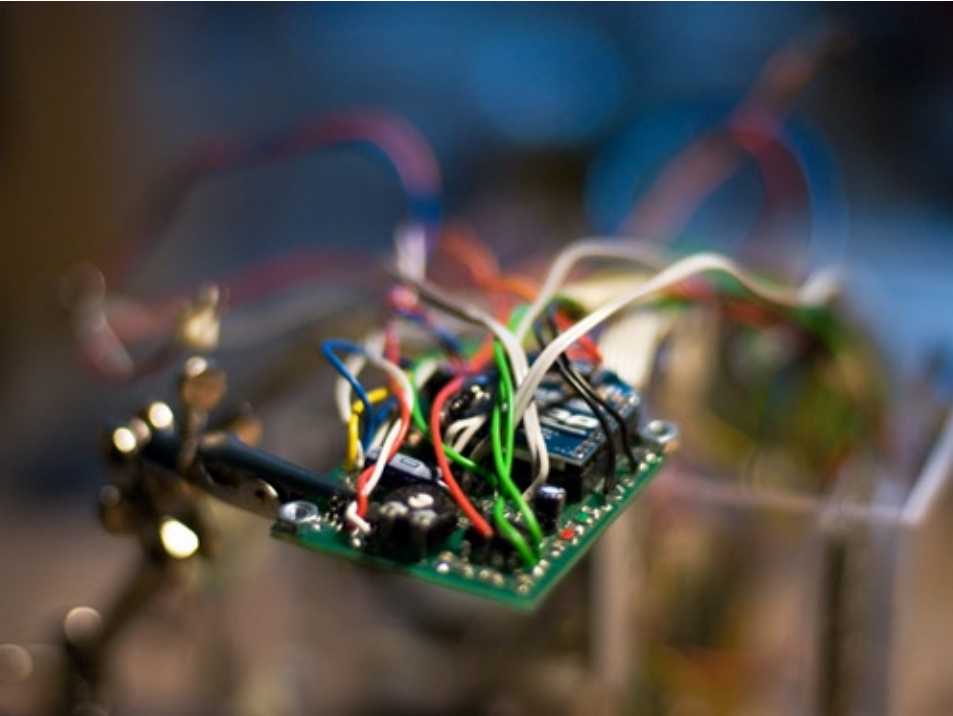
Yahoo! Design Expo 2007 in Sunnyvale, CA / USA



The second edition carries the actual electronics inside a removable cube



The inner cube carries most of the necessary parts like wireless connection, sensors and batteries



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