

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.

Motivated by this 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:

Everyone:

- What is the most memorable site you've visited here? Why?

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- 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)

“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 app that helps create and share custom tours of the MIT campus called “Campus Sherpa” targeting the iOS platform and making use of the phone’s location services, audio capabilities, and internet access. The app allows a user to create a tour by geotagging a list of tour media, share a tour by uploading it, and taking/viewing a tour from the list of uploaded tours. The combination of the above features should enable people to have a custom campus touring experience.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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