Sharing Serendipity in the Workplace

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Overview

- Improve usability; (could/did) chance encounters; feedback for future versions
- Contact Space Concept Evaluation
  - (Jon Duhig)
- Contact Space Prototype Evaluation
  - (Phillip Jeffrey)
- Contact Space Ethnographic Evaluation
  - (Beverley Wright)
Helping people work together, that cannot be together

- BT Contact Space: semi-transparent levels with zones
- Symbolic Acting: avatar acts out symbolic meaning of normal desktop activity
- People brought together based on subject interest (CSCW) or activity (composing research paper)
Phillip: look at screen shot 3
Phillip: it is the best one
Holly: I am off now
Holly: bye
Phillip: bye
Contact Space Concept Evaluation

**Problem:**
How to gather user opinion on the Contact Space concept?

**Approach:**
Use focus groups to generate responses introducing the Contact Space Concept on paper.
Focus Group Composition

- Students
  - no apprehension using CS-like environment

- Research and Development Workers
  - Can social interaction exist?

- Flexible Workers
  - Benefit to using CS-like environment?
Lessons Learnt

- Social Interaction
  - Would I communicate when placed beside someone?
  - Formal environment foster formal communication
  - Benefical for producing chance encounters? (group discrepancies)
- Communication
  - active with virtual communities,
    greater confidence

- Control
  - Will there be a potential extra burden placed on one’s work?
  - consensus for system that works for its users rather than controlling them
Contact Space Prototype Evaluation

Problem:
Can a virtual world designed to support chance encounters successfully do so?

Approach:
Interviews, focus group used to determine whether chance encounters have been reported
Methodology

- Study conducted June-August 1999 at the Advanced Communications Technology Centre at BT Adastral Park
- Thirty-five participants, twenty-six active, nine dropped out due to holidays, perceived software conflicts, lack of participation by team members
- One-on-one interviews, one focus group, two-week video diary, personal diaries
“I’ve got a mind that I need to ask say Michael a question...and then I’ve seen him in the Contact Space and that’s reminded me that I need to ask him something and I’m there opening up a text chat and do that.”

- Supporting Chance Encounters
“And about five minutes after seeing him in the Contact Space I saw him at the ASK presentation so again I wouldn’t have found that out because I’d totally forgotten...but I just happened to mention to him about lunch time and he suggested it.”

- Virtual encounter --> real world meeting
“...I use [the Contact Space] when I want to talk to somebody to get some information or to give them some information - sort of, if we’ve got a meeting coming up and I want information from them about the meeting then I’ll find them and chat to them...”
...and there was just this huge avatar face filling almost the entire [view] window...it was just “oh get out of my face”, you know, it was like he’d come up to my desk and was like this close to my face and I found it really intrusive so I actually tried to invite him to chat and say “Hey do you realise you’re in my face”...

- Proxemic Behaviour
sometimes when I log out I’ll go to, I’ll fly to someone and click close which makes me bob up and down. So that I know that someone else can see that I’m leaving...what I find appealing is actually showing someone that I’m leaving and that’s no different to saying “Goodbye” to someone in the office.

- Social Etiquette: Greeting and Leaving
...I’d gone into the Contact Space and there were four, four people in there and I’d gone up to each one of them in turn and asked them to text chat and not one of them responded and that’s very disappointing. You feel quite cut off by that. Cause if you were in the office...you could turn around and see whether they were at their desks or not, but because I’m at a different site I can’t. I’ve got no other means of finding out if they’re actually there or not...

- Signalling one’s level of presence
Lessons Learnt

- Seeing colleague triggered ‘I should speak with you’ memory

- Greater population required to increase likelihood of chance encounters

- Lack of system feedback: Why communicate with others in shared space?
Contact Space Ethnographic Evaluation

**Emphasis:**
How have participants adapted work and communicative patterns to be integrated with the Contact Space? How has the Contact Space affected work patterns?

**Approach:**
Use video analysis and informal interviews to determine the type and level of integration with different communication tools.
Methodology

- Eight participants (three locations including remote)
- 60 hours video analysis
- Informal interviews (evaluate main themes discovered during observations)
Themes Discovered

- Importance of boundaries in work, for Forum usage
- Importance of observation and peripheral awareness
- Moving from a peripheral to a core tool
- Integration with other Media Tools
- Establishing surrounding in the Forum
- Importance of indicators to signal busy
Forced and Personal Boundaries

- Boundary: break from one’s work or current desktop activity

- personal (take a break)

- forced (external event interruption)

- forced example: laugh --> text chat
Peripheral Awareness

- Natural awareness of office environment

- Virtual (Contact Space) environment natural extension of physical (office) environment

- More attuned to workspace beyond immediate vicinity

- ‘Navigate to’ adapted for own person’s needs
Moving from the Periphery to the Core

- Peripheral tool: Self-view window
- Core tool: text chat pop-up window - obstructs

- why?: optimise viewing (simultaneous chat/CS)
- but: shift in communicative patterns (reduce interaction ability in office surroundings)
Text chat

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Integration with Other Media Tools

- Complete system: peripheral and core sections

- Interviews: lack integration (if thought only as core)

- Peripheral: occupy fringes of work (static)

- Core: when active, text chat invitation (dynamic)
  - ex. ‘blunt and to the point’ manner after real world interruption
What does it all Mean?

- Findings resulted in improvements
  - 2D ticker option
  - upgrade to meeting space easier
  - email within Contact Space
Contact Information

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The Contact Space

- Consists of levels (login/office work)
- or zones (CSCW, wearable computing)
- requested or suggested navigation
- entering/exiting

Ease of Use/Needs Changing

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