

Campus Sherpa

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ABSTRACT

We describe the motivation, design, and evaluation of the Campus Sherpa app, which helps users create and take custom tours of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) campus. The motivation for the app came from a study where we found a large number of people, such as prospective freshmen, incoming graduate students, tourists, and parents all expressing the need for custom tours of the campus. Our app was designed to address this need by allowing users to create, upload, and take custom tours of the MIT campus. (TODO: INCORPORATE FIELD STUDY RESULTS HERE)

INTRODUCTION

MIT receives a number of visitors each day from various demographics- prospective undergraduates/graduates, tourists visiting Boston/Cambridge, professionals or researchers attending a conference on campus, middle school students enrolled in Splash, etc. Many of these visitors will take a campus tour which will take them to the main sights at MIT, such as the Student Center, gymnasium, auditorium, main hallway, and architecturally impressive computer science laboratory). However, this “one size fits all” nature of the tour fails to take into account the interests of each visitor and show them all the sights that they would enjoy seeing. For instance, it is plausible that a prospective graduate student in biology would like to follow a tour of the biology labs, while a tourist interested in history would like to be taken to the most historically important sites at MIT.

RELATED WORKS

(TODO: BY CHRIS)

BACKGROUND

(TODO: EXPAND SECTION) Motivated by the above observation, we first identified the types of people touring MIT. We decided that for the purposes of campus tours, we can broadly classify people as current students, prospective freshmen, parents, and tourists. In order to gather information about these groups, we conducted a survey of these four groups,

with some questions common to all four groups and some tailored to a specific group. Here are some of the questions we asked (TODO: SHORTEN QUESTION LIST IF NEEDED):

Everyone:

- What is the most memorable site you've visited here? Why?
- What is the one thing you most wish to see here? Why?
- Have you gone on a tour of MIT?
 1. Are there any questions the tour guide didn't answer?
 2. Did the tour take you everywhere you wanted?
 3. Did the tour leave out any place you wanted to see?

Current Students:

- What are three things you looked for when touring MIT?
- What is one place that the tour didn't cover, which you think tourists should see?

Prospective Freshman:

- If you could ask a current student one question about MIT, what would it be?
- What aspect of MIT do you want to explore the most?

Parents:

- What are three places you want to tour at MIT that you think your child might not want to?
- If you could ask a current student one question about MIT, what would it be?

Tourists:

- How long will you be visiting MIT?
- In a sentence, why did you want to come visit MIT?

Approximately twenty people responded to the survey, evenly distributed across the four demographics. Some of the responses to the survey are:

“There are always too many things to see ... I am wishing I can see more later” (current student)

“Campus Preview Weekend (CPW) was really rushed, and I did not get to see everything” (prospective freshman)

“I wish I could get a better sense of MIT culture. The tour guide briefly touched on how each dorm was different, but did not go into detail.” (prospective freshman)

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“I wish they had shown us where the students hang out ” (parent)

“I wish I could get a better sense of MIT culture. The tour guide briefly touched on how each dorm is different, but didn’t go into detail. ” (tourist)

From the above responses, we saw that a common complaint was that people were not able to visit places they wanted to with the regular campus tours. In order to solve this problem, we proposed an application that helps create and share custom tours of the MIT campus called “Campus Sherpa”.

Since smartphones offer location awareness and mobility, they are the obvious platform choice for “Campus Sherpa”. By deploying this application for iOS, users can take out their smartphone when they arrive at MIT, select a tour based on their interest, and then begin exploring sites that will be most useful to them.

The second aspect of “Campus Sherpa” that we wished to support is to allow users to chronicle their tours and share them with others. As prospective students compare MIT to other schools or as tourists reminisce about their visit to MIT, the ability to record their tours (by associating locations with text, photos, videos, and links to related content) will aid them in remembering. For current students, this offers a way to record the precious memories they make at MIT and share them with others. Thus, the primary audience will be people who aim to tour MIT and record their experience there. The secondary audience will be current MIT students who would like to chronicle their lives at MIT.

While some MIT tours will be pre-installed, the majority should be user-created. Based on our own experiences and the responses to our survey, people have varied tastes and desired destinations when visiting MIT, and we aimed to make sure that their trip to MIT is as enjoyable and productive as possible.

By creating an application to let users create, share, and follow custom tours of MIT, we hope to make college tours custom fit to each persons taste, to make memories of MIT easy to record and share, and to make a platform for sharing tours.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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