CS 6474/4803 Social Computing: Social System Design

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“Social Translucence: An Approach to Designing Systems that Support Social Processes”
• “Socially translucent systems” – visibility, awareness, accountability
• Many analogies to physical world social encounters
• Central hypothesis – online social and collaboration tools should mimic these encounters
Every day we make countless decisions based on the activity of those around us

In another town on business, you and a few colleagues are looking for a place to have dinner. You notice a small restaurant: through its window you see a cozy room with waiters bustling about; you hear the murmur of conversation, and the clink of glasses and cutlery. You head for the entrance...

You have arrived at the opening reception for a convention. You look around for someone to talk to and see someone you recognize gesturing excitedly as others listen intently. Curious, you wander over...

You are shopping for wine to bring to dinner. As you browse the racks you hear a muttered “Aha!” and watch another shopper grab two bottles out of a nearly empty bin. You get a bottle for yourself...
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The glass window makes socially significant information visible
The glass window supports awareness: brings our social rules into play to govern our actions
Accountability behind opening the door, as a consequence of public knowledge of the above awareness
• Design of socially translucent systems:
  • *Making activity visible*
  • *Conversation Visualization and Restructuring*
  • *Organizational Knowledge Spaces (managing visibility and privacy)*

• Design of a system called Babble, a knowledge management system which makes social information visible, aware, and accountable
  • Textual representation of the conversation
  • Social proxies
  • Group awareness
Babble’s Design

---Friday 12 Dec 97 3:43:44 From: Bill
Hi Steven!

---Friday 12 Dec 97 3:44:49 From: Steven
Hellooo Bill. A little guidance please? Is the [...] summary we're preparing for [...] supposed to be an exercise in feeling good, or are we supposed to be giving him hard-headed guidance?

---Friday 12 Dec 97 3:56:55 From: Bill
yes :-)

Fig. 1. A segment of conversation displayed as a single, shared, persistent document.
Class Discussion Point I

Erickson and Kellogg look at social translucence in the context of a corporate environment.

What are the implications of this design beyond collaboration and knowledge communities?

How would these considerations of social translucence (visibility, awareness, accountability) change if it were a different environment?
Class Discussion Point II

Erikson and Kellogg say that “Digital systems are generally opaque to social information”

Is it really the case?
Give one example where it is
Given one example where it is not
Open Design Issues in Babble
Erickson and Kellogg point out the tensions between visibility and privacy in designing socially translucent systems. What kind of design elements can help resolve this tension?

Take how Facebook promotes some social translucence via the News Feed. Modify this design to negotiate the tension between visibility and privacy.
The Chat Circles Series: Explorations in designing abstract graphical communication interfaces
Chat Circles introduced the notion of “hearing range,” which is the distance a user’s messages travel in the virtual environment. These distant circles are still seen growing and shrinking, indicating the ongoing conversation. In subsequent projects we experimented with different ways to visualize the social interaction by intuitively structuring the postings as horizontal bars, which create a simple and legible visualization of the conversation, giving the user a better sense of the other participants and their contributions.

Key interface elements vary in specific design features and as a result differing environments that foster lively, engaged interaction. The approach was to create a central, focused space for discussion, giving the user a better sense of the other participants and their contributions. Unlike an audible conversation, there to do besides chat? How can one see bygone interactions? What is the purpose of the site? What is the ultimate design of a chat interface?

In Chat Circles, uses simple 2D graphics (see figure 1). Each user is represented by a colored circle with a message history of their latest postings. Users can move in the space, and their movement is represented by the size and color of their circles. These circles are bounded, and participants are encouraged to move towards others. Although the cost of doing so is not at all high, it does encourage social interaction.

In a text chat if someone is bothersome or is not participating in different discussions, the user can take it under their own account. In text chat they are able to create a simple and legible visualization of the conversation, which is quite useful, especially since people often live together.

Features and details should be added to the initial design only if they enrich the experience. The Foundation: Chat Circles is the original project in this family and projects evolving from it. The approach was to create a central, focused space for discussion, giving the user a better sense of the other participants and their contributions. Unlike an audible conversation, there to do besides chat? How can one see bygone interactions? What is the purpose of the site? What is the ultimate design of a chat interface?
Chat circles were about online chat rooms where people conversed.

To what extent these principles of design (environment, history, individual representation, comm. channel etc.) are present in today’s social media sites?

Interpret Snapchat and 4chan with the design principles of chat circles (environment, history, individual representation, comm. channel etc.).
How would you implement a “hearing range” feature within a social media conversation? Take/contrast Tiktok and Reddit as two examples. Is it a good idea?
Situate how the visualizations of social interactions by Donath and Viegas fit with the social translucence theory
A common premise for both papers is that they want online social interactions to mimic offline interactions. Almost 15 years later, is this still a requirement in the design of social computing systems? Why?