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Week 9

Establishing and Maintaining Long-Term Human-Computer Relationships

This paper is a core summary of the Relational Agents notion, and touches on most aspects of the genre that we have discussed so far, with particular focus on long-term considerations. Many agents that purport to be relational seem to in reality have been designed with short-term goals in mind such as initial familiarization of the novice user with a piece of software (e.g. the most notorious example, Microsoft's "Office Assistant").

The most useful aspects of this paper besides the extensive background familiarization were the measures of relationship quality between the synthetic assistant "Laura" and her human counterparts and the example dialogs and "lessons for the HCI practitioner". In particular, the need for meta-relational communication and the ways in which the benefits of a natural language interface can be obtained without having to become bogged down in support for full language understanding (currently impossible).