

Aaron Zinman

## Project Update

New project:

Based upon what we had been talking about last (after the 3 or so major shifts), it still is a piece about the flow of people within the building.

To reiterate, the idea is that all walls are lined with displays with filters put on them so that you can only view them straight on. With geo-tracking, we now know which monitors you can see and which you can't, allowing us to throw on private information that only you can see but doesn't require AR glasses, PDAs, or any other kinds of material non-sense. We now have a private space that lives in a public space, perhaps adjacent to the public displays. So the question becomes, when you are next to another person, and can then create a shared private space, what kinds of information should be projected? Most ubi-comp projects are already looking at "practical" uses such as collaboration, etc, but perhaps we can be a bit more abstract (in reasoning). This piece is about understanding your relationship to the architectural space you inhabit, as well as its relationship socially to those around you, and how that changes over time.

When you look at the display, you see a multi-floor layout of the media lab. Perhaps if the display is not very high resolution (or you choose so through a remote control), it only displays the floor you're on. As people walk throughout the building (and are of course monitored by extremely accurate geo-location methods), traces of their activity appear on the display. These accumulate over time the more people walk, while fading at some constant rate. By altering the rate of fading (as well as perhaps shifting backwards in time), we can see the movement throughout the building across time intervals and get a sense of the overall flow, or what Manuel Castells might call the space of places. Each movement is represented by a small icon that moves proportionally to the original recorded rate, and has this animation looped. Each trace left behind is mostly transparent, so major intersections of people will become more opaque. When looking at the display, the set of people minus the users in the shared space are represented in a single color. This gives some privacy, not to mention assigning everyone a unique color would in the end be meaningless with more than 3 people. The users in the shared space are assigned a primary color to distinguish themselves. This allows the users to reflect on their own movements juxtaposed against the global reference in addition to each other. One feature might be to emphasize (fade less quickly) areas where slow rate has occurred or paths between the users in the shared space are crossed, indicating where the social and working hubs are located. This might allow the users to see that they only meet up in spaces that neither of them frequent often, or rarely converse.

Because of the nature of both the Media Lab and technology, much work and social interaction functions virtually. To depict what Castells calls the space of flows, above the foot paths is a space of information traces. A central ring becomes both a destination and a "ring-road", connecting individual offices and computers. Each time a user sends an email or an IM, a trace comes from the computer, into the ring, and if to another media labber, out to their computer. Information accumulates until it has been retrieved.

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Reading an email would be one way of retrieval that accumulates over time, while with instant messaging there might not be any accumulation (unless the user is away). This gives an idea of the real activity level of the social and functional space, which would otherwise be fully underrepresented by relying on antiquated physical space.

Since this piece is also about history (greatly influenced by Fernanda Viegas), the display might alternate between the present, one month ago, and one year ago. This alternation allows the users to understand how they and the space have changed over time, not to mention the relationship with others in the shared space.

Where I am right now:

Due to Ars Electronica, CHI, and now InfoVis?? (due on the 20th), not too far. I've been trying to learn OpenGL? since it is a technological pre-req for this project and I've never used it before. Besides having sketches, learning OpenGL?, and having a good idea of what this project is (finally), I know what I need to do. Unfortunately, due to issues of privacy, technological platforms, and stupid reality, I cannot get the data I would really like to have. I might be able to use some of the badge data from sponsor events, but I would have to fill in a lot of gaps (not to mention a total lack of centrality, data, and meaning for the space of flows/information). Perhaps it might be best to simply rely only on a simulation to generate hopefully realistic looking data to give a sense of how such a system might operate.