For Your Eyes Only

The Arcadia Report Dossier

Kezie Todd

34. 23. 19. 14. 33. 28. 17. 10. 32. 38. 27. 18. 11. 35. 29. 15. 22. 26. 16.
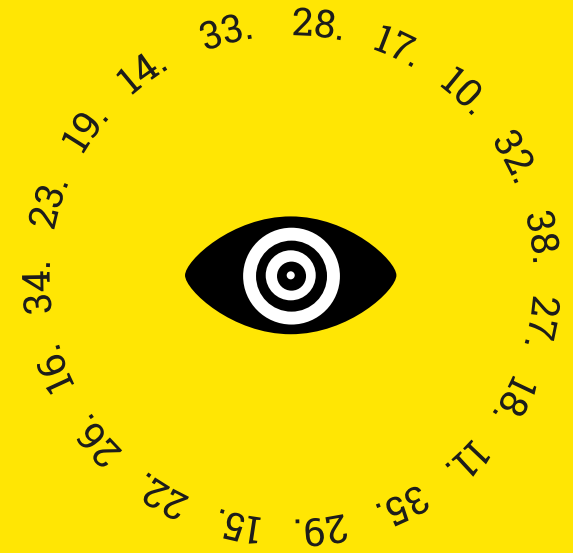
Secret of the Dossier

The following text was recovered from a hard drive submitted as evidence in the Arcadia cold case. Why the report presents the case as a design project remains a mystery.

The page numbers are the key. Follow the order. Solve the mystery.

> *To begin at the beginning...*
>
> - Sherlock Holmes, A Study in Scarlet

Welcome to Arcadia

Introducing The Arcadia Report

Welcome to Arcadia

We are in the experience economy. Attention spans have shrunk and tv no longer excites. Viewing is not enough, people want to participate.

The Arcadia Report aims to create a new mode of entertainment tailor made for this generation. It is an immersive mystery experience, transforming your city into an escape room from your phone. You don't read about a detective, you **are** the detective.

The Arcadia Report is designed specifically for participation and immersion. Time, cost, and accessibility issues of escape rooms are solved as The Arcadia Report brings the experience to you case by case.

Mystery Invades Reality

The narrative blends reality and game, playing out across real locations in your city. The Arcadia Report combines true crime influences in a neo-noir, tech thriller where you dive into the dark secrets of a failed startup and their quest to build an algorithm to solve crime. I believe stories

can change the world. Today, when algorithms determine bail in the US and China ranks social credit of citizens, narrative is more important than ever to see the world from a new perspective. The Arcadia Report puts you at the centre of topical issues in ethics in AI, privacy, and bias. It is more than a game: it is a platform for immersive experiences.

Join the mystery.

◉

Click or scan to experience
The Arcadia Report
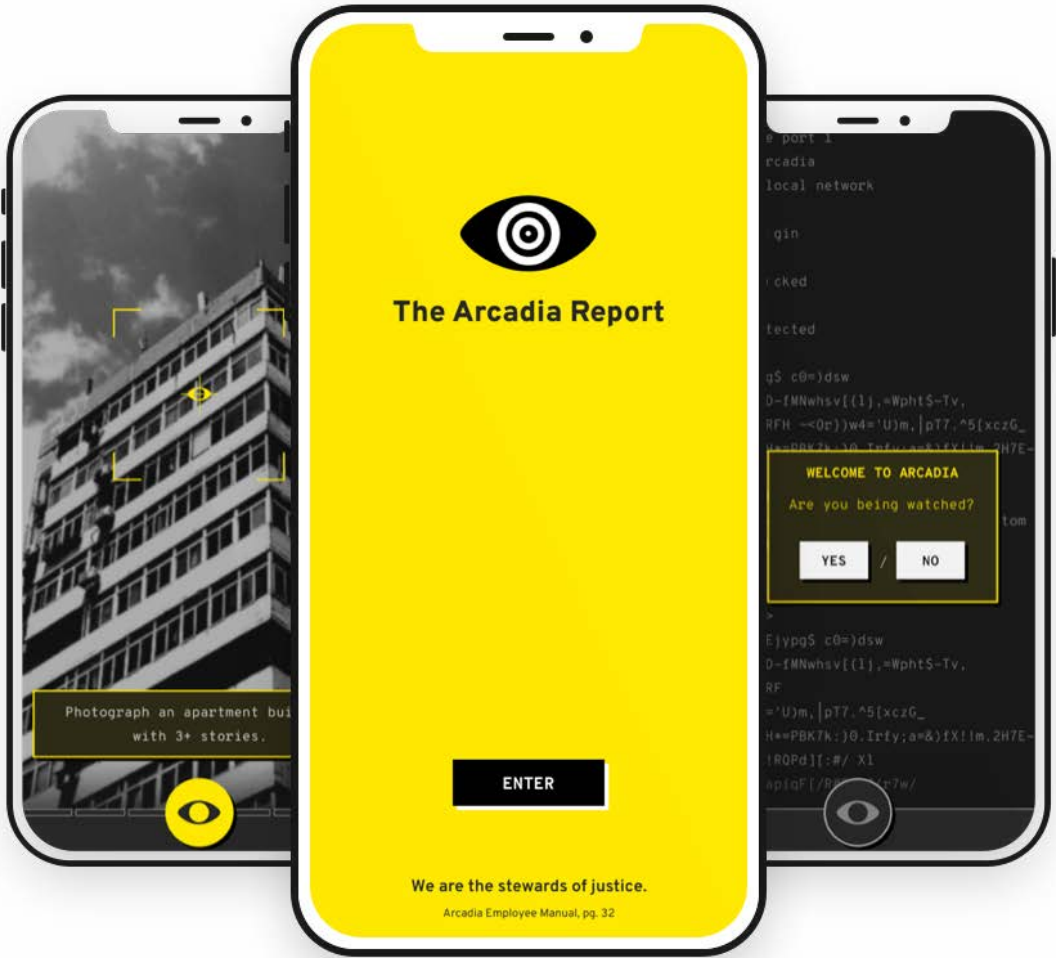
Special Operations

Strengths & Weaknesses

Special Operations

Human-Centred Design

Working as a User Experience (UX) designer on technical software gave me an essential grounding in how to break down complex problems and services. This user-first approach helped me map out how people move through an open-ended mystery involving real-world interactions. Skills like that enabled me to not only build up a strong base of user research but apply it and improve as I gathered new information which informed every stage of the design.

Solving New Problems

My work regularly meant venturing into the unknown and thinking outside the box to develop the best approach for technical software where there were not many preexisting patterns to draw upon. This willingness to research and adapt helped me combine diverse areas of research into a new experience. Likewise, the research fed into my strength in narrative-driven design and helped me create a bespoke interface that tells a story.

TAR Persona File #001

Rebecca
True crime fanatic

Age: 21   **Status:** Single   **Occupation:** Barista/Student

Between her job and her studies, Rebecca is on the go most of the day, earbuds pumping her favourite music or true crime podcast. True crime has gotten her hooked on mysteries but without the time to read, it's Netflix and podcasts to get her mystery kicks.

Suspect Profile

Can be found
- Listening to true crime podcasts
- Drinking coffee
- Binge watching

Mystery
Favourite mystery: Mindhunter
Loves mysteries for: The twists in the story

Loves & Loathes
Loves: Getting lost in the story, that adrenaline rush
Loathes: Stories with no substance
Pain points: Budget and time get in the way of fun, waiting for the next episode, spoilers

Gaming
Hobby spending: £
Average time gaming: 10-30mins on the bus
Social gaming: Nice, but not critical
Story vs challenge: Both

Prints

Glenn // 24 // Thrill seeker

Find the Report	Start Case	Follow Lead	Find Clue	Submit Report	Mystery Continues
Actions					
Saw it on friend's Instagram stories	Message from strange number	Share unique clues	Discuss which lead to follow first	Share + discuss clues	Track countdown for next case online
Friend setting up a group to play	Receives a role + unique access code	Start a group chat while each investigating leads	Meet up at location and follow prompts	Argue over personal theories	Share results on Instagram
				Submit theories	
Thoughts					
Can I play with my friends?	Whoa, who is this?	What do I do with this? Is this a clue?	I know where to find a place like that!	Did my theory win?	How well did we do?
I want to try!	I'm the saboteur? What do I do? Why?	How do I solve it now?	Do we all share clues?	Who was right/wrong?	We're going to be first to try the next one!
Pain Points					
What if I can't solve it?	We all went after the same clues	How do I share this?	Now what? We're stuck	I don't think that's what happened!	I can't remember where we left off
I don't want to look stupid			Resolving disagreements		
Opportunities					
Outline social aspects	Explain roles clearly and outline goals	Include a way to pool saved evidence	Include a hint system	Make reports separate and then pool the votes	Role-based messages between cases
Clarify how launch works and reward early subscribers	Make everyone feel important			Show results	Easy Instagram share

Building on user research in to map out the core experience from their perspective.
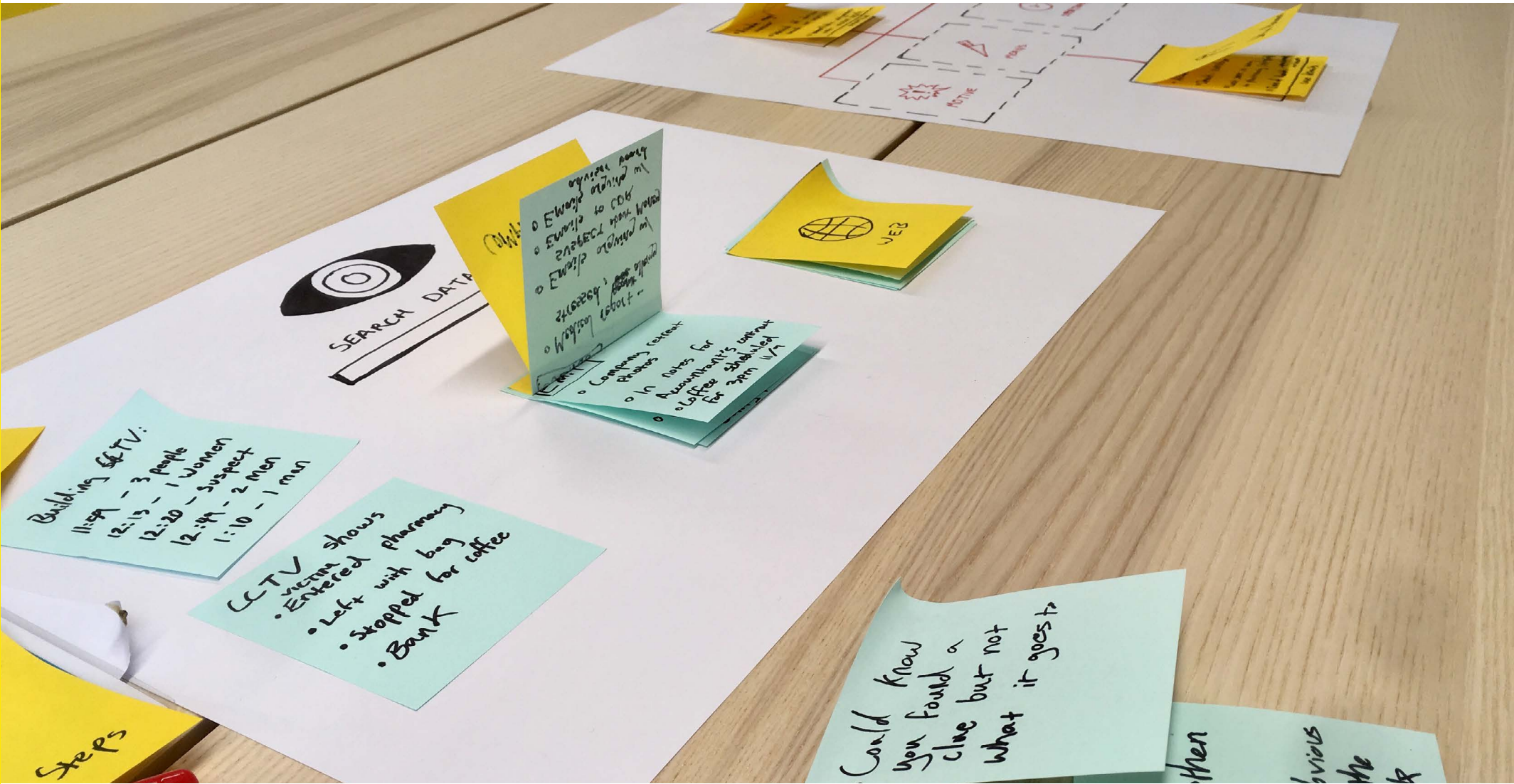
Rapid Prototyping

The Arcadia Report is not like anything else on the market. This could be a double-edged sword and meant a lot of heavy lifting in terms of research, designing, and testing solutions. I had limited video game design experience but was able to leverage my background in tabletop gaming and UX to create a paper prototype to validate the gameplay approach with players from the start. This willingness to build the simplest possible prototype helped me get feedback and quickly iterate which proved a core strength throughout the project.

Plotting a Murder

Writing an interactive mystery was new to me. It did not make things easy but I was able to draw upon my strengths from regular blog writing (and watching unhealthy amounts of Columbo as a child). It also proved an amazing opportunity to develop my content design skills and practice designing visuals, content, and experience to work together to tell a story across multiple platforms.

Lessons Learnt

If I were to start again, I would enter with a better understanding of the magnitude of the task. I would also focus on learning more about marketing and the games industry from the start so I could hone in on a focused minimal viable product (MVP) faster without getting caught up in designing so many features.
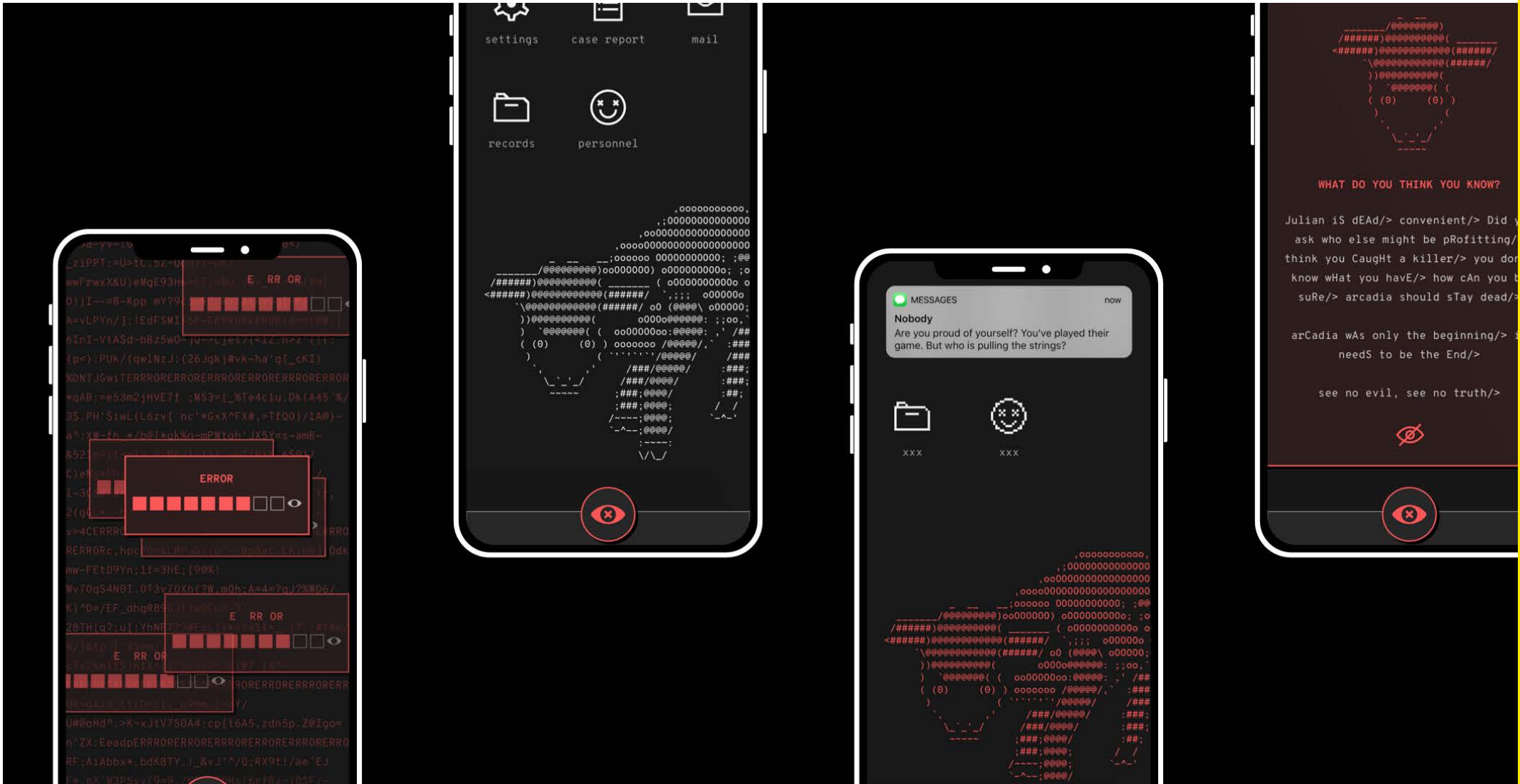
> *You know my method. It is founded upon the observation of trifles.*
>
> - Sherlock Holmes, The Boscombe Valley Mystery

Tools of the Trade

Methods of (fictional) murder design

Tools of the Trade

Crafting The Arcadia Report required a diverse toolkit. Particular challenges were adjusting to learn new tools on the fly, such as Figma and Flinto, and how to streamline the toolkit for the most efficient workflow. Content management also brought new considerations, whether designing newsletters, mapping out clues, or identifying the best platforms to spread the word.

Tradecraft

Software is just a tool, more critical was the design process. Iterative prototyping and regular tests with users were essential. During the redesign, I moved to weekly design sprints which helped me overhaul key areas and validate decisions at lightning speed. Finally, I established regular goals and milestones to be reviewed on a weekly and monthly basis which helped keep the project on track.

So Much Paper

(and stolen post-its)
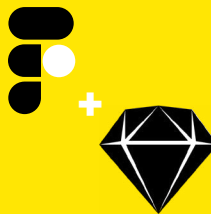
Figma + Sketch

Figma for early prototyping and sharing

Mailchimp

Audience building with weekly updates

Design Sprints

Redesigning and testing in weekly sprints

HTML + CSS

Crafting playable prototypes

Flinto

Delivering the first case file

> *Education never ends, Watson. It is a series of lessons, with the greatest for the last.*
>
> - Sherlock Holmes, His Last Bow

Case Report

Challenges from the case

Case Report

The Arcadia Report combined some of my favourite areas: narrative experiences, murder mysteries, and game design. Covering such diverse areas, each with unique obstacles, proved to be the biggest challenge. From day one, I was balancing tasks that were all new to me. To overcome, it required drawing from everything I'd learned about design so far. Experience breaking down complex design problems helped me tackle this challenge. I approached the project management as a design problem, breaking it into stages and getting creative with resource and time limitations.

Gamifying a City

Even once I overcame the initial hurdles, the location-based gameplay proved challenging to design. Designing camera and geolocation functionality was a new experience and since the overall concept was also new to players, I needed to create an intuitive design from scratch. Regular tests with users helped me tackle this through a series of iterative prototypes built as simply as possible to tighten the feedback loop.
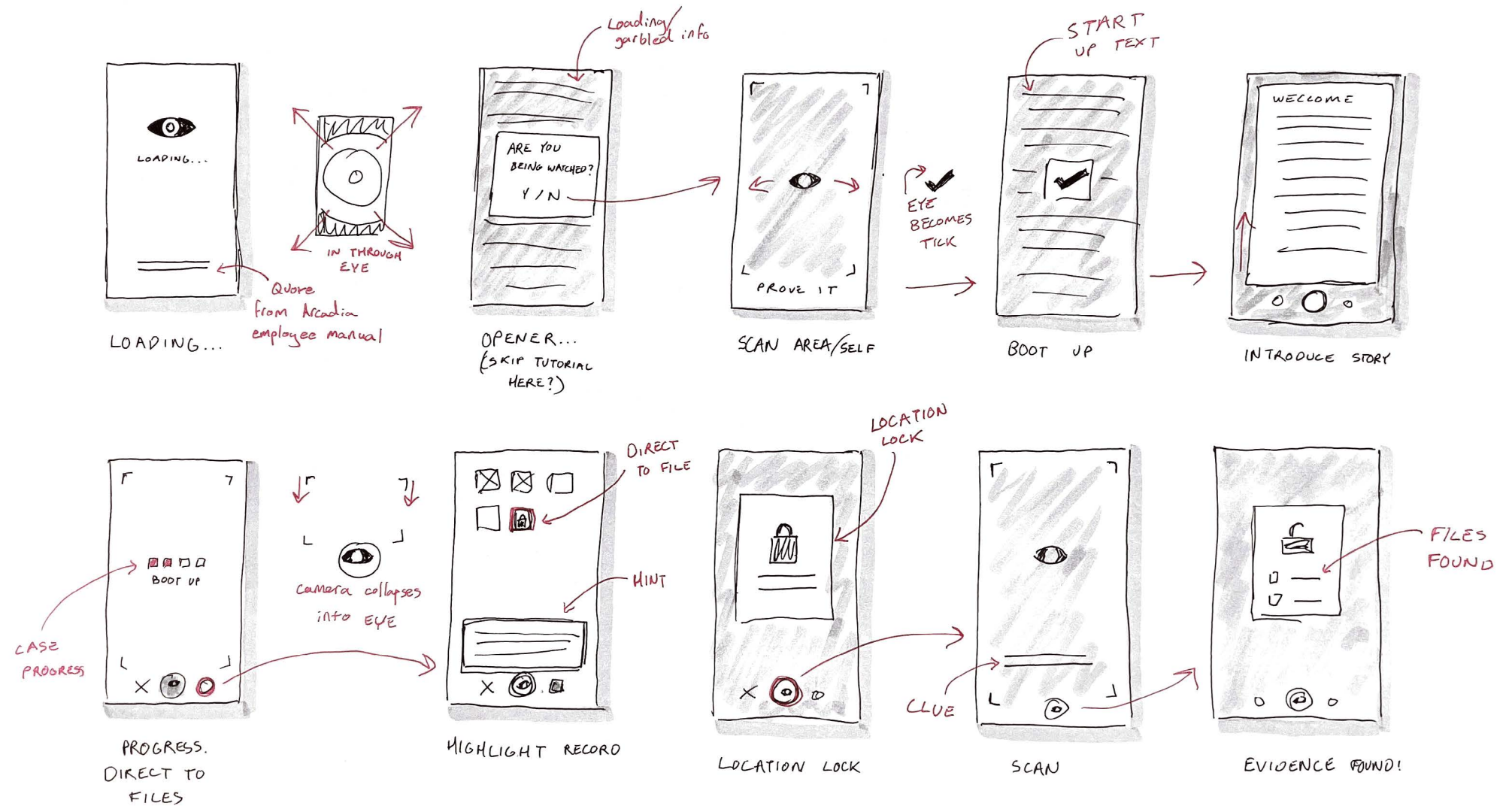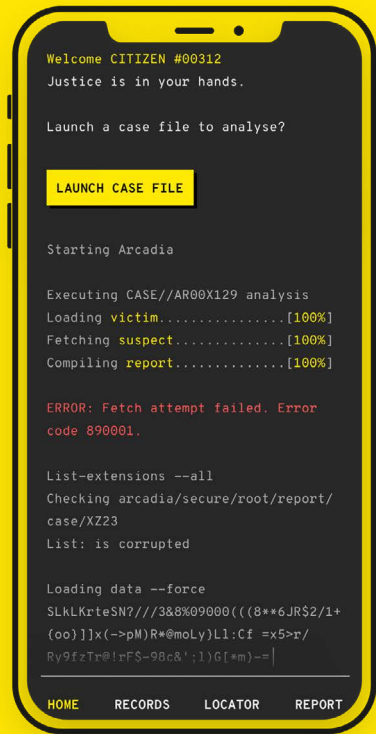
Alpha v1.0

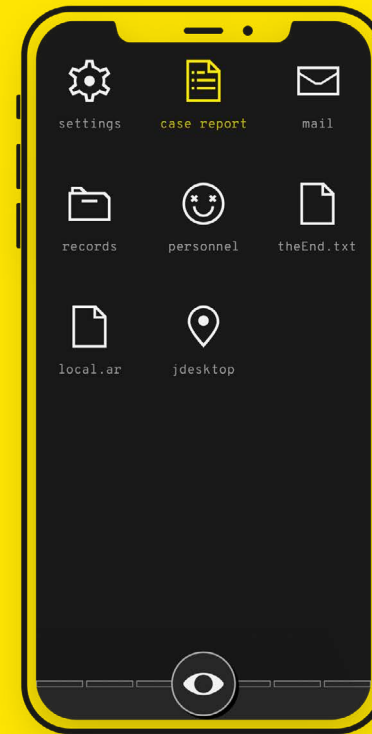Alpha version of the first case

Beta v2.0

Redesign halfway through the project
based on alpha testing

Arcadia Reborn

The completed overhaul after beta testing
and refining the visual design

Arcadia Reborn

Perhaps the greatest challenge came halfway through the project. After numerous prototypes, I finally completed the alpha version but found it lacked in a few key areas during unmoderated tests with players. I took the decision to overhaul the design, radically streamlining the user experience and restructuring the onboarding. The results were clear, the new design had a 100% success rate with players, but it took a willingness to respond to feedback and trust my gut no matter the stage.

Other Challenges

- Building an audience from scratch.
- Balancing design with content writing and business decisions.
- Capturing the corrupted aesthetic in an engaging (and useable) experience.
- Teaching myself game design and mystery fundamentals along the way.

> *Every man at the bottom of his heart believes that he is a born detective.*
>
> - John Buchan, The Power House

The Detectives

Target audience and launch suspects

The Detectives

The Arcadia Report's unique entertainment blend made honing down the audience interesting. Using the core areas of gaming, mysteries, and experience, I focused in on three main user types: indie gamers, true crime fans, and experience-craving millennials.

For early market validation, I targeted forums and analysed mystery game reviews. Conducting a market survey confirmed The Arcadia Report had potential, with over 50% of participants signing up for further information. This research also helped me tailor the narrative to the audience and refine the product market fit with each iteration.

Gathering Suspects

The three core users overlap but the focus is on 18-34 year olds, specifically indie gamers, as early adopters. The goal is to establish a strong following pre-launch. Marketing focuses on platforms they frequent, such as reddit and itch.io. To help grow that, I maintain a weekly development blog and newsletter to engage and spread the word.

$1.4 Trillion

Trended spending power of millennials by 2020.

3 in 4 Millennials

Would spend money on an experience over buying something desirable.

72% More

Millennials say they would like to increase their spending on experiences rather than material goods.

$152 Billion

Projected worth of global gaming industry by 2020, 50% of that from mobile gaming.
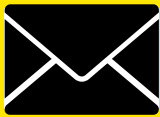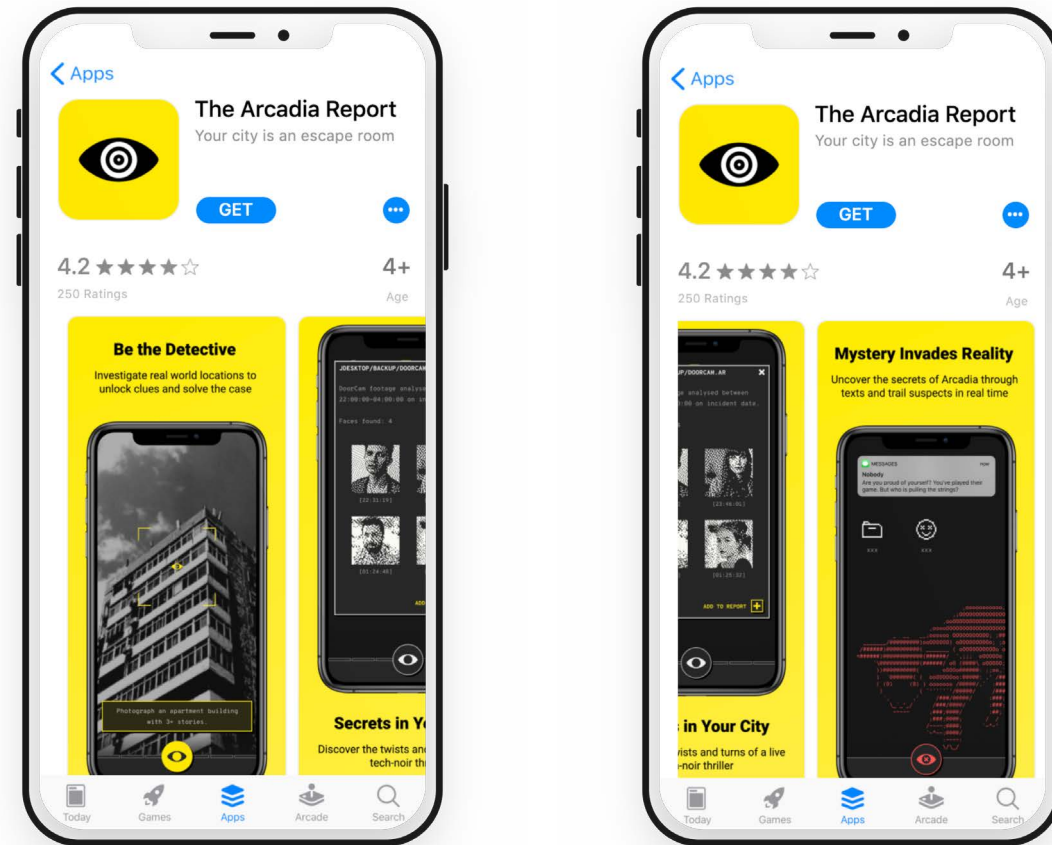
32% Subscribe

Millennials are more likely to make impulse purchases and subscribe.

10-30 Minutes Gaming

85% of gamers I surveryed played for at least 10 minutes a day, the majority (40%) playing for an average of 10-30 minutes.

Launching the Mystery

Millennials are 30% more likely to subscribe than the rest of the population. The Arcadia Report leverages this aptitude to deliver an experience accessible to all players.

- **Gumshoe** - Digital only, pay-per-case.
- **Private Eye** - Complete digital subscription.
- **Chief Inspector** - Collector's edition physical boxset subscription, with exclusive secrets.

The tutorial case is free to download and play. Players can continue to the next case but, once hooked, must purchase in order to unlock the answer. This means The Arcadia Report can launch for free and then sustain growth through in app purchases and advertisements.

For the Beta launch, The Arcadia Report will be digital only to help reduce costs and gauge interest in a collector's edition. A kickstarter and pre-orders can then help fund the printing costs of premium artefacts to launch the higher tiers.

Future Investigations

If The Arcadia Report proves successful, the underlying platform can expand to power any number of unique experiences. This opens up licensing potential of both the platform and unique IPs generated. The possibilities are endless: from bespoke corporate onboarding trails to exploring 'haunted' locations with friends.

The location-based gameplay also opens up additional revenue potential through partnerships with different businesses or tourism sites which could become special locations in the games.

Any city can be an escape room.

> *Just one more thing...*
>
> - Columbo

Case Closed

...or is it?

Case Closed

Thanks Columbo

Overall, The Arcadia Report was one of the most complex, challenging, and rewarding projects I've ever worked on. It required every skill I'd learned across my studies, the industry, and personal projects. Almost everything was new: from the murder mystery gameplay to figuring out how a corrupted AI would talk or how people solve a murder that plays out across real locations and virtual clues.

The challenge allowed me to explore new areas, learn to apply my design skills to any field or task, and do more than I would have ever imagined as a kid watching Columbo.

More Than a Game

Ultimately, The Arcadia Report delivers a story that questions the ethics of technology today in a unique experience designed for this generation. Creating an immersive murder mystery experience that transforms your city into an escape room was a lofty goal but that is only the beginning. My true aim is to create a new narrative platform for stories you experience.

This is not the end but only the beginning of The Arcadia Report.
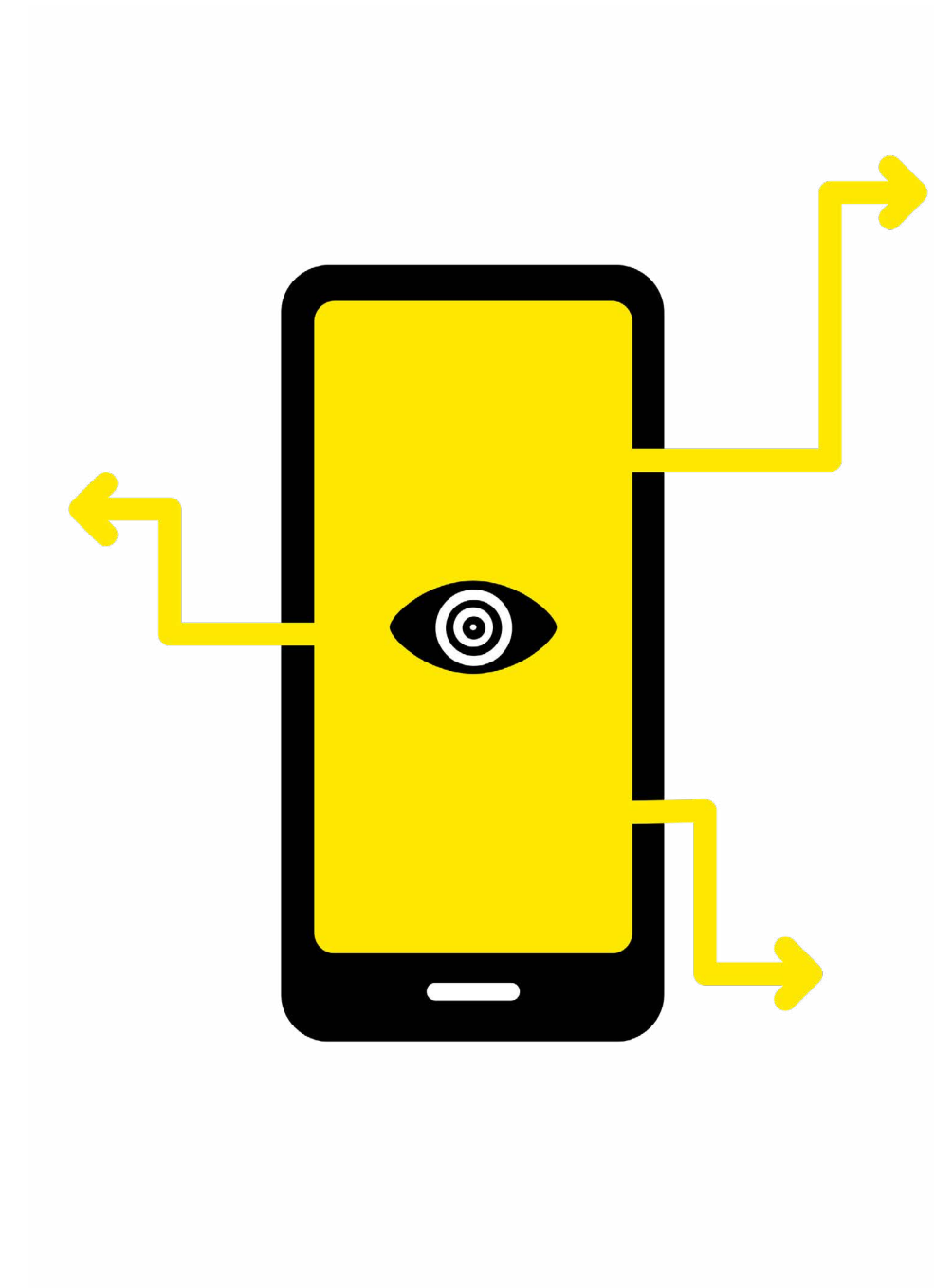
It is ridiculous to set a detective story in New York City. New York City is itself a detective story.

- Agatha Christie

Special Thanks to...

My family for advocating wild ideas.

My lecturers: Paul McCormack, Dr. Kyle Boyd, and Chris Murphy, for their support (and not saying I was crazy).

Rick Monro, John Murray, and my entire team at work for being willing listeners and victims of murderous prototypes.

Join the Mystery

Click or scan to experience The Arcadia Report.

Follow The Arcadia Report online and join the Citizens Club for exclusive behind the scenes updates.

ArcadiaReport.com

Keep your eyes open