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Week 4 Critique

Beating Common Sense into Interactive Applications
What this article still did not address to me is how its different from the Cyc attempts long ago, other than direct question-answering inferences. Perhaps that is the only difference. If so, then why don't they build upon cyc's existing knowledge base?

I also was not very impressed by the sample applications shown. Not only did they seem quite shallow, I'm not sure that any of them are desirable in the first place. Most seem like they were designed to show case a particular kind of reasoning rather than being able to stand on their own. I'm not quite sure how useful ARIA might be, and I wonder how much should be filled in by the computer in the first place. This just comes down to standard design "common sense". If you are sending a picture to someone, then you have a specific reason for it. You know what they already know or don't know, and your annotations are done in such a way to fill in any blanks as well as point out specific issues. There simply is no way for a computer to do that--I couldn't even get a human to do that for the most part. When I receive a wedding photo, I can tell its a wedding--I don't need the annotations. Furthermore, if I'm sending photos to someone, something that shows photos that I've clustered together chronologically is much more useful than having it suggest photos to me. Think iPhoto.

This statement of doubt can be generalized to most of the applications, except for a few where it truly makes sense. That is when you NEED (or it is highly desired) a computer to fill in potential blanks for you, such as for word completion. They didn't make it sound like common sense is particularly better than standard linguistic tools, but something needs to be done for cell phones. This is a situation where form factors require a disabled interface, but technology can augment these limitations. Search engines also sound intriguing, mostly due to users not understanding how to properly search. Although I do have to say google does quite well without it.

Furthermore, I'm not quite sure I buy the argument for solving context problems. This is and always will be one of the major problems in AI , and quite simply requiring the user to specify or help guide the system is not enough. At that point so much effort is put in that the user probably could have done the task faster themselves. Also, the efficacy of the existing solution attempt is not specified, which leads me to believe it is not very good.

Lastly, the problem if anthropomorphizing an interface was not addressed. Many papers, studies, and "common sense" highlight the potential negative consequences of anthropomorphizing an interface--something that adding AI does. This is a particularly tricky issue and is almost impossible to get right. Thus the applications of common sense reasoning need to fundamentally address this issue first, and still have good reasons to stand up to the challenge.
