Google Introduces Three New Photography Apps

SAN FRANCISCO: Google has introduced three photography apps which are part of a new series that it has dubbed as photography "appsperiments".

"We're launching the first installment of a series of photography appsperiments: Usable and useful mobile photography experiences built on experimental technology. Our 'appsperimental' approach was inspired in part by 'Motion Stills'," the company wrote in a research blog late on Monday.

"'Motion Stills' is an app developed by researchers that converts short videos into cinemagraphs and time lapses using experimental stabilisation and rendering technologies," Google added.

The new photography applications are "Storyboard" (available on Android only), "Selfissimo!" (available on iOS and Android) and "Scrubbies" (available on iOS only).

The "Storyboard" app takes video clips and automatically pulls out six frames that it lays out in a comic book-style template. "Selfissimo!" is an automated selfie photographer that snaps a black and white photograph each time the user poses.

"Scrubbies" lets the user easily manipulate the speed and direction of video playback to produce video loops that highlight actions, capture funny faces and replay moments.

The tech giant has also urged users to try out the new apps and provide feedback via the in-app feedback links.

Motorola Opens 'Moto Hub' In Hyderabad

HYDERABAD: To strengthen its offline retail presence across India, Motorola India on Wednesday opened its first "Moto Hub" in Hyderabad in partnership with mobile retail chain BigC and personalised mobile store chain Lot Mobiles.

This is the first "Moto Hub" to be launched under the collaboration that will let prospective buyers experience the latest Motorola technology and get a hands-on demo of the entire product portfolio.

"With the launch of first ever 'Moto Hub' in partnership with BigC, we aim to provide access to Motorola's premium product experience to the people of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana," Sudhin Mathur, Managing Director, Motorola Mobility India, said in a statement.

"We are also partnering with Lot Mobiles to give the people of Hyderabad a seamless experience of the entire portfolio of Motorola products," Mathur added.

The Lenovo-owned brand is planning to open "Moto Hubs" in 185 BigC stores and 140 Lot Mobiles stores across 55 cities in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

The company inaugurated its first "Moto Hub" in Chennai in partnership with the multi-brand retail chain Poorvika Mobiles on Tuesday. Earlier this month, the company announced the first-ever experiential store in south India. The company currently has six "Moto Hubs" (without the partnership) in Delhi-NCR and Mumbai, and opened three such stores in Kolkata last month.

Microsoft Gets Simplygon

SAN FRANCISCO: Microsoft has announced a new platform "Simplygon Cloud" that will support all major 3D Mixed Reality (MR) platforms, including Windows Mixed Reality, iOS and Android.

Microsoft acquired Simplygon, a leader in 3D model optimisation based in southern Sweden, earlier this year.

"As we continue our journey to bring the benefits of MR to everyone, Simplygon is an important accelerant that makes it easier, faster, and cheaper to develop in 3D," said Lorraine Bardeen, General Manager, Windows Mixed Reality Experiences, in a blog post on Friday.

Simplygon reduces complexity in the creation and extensibility of 3D models through optimisation.

Historically, 3D asset optimisation has taken days or weeks of manual effort and is one of the tasks that artists and developers dislike the most.

"With Simplygon, you can create 3D assets once -- at full visual fidelity -- and automatically optimise them to render smoothly on any platform -- within minutes, saving valuable time and money," Bardeen added.

"Simplygon Cloud" is now available in the Microsoft Azure Marketplace.

Facebook Face Tools Will Help Users Manage Identity

SAN FRANCISCO: To help people better manage their identity on Facebook, the social media giant has launched new facial recognition features.

The new features will help you find photos that you're not tagged in and help you detect when others might be attempting to use your image as their profile picture.

"We want people to feel confident when they post pictures of themselves on Facebook so we'll soon begin using face recognition technology to let people know when someone else uploads a photo of them as their profile picture," Joaquin Quinonero Candela, Director, Applied Machine Learning, said in a blog post on Wednesday.

"We're also introducing a way for people who are visually impaired to know more about who is in the photos they encounter on Facebook," Candela added.

Soon, you will begin to see a simple on/off switch instead of settings for individual features that use face recognition technology.

"We designed this as an on/off switch because people gave us feedback that they prefer a simpler control than having to decide for every single feature using face recognition technology," the post read.

Since 2010, face recognition technology has helped bring people closer together on Facebook.

Facebook has introduced new features in most places, except in Canada and the EU where the company does not offer face recognition technology. "You're in control of your image on Facebook and can make choices such as whether to tag yourself, leave yourself untagged, or reach out to the person who posted the photo if you have concerns about it," Candela added.

App To Monitor Status Of Heart Patients

NEW YORK: Researchers have developed a clinical decision support application that monitors heart failure patients' medical tests, health status and promptly notifies clinicians when their conditions have changed or when they require advanced disease therapies.

The researchers found that the app led to significantly improved detection of disease advancements such as an increase in patients' survival rates as well as improve quality of life.

"We found that clinical decision support can facilitate the early identification of patients needing advanced heart failure therapy and that its use was associated with significantly more patients visiting specialised heart facilities and longer survival," revealed the team led by R. Scott Evans, Medical Informatics director at Intermountain Healthcare -- a not-for-profit firm in Utah, the US. Heart failure is a condition in which heart fails to adequately pump blood, resulting in an array of symptoms that include fatigue, shortness of breath, swelling, and a fast or erratic heartbeat.

"But patients typically aren't monitored every day and it's hard for doctors to stay up to date on all the research regarding heart failure," Evans said, in the paper published in the Journal of Cardiac Failure.

The computer application first identified those with new echocardiograms that showed a left ventricular ejection fraction of less than 35 per cent, which is the cut-off that indicates a patient's condition is deteriorating.

It then monitored their records for relevant signs of progression, such as visits to the hospital or emergency department, lab tests, use of diuretics, technological assistance like left ventricular support, data from EKGs and more. The mined data was then applied to the algorithms.

When computer monitoring indicates a patient likely has advanced heart failure, the app automatically sends a secure email to the patient's doctors, which includes the recommended therapy and all the relevant information that triggered the alert. It also lists phone numbers and links so doctors can easily connect the patients with heart specialists.