

To the Editor:

My name is Omar Curière, born in Amsterdam 1968. I have two children - Julian is 10 and Robin is 5; both are born in July, so almost 11 and 6. I started my own company 14 years ago called OC Graphics specializing in 3D visualization, mainly architectural and technical visualizations. We make still images, animation and interactive websites.

<http://www.ocgraphics.com>

When my son was 3 or 4 we bought him his first Roxie Munro book called "Mazeways," and then another, and another, and another. He loves to read... well, he couldn't read back then but he loves to look and search and discover. Over the years something strange happens. Most of his books, after 3 or 4 times he read them, stayed in the bookcase, but some books, and especially Roxie's books, were being read over and over. When he was older, he was drawing mazes of his own. My daughter found the Roxie books when she was around three and together with her older brother was reading them again and again, searching letters and following the maze.

Since my original company is an interactive presentation company, the iPad had a huge impact on how we could give presentations, read our email, and above all, make fun. Then the idea started to appear that we can make really fun apps, especially for children - we had the technical programming knowledge, we had the creativity. But what to do, what to make, what to develop?

One night in October 2011, my daughter was on the floor reading - all our Roxie books were scattered around, with my son Julian next to them, drawing his own maze. This is it, I thought. We must make something like that - I am pretty creative but not a great artist. I have to contact Roxie.

Six or 7 years ago I had emailed Roxie with a request for a BW version of one of her mazes for my son to color. She sent a very nice email with a B&W image attached. But now, 7 years later, I was going to ask her to work with us or ask her if we could make one of her books into an app. I was kind of nervous sending the email, expecting a sort of laugh on the other end: "Why is this small company in the Netherlands bothering a world famous artist about an iPad app." But Roxie was extremely kind and extremely interested, and, more important, none of her publishers was working on an app. The main reason, I guess, that she wanted to work with us was a simple one - we wanted to make the best product possible, no quick book-to-app conversion ... the most beautiful drawings in a very nice app that would be fun for children all over the world.

The first ideas were about how to transform an existing book into an app, but this caused all sorts of problems, business-wise and technical. If you take a normal digital image and you cut something out this image, it leaves a hole. We wanted to animate a lot of things in Roxie's drawings; this means filling up a lot of holes digitally. It is like restoring a painting, a tedious time-consuming job, which hardly makes it better. So the decision was made to start from scratch. We had tons of ideas, dozens of emails going back and forth. Roxie made 16 B&W screens, very basic, no detail - when put together it created one immense maze. It was going to be a Vacation Adventure.

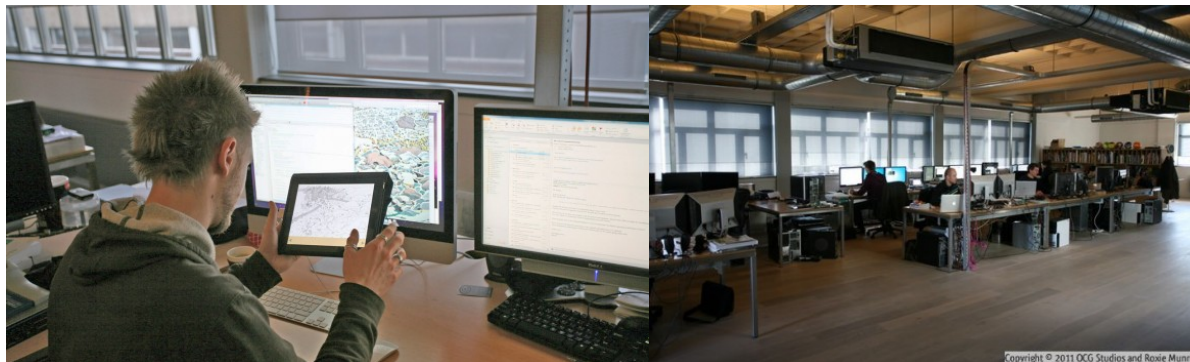
In November Roxie came to our office in Holland. We had 3 or 4 days ahead of brainstorming. We had to discuss every piece of the maze - the search items, all the things to animate, and most important, we had to get to know each other because we never met. We talked once over the phone and emailed a couple of hundred times.

At that point we decided we had to start a new company - a company that had more of a creative sound to it. OCG Studios was born.

When Roxie left she had a busy time ahead; she was going to make a huge drawing (5 feet by 3.5 feet). This drawing when finished was going to be cut digitally in 16 pieces. Each piece a page on the iPad. On each page letters and numbers are hidden and a lot of other things are random. Roxie made the huge drawing and almost 400 spots to animate. Every item that was going to move has to be drawn separately. The strange thing for an artist like Roxie it that she has to make a very detailed drawing but leave a lot of stuff blank, so actually not finishing the drawing. Because we fill all the blank spots digitally.

First Roxie made the B&W outline drawing, so at that point, around the middle of December, we really could start developing. We already started a month before but that was purely testing things out. We started with the B&W drawings and build the almost complete functional maze version.

The middle of January Roxie finished the painting - almost 3 months work. Now we could replace the B&W maze in our app with a beautiful colored version. We also received all the different spot drawings for us to animate and hide in the drawing.



The next 3 months was full time programming - our team did a remarkable job. During the day we developed, animated, looked for the right sounds, worked on the music. In the evening we tested with our children or their friends. What a great feedback these kids give... they tell what they think and tell you how you could improve. Every day the same, developing and testing. Our children quickly started to know the maze blindly and were asking each day, "So what is new and what is changed? Why did you change it? That isn't any good... or that is great." And the strange thing is after three months, my 5 year old daughter still loves to play it every day. I knew at that point that we had a remarkable product. Every couple of days we would send Roxie a video with the progress for her to comment.

The music is an important part of our app; there are several screens or world in our app that could use a different ambiance in music. We wanted one main tune but with variations in style, instruments and speed. We have a skiing area that has different music; then the Theme park area and the raft area has a more speedy sound.

The middle of March was an important date, I had arranged for a full day of testing in the elementary school of my children. Seven classes, more than 150 children, 15 ipads. We had 6 people from the studio - 4 in the class and 2 programmers on standby. Luckily, we found some small things we could fix right away during the day. We got a lot of great feedback from the children. We noticed so much difference between the 5-year-olds and the 12-year-olds... how they played the game, and there is even a big difference between boys and girls. Most girls sit down with the app and take their time searching for all the hidden things, while the boys love to drive the car through the maze. The biggest confirmation we got that day is that each and every child loved to play “Roxie's a-MAZE-ing Vacation Adventure.”



The next week we spend fine-tuning the app and adding or changing the recommendations the children gave us. We worked late every day. Then at the end of March we were finished and ready to submit to the App Store. After a 7-day wait we got the green light from Apple. It is in the App Store.

Now our marketing starts a very exciting time ahead.

We have 16 screens, hundreds of animated spots, hundreds of sounds, 8 different music styles, 85 items to search for, and 6 months of work. It all started with a little girl and boy reading a book on the floor.

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Trailer: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yj43npwXbRc&feature=player_embedded - at=15